

Networking Series, Dubbed " Doing Business in East Africa" was held at the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington D.C.

The Ethiopian Embassy along with the Embassies of Kenya and Tanzania and in collaboration with the US Commerce Department, have organized, " Doing Business in East Africa ", an after hour Networking Series.

The information exchange event was intended to give the opportunity to network with US trade officials and members of the African diplomatic community. It also envisages an opportunity to hear about the latest momentum around Africa-US trade.

Included in the program was the opportunity to hear important announcements about Trade Winds Africa, the largest ever US- government-led trade mission to Africa, it was learnt.



Ambassador Girma Birru, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extra-Ordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to the US, made a remark on the Networking event for the " US Business Development Conference and Trade Mission to Africa in September 2015.

Ambassador Girma noted that although there are some disparities among countries, the recent economic performance of the East African region has been

remarkable by international standards. The region is one of the fastest growing regions in the continent, with average GDP growth of 5% in 2013-2014, compared to the sluggish global economic performance of 2.4% during the same period and cited Ethiopia as the third growing success economy in the world.

The region has abundant agricultural and other natural resources and provides ample opportunities for U.S. businesses. With a total population of about 320 million, the region is also a big market for food and other consumer products, he underlined.

Recognizing this immense potential, and as a follow-up to the very successful U.S. - Africa Leaders Summit, convened by President Obama in August 2014, Ambassador Girma punctuated "we are very pleased that the U.S. Department of Commerce is organizing a "Business Development Conference and Trade Mission" to 8 African countries in September 2015".

The Trade Mission will offer you a unique opportunity to explore, first-hand, the vast business and investment opportunities that exist in Africa in the various areas, the Ambassador Extra-Ordinary and Plenipotentiary, added.

In reference to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which he said has served as the cornerstone of U.S.-Africa commercial relations, AGOA, he underscored has contributed to economic development in the 40 countries that benefit from this program through market access, job creation, and closer commercial ties with the United States.

Increasing number of American companies are recognizing the opportunities that exist in the continent partly through this preference program. Imports of American products (such as Boeing planes by Ethiopian Airlines) have contributed to job creation in the U.S. as well, he proclaimed.

However, he exclaimed AGOA is set to expire at the end of September, 2015. With a new Congress and many issues competing for legislative attention, it

appears that AGOA's reauthorization will not be as seamless as expected, Ambassador Girma expressed his opinion.

Given the necessary lead-time that U.S. buyers need for placing orders (such as in the textile industry), African governments and the private sector are quite concerned the delay in reauthorization of AGOA could result in unnecessary disruptions in commercial transactions between the two sides, the Special Envoy added.

It is paramount, therefore, that a call for action on AGOA needs to be taken by all concerned, particularly the U.S. business community, to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of this landmark trade relation between the U.S. and Africa he emphasized.

"I would like to take this opportunity to express our continued commitment to collaborate with the U.S. Government and the private sector to make the September Trade Mission to Africa a success, thereby contributing to the strengthening of our economic ties," the Ambassador concluded.

Earlier Mr. Antwaun Griffin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for US Operations made a welcoming remark. Ambassador Robinson Njeru Gthae of Kenya and Ambassador Liberata Mulamula of Tanzania, to the US have also made speeches pertaining to the occasion.



Present on the event were Ambassadors, Mr. Michael Lally, Executive Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Europe, the Middle East and Africa and Mr. John Saylor, Chairman of Virginia-Washington DC, District Export Council, Ambassador Robert Perry, Vice President, Corporate Council on Africa, Jude Kearney Chair Africa Practice, Greenberg Traurig, LLP, Marta Alonso, Verification of Conformity Manager & CCCS Supervisor, BIVAC North America, Bureau Veritas and other invited guests.

