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ON-THE-RECORD BRIEFING

**Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson
Briefing to Preview the Secretary's Trip to Africa**

**August 4, 2009
En Route Nairobi, Kenya**

AMBASSADOR CARSON: Let me give you a little bit of a taste for what the Secretary hopes to accomplish here in Kenya on her first stop. She has about five key objectives in being in Kenya. One, she wants to demonstrate strong U.S. commitment to partner with African states to promote greater trade, investment, and economic opportunities in Africa and between the United States and Africa. She's going to do this largely through her active participation in the AGOA Forum, where she will be the keynote speaker on the first day of the Forum's activity.

Secondly, she wants to promote the Administration's emerging food security initiative. And she will do that by going to visit one of the premier agricultural research institutions in Africa. Its abbreviated name is KARI, K-A-R-I. It's the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute. There, she will have an opportunity to meet with a number of world-class African scientists who are working on helping to develop new seeds, varieties that are drought-resistant and disease-resistant, that can be used to help boost agricultural productivity. But it will also give her an opportunity to talk about the Administration's food security initiative.

Thirdly, the Secretary wants to talk with Kenyan leaders about the implementation of the Kofi Annan accords which ended the post-election violence in February of 2008. It is important for Kenya to move forward with the constitutional, judicial, police, and land reform requirements that were a part of the Kofi Annan agreement. Implementation of those agreements has been slow, and in some ways, frustrated. The Secretary wants to encourage the full implementation of those agreements, especially those elements of the agreement which deal with impunity and holding those individuals who were responsible for the violence accountable under law.

Fourth, the Secretary wants to take the opportunity of being in Kenya to meet with the leader of the Transitional Federal Government, President Sheikh Sharif. He will come across from Mogadishu while the Secretary is in Nairobi to speak with him to – he will give her an assessment of the situation on the ground in Kenya.

Let me just say a broad word about Kenya itself and put it in perspective for the United States. Kenya is and has been America's most important partner in East Africa and the greater Horn of Africa since its independence in 1963. Our relationship with Kenya has been broad and deep

and enormously useful for the United States. We have our largest diplomatic mission in Sub-Saharan Africa in Nairobi, and second-largest on the continent after Cairo.

Our political relationship has traditionally been very good and, unlike any other country in East Africa, it has been an unbroken and very good political relationship. With every other country in the region, we have at one time or another have had to close down or leave or we have been under pressure, whether it has been Uganda or whether it has been Ethiopia during the era of the Derg, whether it has been Tanzania, where we have very good relations today but had very, very difficult relations during the era of Vietnam.

In Kenya, we've always had a very good and positive relationship with this country. We've enjoyed very good military-to-military ties. Kenyans have had a professional military. They have been very active as peacekeepers, not only in Africa but also as far away as East Timor and also in the Middle East.

And it has been a place where we have been able to work effectively. Kenyans have allowed us as well, as a country, to carry out many of the emergency and post-conflict operations that we have responded to in this part of the world. The U.S. would not have been able to respond to the problems of Somalia in the early 1990s without the use of Mombasa and the airport to go into, the Jomo Kenyatta. We would not have been able to undertake the relief effort after the genocide in 1994 in Rwanda without the use of the airport that we would go into to ferry equipment and air supplies into Rwanda. We would not have been able to carry on a major relief operation into Southern Sudan without the support of the Kenyan Government. And of course, the Kenyan Government was instrumental as a host and as a lead in putting together the North-South Peace Agreement between the government of Khartoum and the government in Juba. In many of these instances, we have been very close partners with the Kenyans in many, and if not all, of these operations. The relationship is strong.

We also note that this country is the hub of all activities in this region. Kenya is a crossroads. It has the strongest economy in the region and, in fact, has the strongest non-oil, non-mineral based economy in Africa. It is the country with the strongest agricultural base, the country with the strongest financial and banking and insurance base, and the country that has the strongest industrial base in the area.

The United States wants to continue to be a strong friend and partner of Kenya, and that is why we remain concerned about the trajectory of the politics in Kenya over the last two years since the flawed elections in December of 2007.

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