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Country-led Development: Proven Partnerships in Fighting Global Poverty

Millennium Challenge Corporation and InterAction Host a Public Outreach Meeting

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His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete,
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His Excellency Sali Berisha,
Prime Minister,
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His Excellency Jose Brito
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His Excellency Alpha Kanu,
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Transcript

SHERINIAN: Your excellencies, honored guests, members of the diplomatic corps, friends of InterAction and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, good morning. My name is Aaron Sherinian. I am Managing Director of Public Affairs for the Millennium Challenge Corporation. And on behalf of your co-hosts, InterAction and the MCC, it is a true honor to have you here with us to join in learning from such a distinguished group of world leaders that are here with us today.

A matter of business, if we may. If we could please ask all of you, as our guests, so that we can concentrate on what will be an interesting dialogue, if you could take just a few moments to silence your cell phones before we begin the dialogue today.

Our program today will be in two parts. We will have the opportunity to hear some brief keynote remarks from the world leaders that are gathered with us today, and we will then move into a panel discussion that will include some dialogue and some questions and answers from each of you, as part of our audience.

Allow me now to introduce the co-host for today's event, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Darius Mans.

(APPLAUSE)

MANS: Thank you. Thank you, Aaron.

Good morning, and welcome to you all. It's a unique privilege today to be in the presence of so many distinguished individuals. On behalf of the Millennium Challenge Corporation and our co-host, InterAction, I am extremely honored to welcome you all here.

As you know, it's an exciting time at MCC. We just learned last Friday that the White House intends to nominate Mr. Daniel Yohannes as MCC's new Chief Executive Officer. This nomination by the White House indicates strong support for MCC and our mission.

Like MCC, I am particularly pleased that the United Nations General Assembly recognizes the importance of partnering with civil society organizations with groups like InterAction and other NGOs. These are the organizations who know firsthand the realities unfolding on the ground through decades of dedicated service.

Your presence, agendas and missions play an integral role in fostering meaningful, sustainable development. And partnering with you, working alongside you, is not a luxury, but rather a necessity.

This week, all eyes are on New York City. As world leaders gather for this year's General Assembly of the United Nations, they face a number of pressing global issues: a severe economic crisis, a threat of nuclear proliferation,

the implications of climate change and the challenges of food insecurity and disease that are pushing more of the world's poor into extreme poverty.

As I look across this crowded room, as I see presidents and prime ministers of countries that are partnering with the Millennium Challenge Corporation, as I see civil society leaders and representatives from NGOs and think-tanks among them, what I also see are solutions that are working in the fight against global poverty.

If the international community wants to know how best to tackle global poverty, I'd invite them to this very room to learn from our partnerships. Here in this room are the partners with the capacity and the will to contribute in meaningful ways to our common challenges to elevate our common humanity.

This morning, our focus is on one of the most significant tenets of development assistance: the practice of country ownership, where countries lead and champion their own development. We will hear many perspectives on this from an illustrious group of speakers.

I think there's broad agreement that country-led development really matters. What we know for sure at MCC is that the development assistance we provide to improve the quality of life for the world's poor depends on country-determined and country-implemented solutions in which not just government planners, but broad segments of society have a stake.

If we're serious about results, we must take country ownership seriously. Consider the reasons why. First, country ownership matters because it makes programs smarter and stronger. Distinctively homegrown programs reflect the priorities of partner countries themselves. Countries, not donors from the outside, know best what they need to pursue their own development. Countries are more willing to pursue and be held responsible for programs of their own making.

Second, country ownership matters because it empowers our partners and sustains results. Because countries own their programs from the outset, they build the capacity to sustain them over the long term. MCC provides technical assistance as needed, but day-to-day program implementation and management is country-led, not MCC-led. You cannot have sustainability without country ownership.

Third, country ownership matters because it improves transparency and accountability. Programs created through country-led development reflect more than the wishes of individuals at the highest levels of government. They also include input from a wide range of stakeholders across society, engaged and consulted throughout the process. Through the democratization of ownership, through ongoing debate and dialogue, vigilance and monitoring, programs are scrutinized to make sure they deliver their intended results.

Country ownership is not just the catchphrase at the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Though it has its share of challenges, it is and will remain a guiding principle. It stems from our firmly held belief that development cannot be imposed from outside, but must be built from within.

It is a belief we put into practice each and every day with partners in Africa, in Central America, Eurasia, and the Pacific, represented by many of you in this room this morning who are investing over \$7 billion of MCC's grants in homegrown programs to reduce poverty and generate economic growth.

Because our partners know best what they need for their long-term economic growth, we find them investing MCC grants in agriculture and rural development, in schools and health care, in land tenure reforms and financing projects, in roads and bridges and programs to help them achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Let me leave you with a call to action. As we look for ways to chart the future of foreign aid and make it smarter and more effective, approaches that deliver results, approaches that place countries in charge of their own development will help inform this conversation. And such an honest conversation demands that we also examine the challenges of country ownership and how to overcome them. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is very proud to be part of that conversation. Our partnerships worldwide prove that country ownership creates smart programs that really matter to the poor. I invite and encourage all of us in this room this morning to listen and learn from one another about our collective experiences with country ownership, what works and what can be improved.

Let's recommit ourselves to this guiding principle and strengthen our partnerships along this core value so we can achieve further progress in the fight against global poverty.

Thank you. And I look forward to what promises to be a very exciting discussion this morning.

(APPLAUSE)

WORTHINGTON: Thank you, Darius.

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure and a great honor that InterAction joins the MCC in co-hosting this event. InterAction is the largest umbrella organization of U.S. NGOs. We represent 184 NGOs working in 150 countries around the world. Our community depends upon the generosity of the American people, which give it billions of dollars to partner with local civil society, local governments in implementing programs that try to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable and poorest people.

We applaud the country-led development approach. We applaud the role that the MCC plays in shaping a relationship between the U.S. government and the nation-states that -- threshold agreements and compacts. At same

time, we stress the importance of a consultation with local civil society and engaging in a process where country ownership implies also community ownership, a ownership by people of their own development process.

Our community works with villages, with local CBOs and NGOs to enable them to make a difference. Most of our resources -- and this was \$5,995,000,000 in 2006 -- come directly from donations from the American people. We are, in essence, a very large donor.

We see ourselves as a partner with governments, a partner that must work within a country's strategy, a partner that tries to bring voices to be heard, a partner that encourages local civil society actors and NGOs to make sure that their presence is heard as we go forward in a joint development effort.

We have worked with the MCC through our MCC working group for many years. This group has helped shape the policies of the MCC. It's helped influence the direction of its organization, how it evaluates. In many ways, we have pushed the MCC and seen a very positive response in how they encourage governments to work closely with their civil society, for it's, after all, the base of a society, the village, the family, where social change happens. It is that ability of that family or village to raise themselves out of poverty that makes the biggest difference.

It is a pleasure to be here to co-host this event with the MCC and to highlight the role that the international NGO community plays. And I'd like to turn it over back to Darius to welcome our distinguished guests.

(APPLAUSE)

MANS: It is truly a great honor to be joined today by four distinguished heads of state. These esteemed leaders are known to all of us and really need no introduction. Though their time is limited, we're very pleased to have this opportunity to hear from each of them.

If I may first let us please welcome His Excellency, Mr. Compaore, the President of Burkina Faso.

(APPLAUSE)

COMPAORE (THROUGH TRANSLATOR): (inaudible) United Republic of Tanzania (inaudible) acting CEO of MCC, distinguished stakeholders who are supporting us in our initiatives for the development of Africa, dear friends representing NGOs, I was very glad to receive your invitation here, because when we talk about MCC, I'm convinced that we are going to talk about development in our respective countries.

We know that development is the current quest for humanity right now, because without development, there is no peace, there is no health, and there is no knowledge. And for us Africans who are always lagging behind, we always take this opportunity to share our views on development with international partners.

I'm here today because of MCC is a new approach, an innovative approach for all of us here. It is a new thinking on how to promote development. And we have to work with the open spirit of -- of the ability of the American people to work with us. And (inaudible) American people have -- have confidence in us and are prepared to support us towards development, but we have also to take into account a number of key principles that are very important for each -- for any process of development.

We have to encourage sound policies in the different countries. We have to conduct this development process by taking into account the views and opinions of people on top, like leaders, and also people at the grassroot level, like communities.

And we should also bear in mind that this process should be the ownership of the people who are also -- who are at the same time the actors and the recipient of this development process. And under this initiative, this process, we have shared responsibility between Americans and Africans. And this process should take into account our own visions of development and our own aspirations.

So I'm here this morning to thank President Obama and people of America (inaudible) all the people who are present here and all the people who are working on the ground, especially the NGOs that are supporting us on the ground, and I want to tell them that Burkina Faso is confident in the MCC. And it is our wish that this American crusade for development will be for all of us a way to strengthen our friendship, but it will also be a new way for the United States of America to work for the development of people in Africa.

That's what I wanted to tell you (inaudible)

(APPLAUSE)

MANS: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Now, we're very pleased now to hear from His Excellency, Jakaya Kikwete, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

KIKWETE: Excellency President Compaore, President of the Republic of Burkina Faso, the Prime Minister of Albania, acting CEO of MCC, excellencies, ambassadors, guests, ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank the MCC leadership for organizing this event and for inviting me to be one of the speakers this morning.

I bring along with me the very warm greetings from the people of Tanzania to the people of the United States of America. The government and the people of Tanzania are very grateful recipients of the generous support from the government and the people of the United States through the millennium challenge account compact.

Allow me to point out five things that we in Tanzania are very happy about in the development cooperation model that defines the MCC and the kind of working relations that has developed between the government and the MCC.

The first is that its genuine commitment to country-led development and ownership. None of the projects in our compact was dictated by the U.S. government. We identified the projects, and we (inaudible) we made the strategic choices. And in our case, we decided to use the entire compact resource envelope in addressing some of our most pressing infrastructural challenges: roads, energy, water and airports.

The second is the sense of genuine partnership that we have experienced in working with the MCC management and staff. This was evident since the time when we were implementing the threshold program, beginning with the concept itself, a notion that when you see a poor developing country striving hard to create the right environment for development, you should step in and lend a helping hand until it reached the criteria for a full compact, is to us an indication and manifestation of partnership.

My only request is that the willingness of the U.S. government to help us build the capacities necessary to meet this criteria should continue, even after compact is signed. This is because our need for partnership and capacity building does not end at the signing of a compact.

The third thing we would like to -- what we like about the MCA is its predictability. The criteria for eligibility are clear. And once the compact is signed, the money is assured for the duration of the compact. This makes planning and budgeting much easier. There is (ph) confidence. We -- we did not have to worry even when there was a change of government in the U.S.

The fourth thing I am happy about MCA and MCC and which follows from my -- my point about predictability is the bipartisan support that the MCA (inaudible) enjoys. President Bush initiated the program, and both the Republican-led Congress and now the Democratic-led Congress supported it.

We're happy with President Obama's clear support and commitment to MCA (inaudible) aid delivery. This is a commitment we have likewise heard from the secretary of state, Madam Hillary Clinton, who also chairs the MCC board.

I'm here to assure all of them that this is also our view in Tanzania. The MCA is an excellent innovation, an effective aid delivery, and it needs to continue and needs to continue to be supported. And we must even now begin to consider the possibility of not only original compact, but successful compacts, as well, because needs will remain even after the conclusion of the first compact.

The fifth thing I'd like to -- I like about MCA model is the inherent incentive structure that it has for continued effort on good governance, on efficiency and speedy implementation of projects and (inaudible)

As a gentleman, so, once again, I thank the American people for this excellent aid delivery innovation that the MCA delivery definitely is. We in Tanzania have just completed a first year of implementation for our compact. It

was a year taken up by most of the preparatory work. Now we are about the launch the first project, a road project from Tanga to the Kenyan border, hopefully before the end of this year.

Preparation for the other projects is going on very well, and we expect many of them to be launched next year. Our goal is to make the target of completing all projects in our compact on schedule by 2012. And we assure MCC of our continued willingness to address those issues that looking ahead might delay our progress.

I thank you for your kind attention.

(APPLAUSE)

MANS: Asante sana, Mr. President. Thank you very much.

I now have the great pleasure to yield the podium to His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Albania, Mr. Sali Berisha.

(APPLAUSE)

BERISHA: Presidents, Mr. Acting CEO of Millennium Challenge Account, ladies and gentlemen, first, I'd like to thank U.S. government and U.S. taxpayer for their very generous help provided to my country through a threshold of Millennium Challenge Account corporation.

It is my deep belief that this money was of great efficiency and help to my nation. Fifty million U.S. dollars granted three years ago in a threshold program were used in several projects which really changed my country.

The first one was business registration. And we -- we succeeded to come from a very hectic, bureaucratic, protracted, corrupted procedure of business registration to a one-stop shop business registration in 30 minutes for one euro, a little bit more than one U.S. dollar.

But this practice meant a lot to business people and to international business community. This was fundamental in changing the tide of the climate for business in my country. Albania ranked last year the second in the world in doing business classification as regard to improving the business climate.

The second major project was in taxes, to increase transparency. And now my country's e-tax country. There is no more friendly meetings between taxpayers, tax collectors.

(LAUGHTER)

No. Everything is online. I myself am a low tax man, so I am. But this practice and my low taxes policy, what they brought to my country? They brought to my country an increase every year, 24 percent, 25 percent of revenues.

We have not yet got a compact, but in four years' time, we've got \$5 billion U.S. dollars more in our budget than in previous four years.

The third major domain where we are focused was procurement. We started e-procurement in this millennium threshold program. 2008 was around 15 percent. Then, I saw the big differences. I saw that the number of participation in the e-procurements was more than triple. I saw the saving went up from 12 percent to 18 percent.

Thus, I decided no more (ph). Other than e-procurement in my country, with the help of U.S. aid (inaudible) organized a very large training of representatives of all countries' contracting authorities and started from January. To my note (ph), Albania is the only country which is (inaudible) e-procurement country.

This money was very efficient, because you see reforms are vital to fight corruption. Man is greedy. And we have to do everything to protect him not to become sleazy.

(LAUGHTER)

The truth is that, but also (inaudible) is crucial. In this project, we managed to set up a task force composed by prosecutors, criminal police, tax and customs authorities officials, intelligence officials, and they did a very good job. More than 160 people, including high-ranking officials, are penalized.

In the second threshold project, we are working hard on licensing and permissions. We founded a few months ago one-stop shop for licenses and permissions. After I (inaudible) with my government, dropped (ph) two-thirds of them. We are working closely on judiciary, and my conclusion is that there is no more important, more efficient and fundamental way to fight poverty, to fight misery than fighting corruption.

That's why I'm very happy that this initiative, initiated by President Bush, was fully supported by President Obama. And I think, in my view, this is one of the greatest help that United States could provide to their friendly countries. In three years, the country has changed. Direct foreign investment, this six month, are 59 percent higher than last year. The growth is keeping. The revenues are increasing. And the fight against corruption is consolidating. In a study, World Bank study, it showed that poverty decreased from 18 percent to 12 percent and extreme poverty from 3.4 percent to 1.3 percent.

Let's once again -- I'd like to thank U.S. government, U.S. Congress, Millennium Challenge Account corporation, U.S. -- United States AID development agency for their very important and crucial help that provided to my country in a fight vital to fight to improve the governance, to fight poverty, which is a fight against corruption.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

MANS: Thank you very much, your excellencies. I don't know about you all, but I was positively inspired by your words about progress, about results, transparency, accountability. I don't know about you, but I'm fired up and ready to go for the panel discussion.

Let me please, if you'll join me, to thank them once again for their very inspiring words today.

(APPLAUSE)

WORTHINGTON: We now move to the second part of our program, if our panelists could come and join us here.

After the distinguished presentations by our three visiting heads of state, we now move into a -- a deeper dialogue on country ownership, on the nature of MCC compacts, on the relationship between civil society and governments in finding common solutions.

And it's with pleasure that I'd like to introduce our panelists. To my right, we have Foreign Minister Gadio (inaudible) Foreign Minister Gadio from Sierra Leone. OK, I've got the wrong information here (inaudible)

(LAUGHTER)

... Mr. Kanu from Sierra Leone, and to my right, Jose Brito from Cape Verde, and the president of Africare, Julius Coles.

If each of you can make a -- a brief comment, we want to have this as much as a dialogue as possible with the audience and up here about your approach to development, your approach to country-led development, and how you see a relationship between that approach and your people in civil society.

And I'll start on my right, Mr. Brito.

BRITO: Thank you. I'd like to thank MCC for this opportunity to talk about our program, MCA program in Cape Verde (inaudible) was one of the first (inaudible) country to sign the MCA compact (inaudible) first country to complete successfully (inaudible) compact (inaudible) next year, and we are on track, and we are -- we will finish successfully this compact.

And (inaudible) talk about (inaudible) MCC (inaudible) experience before when I was an ambassador of Cape Verde in Washington and we started (inaudible) and (inaudible) after the President Bush launched the initiative (inaudible) MCC and send a proposal (inaudible) why Cape Verde is a good candidate for MCC and why (inaudible) so quickly is because (inaudible) clear idea of (inaudible) development and where we want to.

And because of this clear vision of where we are (inaudible) because we (inaudible) a lot of discussion (inaudible) discussion (inaudible) so we are able to very quickly to know what we want (inaudible) MCA can really help us

to overcome. And in this case, we (inaudible) mainly market access with road, bridges (inaudible) element of our compact (inaudible) private sector with (inaudible) credits to (inaudible) credit (inaudible) productivity.

And this (inaudible) final program (inaudible) to MCC (inaudible) discussion because Cape Verde (inaudible) first and we are (inaudible) process. And we are (inaudible) each other (inaudible) of MCC was not clear (inaudible) only ideas, and we have very difficult time, really, to (inaudible) what we like to do and we discuss (inaudible) discussion, (inaudible) I said, but we achieve (inaudible) on a compact (inaudible) not on about (inaudible) compact (inaudible) compact, but to justify why -- why these projects and (inaudible) projects (inaudible) discussion why -- why we like this and not the other (inaudible) of the MCC (inaudible) difference (inaudible)

So after (inaudible) starting by really going (inaudible) country (inaudible) second (inaudible) ownership of the -- the compact (inaudible) of the compact. We talk about (inaudible) national (inaudible) and we (inaudible) propose to -- to MCC and (inaudible) beginning (inaudible) first phase of ownership.

The second phase is (inaudible) here (inaudible) Cape Verde was one of the first countries to (inaudible) studies (inaudible) countries have today (inaudible) ideas of some (inaudible) but no studies (inaudible) studies, but what we achieve is -- in this case is to (inaudible) we have our own group of implementation goals (inaudible) MCA Cape Verde (inaudible) put in place (inaudible) all the stakeholders and (inaudible) groups (inaudible) not just with private-sector NGO (inaudible) they are making (inaudible) and on time discussing about the progress of -- of the projects.

And (inaudible) is important is most of the execution was made by (inaudible) institution. So -- so (inaudible) we have agreement with (inaudible) mainly (inaudible) institution like (inaudible) et cetera, on -- for the implementation of the program and agreement (inaudible) with (inaudible)

Another -- another aspect from Cape Verde different from the (inaudible) financial management is done through the program on financial management. I remember at this time when we say that we would like to do this (inaudible) and so (inaudible) that any (inaudible) Cape Verde (inaudible) here in -- in Washington.

And (inaudible) this is possible, we are doing this, why we cannot do this (inaudible) so (inaudible) success (inaudible) convince MCC that (inaudible) finance will do this, because our view is, we have (inaudible) to change the management system of the country.

The country is (inaudible) have to work to improve the management of the country and not (inaudible) different, and (inaudible) is now (inaudible) what we have done with the project is MCA (inaudible) Cape Verde. We are doing (inaudible) project (inaudible) today is (inaudible) on the (inaudible) of MCA Cape Verde.

For example, we (inaudible) information system now of all the projects of (inaudible) Cape Verde. The management of the project is (inaudible) the same (inaudible) project (inaudible) investment (inaudible) same that the

MCA program (inaudible) because (inaudible) MCA (inaudible) development (inaudible) system of management -- finance management (inaudible) we (inaudible) improve the program with support of MCC.

And today (inaudible) one aspect we -- we don't talk about enough is the implementation of MCC (inaudible) society (inaudible) management of the country. And we have a lot of -- of changing with (inaudible) so (inaudible) and now (inaudible) program with (inaudible) management system with (inaudible) with (inaudible) have done.

And (inaudible) but (inaudible) things to say, because I (inaudible) impact and -- of the MCC (inaudible) in our development is huge in Cape Verde, and (inaudible) help us to -- to -- to (inaudible) but (inaudible) an aspect of this is eligibility.

Today, because Cape Verde (inaudible) in 2008 (inaudible) the first group to the second group, and now we are competing (inaudible) countries. And (inaudible) have to compete (inaudible) was very difficult for us. But now I think it's (inaudible) of management of the country (inaudible) management (inaudible) eligibility, following (inaudible) indicators, saying where we can do (inaudible) to make an evaluation of what we are doing and where (inaudible) today (inaudible) we have improved (inaudible) indicators.

So now (inaudible) and we are doing a lot at this moment on a better (inaudible) in Cape Verde. So -- so I have (inaudible) to talk (inaudible) I think these are concrete -- concrete results of the MCC and Cape Verde. And (inaudible) something (inaudible) to compete (inaudible) second compact (inaudible) country (inaudible) you are talking about the second compact (inaudible) if (inaudible) can be (inaudible) Cape Verde (inaudible) compact.

Thank you very much for your attention.

(APPLAUSE)

WORTHINGTON: Thank you, Foreign Minister Brito.

And we will have plenty of time to come back to your experience in Cape Verde (inaudible) political affairs in mineral resources (inaudible) Sierra Leone (inaudible)

KANU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Your excellencies, President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, excellency President Jakaya Kikwete of the Republic of Tanzania, and excellency Sali Berisha of Albania, may I take this opportunity to extend best wishes from his excellency, President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone, who unfortunately (inaudible) program this morning (inaudible) come here and talk to you about this program (inaudible) agenda for change.

Sierra Leone -- Sierra Leone is not (inaudible) compact country. It is working (inaudible) for the MCC. So (inaudible) President Koroma has asked me to tell you about his own country-led development program, which he has dubbed the agenda for change.

It is (inaudible) strategic development policy to improve on political, social and economic conditions of our people and (inaudible) sustainable and conducive environment for economic growth.

The priority areas of development are agriculture, energy and water resources, infrastructure, health, and education. The (inaudible) to this process. When President Koroma assumed power in September 2007, he inherited only three megawatts of electric power (inaudible) and only four megawatts for the rest of the country (inaudible)

He made a commitment to provide electricity supply (inaudible) 100 days of his administration. On the 20th of December, 2007, he was able to switch on the lights exactly 100 days of his assuming power. But he had to make (inaudible) so he turned his attention to the completion of a historic (inaudible) dam construction project that had lasted 35 years.

And (inaudible) Mr. Chairman, that this project was completed in (inaudible) 2009, exactly on the second anniversary (inaudible) president. Our attention is now focused on the attainment of food security, which is (inaudible) combination of many factors, such as improved mechanized agriculture, irrigation (inaudible) energy, et cetera.

We (inaudible) some assistance from our major (inaudible) for us (inaudible) among the worst in the world (inaudible) in 2008, government (inaudible) improvement of general health (inaudible) infant mortality rate has reduced from 170 per 1,000 live births in 2007 to 89 per 1,000 in 2008 (inaudible) 50 percent drop in just one year. Maternal mortality has fallen from 1,300 per 100,000 to (inaudible) 100,000, again almost 50 percent drop.

(inaudible) are high compared to the global average. However, primary school education completion rates are improved and continue to do so (inaudible) increased from 29,918 in 2007 to 33,696 in 2008. And we expect it to rise in 2009.

On corruption, we have demonstrated a very strong political will. The anti-corruption act of 2002 was amended in 2008 to give the commission more powers to investigate, arrest and prosecute (inaudible) prosecutions. The (inaudible) has proven to be a deterrent to corrupt practices and has, indeed, resulted in the (inaudible) number of offenders, including (inaudible) and recovering more than 1 billion leone in 2009 alone.

In the area of commerce, the (inaudible) has (inaudible) number one (inaudible) which is comprised (inaudible) this was facilitated by the introduction of new legislation, such as the bankruptcy act of 2009 (inaudible) act of 2009, the business registration act of 2007, the (inaudible) act of 2007, and amendments (inaudible) 2009.

This has greatly reduced (inaudible) business (inaudible) when we came to power to about \$500 in just (inaudible) we have also reviewed (inaudible) laws to conform to international best practice and to provide (inaudible) enforcement of our commitment to (inaudible)

In the area of good governance, freedom of the press and (inaudible) Sierra Leone (inaudible) very high in the region. It is rated among the top 10 in Africa, according to the Freedom House index. The open government initiative in which the president and the government (inaudible) questions from the public (inaudible) the international community (inaudible) public (inaudible) major (inaudible) achievements in Sierra Leone in 2008.

Early in his presidency, indeed, on his inauguration day, the president (inaudible) to refocus the (inaudible) Sierra Leoneans (inaudible) enterprise. The agenda for change is a strategy through which we want to achieve improved social service delivery (inaudible) democratic accountability (inaudible) institutions, improve management of our natural resources, improve access to land for (inaudible) conducive business climate, increased economic freedom for better educated and healthier people.

However, Sierra Leone needs the support (inaudible) partners, the United States of America included. That is why this year we are looking forward to qualifying for a threshold (inaudible) indicators, we are hoping that we'll do two or three more this year so that we can reach the eligibility criteria.

I thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

WORTHINGTON: Thank you, Mr. Kanu.

It's now my pleasure to turn forward to Julius Coles, the president of Africare, a member of InterAction, and a -- a long-term leader within the U.S. NGO community to make his comments.

COLES: Thank you very much, Sam, and I'd also like to thank Darius (inaudible) invitation to come and speak today.

I feel very honored (inaudible) more than 184 American NGO organizations working with each other and under the umbrella of interaction (inaudible) been chosen to represent (inaudible) group of distinguished NGOs is really quite an honor. And I really am very, very pleased and feel very honored to be given this opportunity.

Let me just make some general comments. Let me just say, Darius, I think you ought to be congratulated on your service and what you've done at the Millennium Challenge Corporation (inaudible) serving as the acting director. I think he's done a just tremendous job. It's not easy to hold the fort when so many things are going on, but having observed you at the Senegal signing and then in other activities, I just think you've done a great job and (inaudible) continue doing that (inaudible) Millennium Challenge Corporation has a (inaudible)

I'd say, from a civil society perspective (inaudible) many of us were very skeptical of the MCC when it was first created. I think Paul (ph) can attest to that. We felt (inaudible) country-led development and (inaudible) talking about a small staff and (inaudible) resources. Can they really pull it off?

I think that was the doubt that was expressed by civil society organizations. Can they really do the job? And I think, after seeing (inaudible) perform over the past few years, I (inaudible) hell of a job and done a great job.

And (inaudible) really removed that skepticism that we all have that that could be done. I think we would argue that you need more staff to do the job that has to be done, but (inaudible) looking at the amount of resources that you are moving and the impact that you are having on (inaudible) countries, I can say that I think we as Americans can say we're doing a great job, keep it up, and give you the resources as necessary (inaudible) do a better job.

Notwithstanding all this, I think most civil society organizations are still looking for a (inaudible) to take advantage of all those resources that you're providing. And the reason why it's not easy for us to take advantage is because you're doing what you (inaudible) you're going to do. You're giving the money to a government, and the governments are deciding themselves how those resources are (inaudible) going to be expended.

The problem with us is that we don't always have those relations (inaudible) don't always take this as part of their development delivery system. And so we're still kind of working out (inaudible) take advantage, how can we become (inaudible) involved?

It's not that the governments are prohibited us from (inaudible) involved. They have their own priorities (inaudible) international and local civil society organizations to be a part of that process I think is something that's still being worked out.

I think they are doing a job in many countries of using local civil society organizations (inaudible) international NGOs are still looking for a mechanism.

I would say with Africare we are very fortunate (inaudible) working process (inaudible) Tanzania, where we are also working with an Irish power company (inaudible) to bring electric power to the island of Zanzibar. And we feel very, very happy about that, because we're doing (inaudible) socioeconomic study. We're doing the (inaudible) studies (inaudible) on this project. And I think that this will lead to (inaudible) future involvement in other projects, and we're talking about other possibilities and other countries that we're interested in.

With those sort (inaudible) about what we are and how civil society fits in with MCC, I'd just like to talk a little bit about Africare and how NGOs in general sort of relate to this whole country-led development process.

If you know (inaudible) understand that we came out of a grassroots philosophy. We were created by Peace Corps volunteers who were working in the Republic of Niger (inaudible) late 1960s and early 1970s. Their idea was to create a private Peace Corps.

And so they went back to Hawaii and incorporated (inaudible) organization called Africare (inaudible) all these volunteers back to Africa (inaudible) health project, working (inaudible) very isolated area of -- of the Republic of Niger. And then reality came (inaudible) that they couldn't afford (inaudible) Peace Corps (inaudible) needed resources.

So they turned (inaudible) to another Peace Corps (inaudible) to make the organization what it is today. It is an international NGO, working across (inaudible) working in some 25 countries in west, central, east, and southern Africa.

And what is our mission? Where -- how do we look at our mission? We look at our mission as working to help to improve the quality of -- of life for the people of Africa. And how do we do this? We work at the community level. We work at the grassroots level.

Very often, we're 600 to 1,000 miles from the capital. We're working in the village with communities, with local NGO organizations. We're working under the philosophy (inaudible) help the people that we work with to achieve our goals. We don't go in (inaudible) we go in (inaudible) government. We go in at the invitation of the community.

And then you do a study. We (inaudible) people. What do you need? What are your priorities? And then work with those people to achieve their priorities.

And that I feel is something that has contributed to our success as an organization, because we work (inaudible) to help them to achieve their goals.

I know I don't have much time, but I would like to give an example of one of the kinds of projects that we're trying out (inaudible) three examples here. I think that this one will give you some idea of this philosophy being applied and how it's being utilized.

The name of the project (inaudible) empowerment program. It's based in four countries -- Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda and (inaudible) and what is its purpose? (inaudible) HIV (inaudible) children in those four countries.

Now, how do we do that? Well, we learn in (inaudible) societies that Africans are anti-institutionalization, yet (inaudible) children in Africa are going to be orphaned by one parent or another (inaudible) in Africa (inaudible) rather than taking these kids and putting them in institutions and orphanages, what we're doing is working with the community to raise those kids in the community itself.

We're providing the community with resources to provide education to those kids. We're teaching those kids life skills, how to grow crops (inaudible) teaching them trades. We're teaching them to work in micro-credit projects. We're teaching them (inaudible) dress-making.

We're also giving them (inaudible) support (inaudible) socio-support, in terms of counseling, counseling in terms of HIV-AIDS, counseling in terms of educational opportunities, and counseling about (inaudible) situation.

We (inaudible) nutrition education (inaudible) giving them legal support, in terms of what their rights are. And yet we are able to help (inaudible) those orphans (inaudible) and so they (inaudible) burden to the community itself. We're doing this with community leaders, and we're also training people in the community to work with (inaudible) that support.

This work, this project (inaudible) and we're hoping (inaudible) other projects. I hope that this example will give you some idea of what a community-led-type project (inaudible) successful that Africare has tried to implement.

And I hope when we get into the discussion that we will have an opportunity to share other examples of our successes and how it has worked. And I think one thing (inaudible) to our success is that most of our employees are Africans. So you have Africans helping Africans (inaudible) our employees are African, and soon it will be 98 percent. And Americans and other international people who (inaudible) going to be in a very, very minority of our work, because in the long run, it is Africans helping Africans (inaudible) bring about change in Africa.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

WORTHINGTON: Thank you, Julius, and to all our panelists. And now we're going to move into a dialogue.

But before we open to the floor here for questions and comments, I note through all of these conversations that we've heard this morning is this theme of partnership, of relationship between different parts of society with the overall development process, whether it's development by a nation-state or work within communities.

And I'd be curious to hear from the various panelists, how has your relationship, whether it's the government or civil society, NGOs (inaudible) implementation or in policy creation, evolved as you created your approach to country-led development? And from an NGO perspective, how has your relationship, Julius, evolved as you relate to a nation-state as it firms up its own understanding of its country development?

I'd just (inaudible) broad question (inaudible) bring in, again, some of your examples (inaudible) thank you.

BRITO: (inaudible) process we are learning which (inaudible) learning with our failure, we are learning (inaudible) success, but (inaudible) most important that we are (inaudible) the same vision (inaudible) and when you have the (inaudible) same vision (inaudible) it will be very easy (inaudible) participation, because each stakeholder know what is (inaudible) so I think, in -- in MCA process (inaudible) where we are (inaudible) together (inaudible) do what (inaudible) and (inaudible) to have (inaudible) mechanism for all the stakeholders to keep the dialogue between -- between them.

And I think (inaudible) but (inaudible) MCA, but I think (inaudible) development process need to -- to (inaudible) vision, to have mechanism of dialogue between the stakeholders, and I think (inaudible)

WORTHINGTON: Minister Kanu, any thoughts on your partnership (inaudible) overall country development process (inaudible) how you relate to civil societies, NGOs, and -- and business?

KANU: Yes, thank you very much. For us, civil society (inaudible) civil society (inaudible) very high place (inaudible) government (inaudible) and we consult (inaudible) civil society very greatly (inaudible)

When we (inaudible) stakeholders (inaudible) civil society (inaudible) MCC (inaudible) approach (inaudible) is that (inaudible) before we were even aware (inaudible) and when we looked at our (inaudible) that is why we are (inaudible) achieve all those criteria (inaudible) MCC (inaudible) government (inaudible) going to do (inaudible) very important.

Investing in people. That is why we are here. We're (inaudible) physical states. We're there to look at the welfare (inaudible) to do that (inaudible) economic freedom (inaudible) finances, the funding, and all that sort of thing.

So (inaudible) cannot do it alone (inaudible) but (inaudible) development (inaudible) stakeholders (inaudible) civil society (inaudible) NGOs, it will be a very difficult and uphill (inaudible) for us. So (inaudible) promote cooperation between us and civil society.

WORTHINGTON: Thank you.

And, Julius, from -- from your perspective, working with governments and government-led development as an international civil society actor, have you seen that evolve over time, and particularly in countries where there's been an MCC threshold or compact?

COLES: Yes, I think there has been (inaudible) evolution. And I was struck -- about three years ago, I was attending an economic forum meeting in South Africa. And the literature that was being passed out at that forum was a picture of a civil society organization being out of control.

And I was really struck by that, that someone (inaudible) type of image being confronted by people who felt that civil society (inaudible) really doing their own thing and were out of control and were not marching in step with the government (inaudible) strategies and philosophies.

And I think that the NGO community has gotten the message, that (inaudible) effective (inaudible) working in a country, that you're going to have to develop a relationship with that government, understand its strategy and what it wants to do, but at the same time be cognizant of the fact that there is a need out in the (inaudible) community and in -- in areas where government may not be reaching (inaudible)

And very often, I think this is where many governments find civil society organizations to be useful, because they fulfill a need in terms of manpower and resources that the government is not able to fulfill itself, i.e., there are many, many underserved areas in parts of Africa where NGOs are working under the guidance of the government, but working on a grassroots level with local NGOs to strengthen their capacity and working with local communities to improve the government structure and also development.

And I think it's this credibility of working with the government both at the local level and the national level -- at the national level that has given the NGOs more strength (inaudible) more confidence, but it's also helped local NGOs to build up their own capacity.

And I think that's the long-term strength of the relationship (inaudible) foreign NGOs should be there to (inaudible) capacity of local organizations and indigenous NGOs.

WORTHINGTON: Thank you for those comments.

I'd like to throw it open now to any questions from the floor to -- to get a dialogue (inaudible)

The gentleman right there just raised your hand. I believe we can find the microphones coming up right behind you (inaudible) make your question or comment relatively brief. Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you very much (inaudible) brief comment (inaudible) Morocco. As you know, Morocco (inaudible) MCC (inaudible) able (inaudible) I think that the philosophy, the vision and the approach of (inaudible) MCC is very (inaudible) because it is based (inaudible) through job creation, promotion of growth, and ownership. I think (inaudible) are on the basis of (inaudible) vision of the MCC.

And for us in Morocco (inaudible) was very interesting, too, because it is done (inaudible) partnership (inaudible) and also (inaudible) ownership of the people (inaudible) so according to our strategy and our vision (inaudible) Morocco (inaudible) is essential, because in our (inaudible) OK?

And then (inaudible) money, because (inaudible) essentially (inaudible) count only on the -- on the financial resources of (inaudible) but we should also (inaudible) we should (inaudible)

Second point is, I think, this (inaudible) project (inaudible) our strategy of democratization (inaudible) transparency (inaudible) good governance, we cannot really implement the vision of the MCC (inaudible) the essence of this project is to help people to help themselves, not to count only on foreign (inaudible)

The third comment (inaudible) very positive aspects (inaudible) government (inaudible) government, civil society, and (inaudible) regional (inaudible) essential. We are now (inaudible) we can work, we can (inaudible) civil society, no more complex.

And I think (inaudible) also through (inaudible) and I think (inaudible) as far as Morocco is concerned, we think (inaudible) to help us (inaudible) of strategy (inaudible) and we are very happy with this (inaudible) country (inaudible) experience (inaudible)

Thank you.

WORTHINGTON: Thank you for your comment (inaudible) any other questions?

The gentleman back there (inaudible)

QUESTION: Thank you. John (inaudible) Sam, I think my question is for you, actually. Julius was talking about the need for international NGOs to get much more into the capacity-building mode and to be able to build the capacities out in areas beyond where government is currently reaching. And I think that's extremely important.

And I also think that this national-led approach (inaudible) MCC (inaudible) about to expand to many other areas, particularly food security (inaudible) et cetera. So from local NGOs in particular (inaudible) to build their capacities (inaudible) very, very critically important.

And I was wondering what you see (inaudible) could do, maybe a partnership with other networks, to accelerate our ability to provide that kind of capacity-building and link it to the government, because, you know, for example, our programs are all led indigenously. They're all staffed completely indigenously. We're in many compact countries, but as far as I know, none of our country directors have ever been (inaudible)

So is there a way that we can work more effectively to ensure that everyone (inaudible) civil society (inaudible) for instance, really knows how to engage in these (inaudible) processes?

WORTHINGTON: Well, I'll make my -- my comment very brief, but last July in Paris, 84 what we call NGO national platforms gathered, each one of them, like InterAction, represents the NGO community of that country. And we are looking at particularly the strength of the southern NGO platforms. How can groups in the north, like InterAction, work with the NGO platform in Tanzania or other countries to help them articulate a common voice? And many of those platforms include the international NGOs in that dialogue.

But in many ways, the challenge here is the capacity of civil society to have an organized voice and not too many voices, but a clear voice of how (inaudible) to government. So that's perhaps the -- the way we can do it (inaudible) strengthening, to some extent, north, south, but really it ultimately comes down to the capacity of (inaudible) groups in a country to relate to their government.

And on the other side, I remember this (inaudible) development conference in Doha, it's a recognition that the billions of dollars that flow into civil society are (inaudible) resources. These resources would not be going through

government and that governments need to see the resources flowing into their NGOs as complementary and supporting their development process, not as threatening to that process.

And that's where this need for a dialogue between civil society and the NGO community is crucial in all the states. And I'm seeing this in many ways in -- particularly in countries where there's an MCC compact, because that process of a dialogue is encouraged.

And (inaudible) many observations (inaudible) anyone else on the panel (inaudible) just stand up, if you could.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. My name is (inaudible) Management Sciences for Health. And this question is actually for the ministers.

We (inaudible) 45 different countries. And over the years, the last three years (inaudible) 140 different governments -- governments. My question to you is regarding the coordination and alignment of your priorities and (inaudible) different donor priorities with the MCC. And how have you overcome those challenges? I know they are challenges in coordinating (inaudible) funding mechanisms (inaudible) indicators that you're supposed to be (inaudible) how have you aligned that with your own priorities for your country and (inaudible)

BRITO: This issue of cooperation (inaudible) also (inaudible) clear vision where you want to go. So this is an aspect (inaudible) aspect of the process.

The (inaudible) has to be made by the country. And this is important, because we (inaudible) of the (inaudible) coordination (inaudible) discuss (inaudible) is coordination. And this coordination is possible when the vision is clear (inaudible) and would like to use this opportunity to (inaudible) if our compact is (inaudible) of the program (inaudible) this compact (inaudible) project (inaudible) more than (inaudible) and we manage to (inaudible) contribution (inaudible) financing (inaudible)

This is a way to do coordination (inaudible) MCC to be (inaudible) with other donors (inaudible) to do this. And (inaudible) NGO (inaudible) part of this process where they can bring their capacity, financing or technical capacity, to (inaudible) to increase (inaudible) coordination (inaudible) leadership of the country (inaudible) one side (inaudible) NGO (inaudible) other side is the government. I think there is no separation (inaudible) separation.

And one aspect (inaudible) important is NGO (inaudible) country (inaudible) NGO (inaudible) possible to go to the (inaudible) because of the lack of democratic institution, because (inaudible) democratic institution (inaudible) one of the aspects (inaudible) different view of (inaudible) country (inaudible) a lot (inaudible) between the civil society (inaudible) institution.

So if (inaudible) framework, democratic framework, where all the stakeholders are able to express a view and give (inaudible) between (inaudible) and NGO (inaudible)

KANU: Thank you. I think if you remember what I said earlier (inaudible) to come to power (inaudible) manifesto (inaudible) promised so many things for our people. We promised that (inaudible) safe drinking water. We promised (inaudible) promised (inaudible) we promised will turn the economy around so that we can have (inaudible)

When we take this and compare with the criteria the MCC has for -- for countries (inaudible) compact programs (inaudible) a nexus between them and us (inaudible) create a task force within the government (inaudible) chairman. And I'm charged with apportioning all of this various criteria (inaudible) performance (inaudible) timeline in which to accomplish this.

So every time (inaudible) MCC thinks of us, what Freedom House thinks of us, what Freedom -- what the (inaudible) World Bank (inaudible) think of us, we compare this (inaudible) we are using the MCC's criteria (inaudible) as a measure of our own performance in government, as a measure of our (inaudible) manifesto (inaudible) by the end of our term, we would have increased infant mortality, like I said earlier, we -- we would reduce it from what it was, at 170 per 1,000 to 89, that, I think, is a positive towards (inaudible)

If (inaudible) maternal mortality from what it was, 1,300, almost as much as China when China was (inaudible) in those days, 1,500 per 100,000, now it's 857 in one year. For us, we can pat ourselves on the back. And if at the end of the day we do all this and the MCC sees that (inaudible) with their own criteria and we get (inaudible) we can only say that that (inaudible)

Even without the -- the -- the (inaudible) our government has charged itself with the task, the challenge of achieving all of this (inaudible) which coincides with what the MCC's looking for, which coincides with the MDGs for 2015. As a responsible government, that is our goal, and that's where we want to get to.

And because there (inaudible) it makes it even more (inaudible) trying to achieve (inaudible) that is the only (inaudible) priorities. And if we have (inaudible) when China changed from what they were, the communist, to what they call the social capitalization (inaudible) life expectancy then was 36.5 years. Today, it's 73.4 years. Their GDP per capita (inaudible) maternal mortality then was 1,500 (inaudible) we inherited. Now it's 34.2.

If we are able to (inaudible) we would have achieved as a government (inaudible) government (inaudible) Sierra Leone. And I think having a threshold support and a compact support from the MCC can only enhance that for us.

Thank you.

WORTHINGTON: We have time for one last question (inaudible)

(UNKNOWN): (OFF-MIKE)

QUESTION: (inaudible) development (inaudible) couple of things very, very briefly. The (inaudible) earlier is that a lot (inaudible) international NGOs (inaudible) and to address the -- the gentleman from Africare (inaudible) African approach and (inaudible) not only (inaudible) but also (inaudible) address reversing the African brain drain. So my question is, what (inaudible) United States (inaudible)

WORTHINGTON: (inaudible) question (inaudible) MCC (inaudible) directly address that, and perhaps you could ask someone from the MCC after the panel ends. And (inaudible) willing to do that. So apologies (inaudible) the panel.

If we could move the mike to the gentleman up here in the front.

QUESTION: Thank you. Very quickly, a moment of demystification. I think it's important that we not leave this moment -- leave this room without deliberately reflecting upon the fact that the enthusiasm, the optimism expressed especially by President Kikwete about the level of bipartisan support in the United States government for the Millennium Challenge Account budget is a myth.

And I think that our good friends -- I'm from Washington (inaudible) variety of different NGOs (inaudible) some 10 years, et cetera. But it's important to our brothers and sisters involved in civil society organizations based in New York that they understand that, that (inaudible) I wish we could start today on where (inaudible) last comments led us, which was that this relationship about MCC (inaudible) to leverage the resources of the capacity of NGOs over all (inaudible) in these communities and vice versa (inaudible) build the democratic institutions and getting NGOs to not look (inaudible) competition for the same budget resources, because that's the (inaudible) of the people that make these appropriations and budgeting decisions in Washington.

We have to find some way to understand that -- that the relatively small number of people at the staff level, in the Congress, that make these budget decisions that are supporting the kinds of good things that the MCC is finally starting to do. And for the most part, these people aren't being (inaudible) by us. And NGOs lobby bilaterally for their own budgets, get together under the umbrella of -- of InterAction and -- and lobby for the overall foreign assistance budget.

But to really, really focus in on -- on the very special nature of -- of what it is that MCC is doing, we (inaudible) education work to do with the staffers on Capitol Hill, for example, because, regardless of all the rhetoric that comes out of the administration, for the best -- best development idea that the George Bush administration ever had, making the best idea that they had, which was the MCC, this stuff hasn't translated into a genuine, bipartisan base of support in the Congress.

This is still largely viewed as a Bush thing, as a Republican thing. And we've got some (inaudible) in the administration (inaudible) Secretary Clinton and the president personally committed to MCC, but that still hasn't translated into Joe Blow appropriations and authorizing committee staffers and members whose constituents around

the country are still thinking about all of the press, all of the pressures and stresses of the economic times that we're in.

So there's a lobbying role for everyone in this room to really get at your best friends at the staff level and -- and -- and tell them what you've got vested in -- in the success of the MCC model.

WORTHINGTON: Thank you.

QUESTION: I'll stop. Thank you.

WORTHINGTON: Thank you for your comment. Appreciate it very much.

What we'll do is (inaudible) comment from the various panelists, and we'll wrap up our session.

BRITO: (inaudible) responsibility (inaudible) countries to do this (inaudible) in Washington for -- for MCC, because we know that (inaudible) programs in -- in Washington. And we need to -- to make known to Congress (inaudible) that MCC is doing.

And (inaudible) last question (inaudible) using (inaudible) congressmen that we have in the (inaudible) for example, to (inaudible) congressman (inaudible) funding to do what it's doing at this moment and mainly to (inaudible) on what MCC has done in the country (inaudible) there is a lot of (inaudible) and it will be a problem if there is no (inaudible) funding for -- for (inaudible) I think this may show that we are (inaudible) interested in doing (inaudible) jobs (inaudible) NGOs (inaudible) country (inaudible)

KANU: Thank you. Well, for us, the (inaudible) will be (inaudible) agenda for the MCC meeting (inaudible) we have worked very hard towards (inaudible) last year, I (inaudible) meeting (inaudible) MCC. And we (inaudible) of course depends on capacity. So we need to develop capacity. And we need the assistance (inaudible) to do that.

In terms of the (inaudible) we have been proactive (inaudible) in his office in Sierra Leone, and that has been funded by the (inaudible) UNDP. And I think (inaudible) especially (inaudible) people who are out here who are working very hard (inaudible) attract them, to give them salaries that are not exactly (inaudible) our pockets (inaudible) from pockets of the foundation, to attract them (inaudible) very interesting program in that.

So we are looking at all opportunities for us to try and build the capacities to help us move our agenda forward. And our agenda (inaudible) it is to reduce (inaudible) it is (inaudible) safe drinking water (inaudible) country. It is (inaudible) agriculture (inaudible) and bring them to market.

It is to bring electricity to our people. It is to increase (inaudible) reduce electricity and increase (inaudible) familiar (inaudible) Sierra Leone. It used to be called (inaudible) first university (inaudible) 1827 (inaudible) South Africa and all those (inaudible) places (inaudible) we (inaudible) but because of the difficulties we have had,

because of mismanagement of resources, because of the war (inaudible) it's (inaudible) difficult for us to get out of the (inaudible) have a president who is determined, who is committed, and who has a clear idea of where he wants to get the country to (inaudible) electricity, just to (inaudible) but to do that, you need money. You need investment.

And (inaudible) MCC (inaudible) it would be a most welcome gift to the people of Sierra Leone and the efforts of the president. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

COLES: Let me just say that I found this panel discussion to be very encouraging. And I am sure that my fellow NGO colleagues would say that we look forward to exploring the -- the Millennium Challenge Corporation (inaudible) civil society (inaudible) can become more programmatically involved with what you're doing.

I think what you're doing is very exciting. I saw the enthusiasm of the recipients and the potential recipients (inaudible) move ahead (inaudible) get things done. And I think we would say that we would like to be a part of that.

And it's not going to be easy, but I think it's -- especially (inaudible) MCC has programs and governments have programs in underserved areas, that civil society organizations can play a very meaningful role in bringing about change (inaudible) and I think that (inaudible) very welcome to participate (inaudible) discussion.

(inaudible) very interested (inaudible) diaspora and the role that diaspora can play in development. I see a lot of international organizations, like World Bank and the U.N., and even the U.S. government now (inaudible) diaspora offices. And I think that's an encouraging sign, because more people are beginning to recognize that people living (inaudible) diaspora have a role.

They're already playing a very important role in terms of (inaudible) now (inaudible) people more engaged, instead of just transferring money, to transferring skills is going to be a very important (inaudible) to be played.

And I'm happy to say that increasingly (inaudible) organization (inaudible) more and more of our employees are from Africa (inaudible) part of the African diaspora.

And so it's just very encouraging to see that more and more in American NGOs. I think that you will see that -- you see them in hospitals, and you see them in schools and education (inaudible) impact on the NGO community. And I think that's (inaudible) sign.

Thank you very much for the honor and pleasure of being here today. I enjoyed it very much. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

WORTHINGTON: (inaudible) very diverse series of keynote addresses and panel conversation. They've stressed the importance of country ownership. They've shown the power and the ability of what different nation-states have been able to do in partnership with the American people for their own people. Each of these is -- is founded on (inaudible) of a partnership. It shows that development does work, it can work.

Many are talking (inaudible) about the long term, and this gets to the whole issue of working for our own Congress. We do have an MCC working group with InterAction. We have no economic stake in the game, and yet we are probably one of the largest advocates for the MCC, in terms of resources, because we believe in the power of economic development that is led by a country.

We've also heard today about the relationship of NGOs and civil societies with communities and villages and ultimately how that voice -- a local voice of development needs to be heard and reflected in a country development process.

Today we've heard how development works. And our challenge going forward is to give that message to those that fund development, to let them understand that this is not a hopeless cause, that this is a cause, as you've heard the ministers say, with many positive results over time. And it's a cause that we will be with you in partnership for years to come.

I'd like to thank the panel, and if you could offer them a final round of applause.

(APPLAUSE)

END