



#89

May 27, 2010

***PRESS RELEASE***

**OP-ED: SENEGAL & CORRUPTION**

**Accountability leads to Prosperity**

*By:*

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One of the most significant dimensions of U.S.-Senegalese relations is our shared commitment to sustainable economic growth and development. The government of Senegal, through the implementation of its *Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée* and other development strategies, seeks to grow its economy, thereby stimulating jobs and trade and U.S. assistance is doing its part to foster Senegal's economic growth. The U.S. Agency for International Development promotes economic growth and private sector development by expanding business development services, access to markets, and improved natural forest management. Many Peace Corps Volunteers help develop small businesses. The \$540 million grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) will improve agricultural productivity and expand access to markets through investments in roads and irrigation in Senegal's poorest regions and a number of other U.S. agencies also promote economic growth and protect Senegal's resources. In other words, America is investing heavily in Senegal's prosperity. An economically prosperous and stable Senegal is an anchor of stability in West Africa, a role model for the entire continent, and a strong partner for global trade and commerce, benefitting the interests of all.

Yet, corruption, or even the perception of corruption, and inefficiently executed policies can easily undermine development efforts, diverting funds away from health, education, and other vital community services, hurting those who need it the most. They burden businesses with extra costs, minimizing their profits and their ability, in turn, to create jobs. The very perception of corruption discourages investment and business development, crippling economic growth, and eroding confidence in public institutions. In short, accountable governments are critical to a country's prosperity.

The effectiveness of development assistance depends in part on how effectively it resists corruption and how well the governments receiving it promote a positive policy environment. That is why the U.S. Government takes even the perception of corruption very seriously and seeks to work with partners who are committed to fighting corruption, promoting a positive policy environment and operating with transparency. The U.S. also welcomes the active involvement of civil society groups, who act as vigilant watchdogs to keep our governments accountable. U.S. assistance has built-in safeguards to protect against corruption and requirements that our partners fight corruption and maintain a positive policy environment.

The MCC is a U.S. Government assistance program that operates with stringent anti-corruption mechanisms to ensure that its development dollars reach the people it intends to help. MCC has systems in place to detect and prevent fraud and corruption; conducts regular program audits; relies on independent procurement agents for open, fair, and competitive bidding, and establishes resident country missions to monitor compact implementation closely.

To qualify for and, more importantly, maintain MCC funds, countries must demonstrate positive policy performance and fight corruption. Many are improving budget transparency, adopting tough anti-corruption laws, strengthening oversight institutions, engaging the public in the policy-making process, and prosecuting corruption-related acts. This improves the delivery of essential public services, engages the private sector, and renews the public's trust in government.

Our Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Ambassador William Burns, and the MCC's Vice President for Compact Implementation, Patrick Fine, recently engaged Senegalese government officials on our mutual development goals and the importance of fighting corruption. In meetings with the highest levels of the Senegalese government, they expressed their ongoing commitment to fight corruption and improve policy performance. They expressed true appreciation for U.S. development assistance and recognized the anti-corruption and good governance goals we attach to such assistance. We look forward to Senegal's continued execution on its commitments so that our assistance can become increasingly effective.

The U.S. will remain vigilant to fight corruption and promote a policy environment conducive to investment. Ultimately, this will create strong and enduring economic growth, eventually eliminating the need for development assistance altogether. The American people insist that their development dollars need to meaningfully improve the lives of the people of Senegal. Americans, rightfully, expect maximum results from each tax dollar invested abroad, and the people of Senegal deserve nothing less. Keeping American assistance accountable is one way to achieve the promise of sustainable economic growth and development that corruption and poor policy performance undermines. I am confident that the Senegalese government will be our strong partner in this effort to improve the lives of all Senegalese people.

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