

**As Prepared for Delivery
October 31, 2008**

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**Minority Business Development Agency National Director, Ronald N.
Langston
Remarks before the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce, Inc.
(CACCI)
Brooklyn, New York**

Welcome

Good Morning. To the esteemed President and CEO of the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Roy A. Hastick, Sr., The Honorable Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke, Borough of Brooklyn President the Honorable Marty Markowitz, Deputy Borough President Ms. Yvonne Graham, my good friend Halim Majeem, distinguished Consulate representatives and guests, thank you very much for your presence today in what I hope will become an annual gathering of the those who have a love and bond with in the Caribbean and Africa.

I am here in an official capacity representing the U.S. Department of Commerce as the National Director of the Minority Business Development Agency, Washington, D.C. I am joined by the sage and highly respected Regional Director of MBDA's New York National Enterprise Center, Mr. Heywood Davenport and his fine team.

We are honored to be a host of this event and welcome the opportunity to build a sustainable relationship premised on developing greater synergies between the Caribbean, Africa and the United States.

The African-American Diaspora

Early in the first term of the Bush Administration I had the honor of traveling to Africa. My maiden voyage to the continent in February 2002 opened my eyes and swelled my heart about the unbroken linkages of the African Diaspora worldwide.

Afterwards, I began to think strategically about the role of the African Diaspora and the global economy. This later led to a desire to have a

programmatic focus within MBDA focused on the importance of Minority Business Enterprises in the Global Economy.

Although not a new subject or interest by the agency, it did represent a renewed sense of urgency to make the business case for MBE's to actively pursue meaningful and sustainable participation in economic globalization.

It is my firm belief today the African American Diaspora has a duty (versus a burden) *not* to abandon the plight of the world-wide African Diaspora. The African American has a special responsibility to actively engage U.S. Foreign Policy with regard to Africa and the Caribbean.

Whatever challenges or problems confront us in the United States they are miniscule in comparison to the challenges with confront the African Diaspora in the Caribbean and the continent of Africa. More broadly, I believe it is our collective responsibility to speak and advocate for people of color throughout the world.

Foreign Policy Successes in Africa

Our nation's foreign policy must have a proactive, constructive interest with the Caribbean and Africa. I firmly assert today history will be kind to President George W. Bush and the administration's commitment to Africa.

President Bush has committed more to eliminate malaria, rid the African continent of HIV/AIDS and to educate the children of Africa than any other American President.

The Bush Administration's legacy in Africa must continue and I ask you, as business and community leaders, to resist the temptation to discount the current efforts to eliminate malaria, to rid the continent of HIV/AIDS and to educate Africa's children.

The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act

I ask you to engage in the progress of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreements (DR-CAFTA), the Millennium Challenge Accounts (MCA) and to participate in "business to business" strategic partnerships between MBEs and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Africa and the Caribbean.

I want the African American Diaspora to have the same relationship with the Caribbean and especially with Africa that Asians have with Asia and Hispanics have with Latin and South America. I want to see the same historical links back to Africa among the African Diaspora that Jews have with Israel, the Irish with Ireland, and Germans, British, French and Dutch descendants have with Europe.

Minority Business Enterprises are the fastest growing population segment in the United States. Between now and the year 2042 any population or labor growth that occurs will be driven by minority populations and thusly impacted by immigration.

Free Trade and Minority Business Enterprises

Free Trade will continue to dominate the overall economy of the United States and our nation's competitive advantage globally. Therefore, it is of critical importance for MBEs and organizations such as the CACCI to prepare, be ready and to engage in the global economy through mastery of the U.S. domestic and international supply chains.

It is in this spirit, through the power of strategic alliances and the linkages of the African Diaspora - with people of different hues and nationalities worldwide - that I am honored to be among you today.

These are my final remarks as MBDA's National Director. It has been an honor to serve the President of the United States, George W. Bush and two Secretaries' of Commerce, Donald L. Evans and Carlos M. Gutierrez on behalf of the national Minority Business Enterprise community.

May God bless and keep you.

Thank you.

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