



September 2, 2016

On behalf of the American brands and retailers represented by our associations, we write in support of the renewal of AGOA benefits for all countries that are currently eligible for benefits. We support the ongoing partnerships to enhance and expand development in the AGOA region and believe that the best way to achieve that goal is to maintain AGOA benefits.

We celebrate the ten year extension of AGOA and also recognize that this is a critical moment for the future of the trading relationship. American companies rely on the predictability of AGOA benefits to support trade and investment decisions. And the outlook is positive. New investment and new sourcing is coming to AGOA countries.

Media reports suggest that the AGOA Implementation Subcommittee of the Trade Policy Staff Committee expressed concerns about the continued eligibility of Lesotho, and also heard from an industry group suggesting that the EAC countries should lose benefits. We would like to respond to both issues.

Without doubt Lesotho is an essential part of AGOA to our member companies. Lesotho is the second largest supplier of AGOA apparel to the U.S. market, and the Lesotho industry has worked closely with American brands and retailers to meet the social responsibility and sustainability standards that are essential for success.

The issue of “used clothing” is a complicated one. We agree that a basic tenet of the AGOA program is market access and we do not support bans on imports. We support continued AGOA eligibility for the EAC countries. At the same time, we encourage the Administration to discuss this issue during the AGOA Forum and look for ways to move forward to keep trade open in both directions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and we would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss them, and the AGOA program, in more detail.

American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA)
National Retail Federation (NRF)
Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)
United States Fashion Industry Association (USFIA)