

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 20, 2021

The Honorable Katherine Tai
U.S. Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Tai:

As you work to prioritize free trade negotiations for this Administration and plan ministerial meetings on trade with Africa, we strongly urge you to prioritize the resumption of a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) with the Republic of Kenya. A U.S.-Kenya FTA is the appropriate next step in recognizing and strengthening relations, economic opportunities, and a security partnership between the United States and Kenya.

In February 2020, the United States and Kenya entered into FTA negotiations, marking a significant and productive step in securing the first FTA between the U.S. and a sub-Saharan nation. This Administration has a historic opportunity to build on that effort in a meaningful way and we urge your strong consideration.

First, a FTA with Kenya would build on the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2000, which expires in 2025. With over 35 eligible nations, this preference program has dramatically expanded economic opportunity across the continent while African nations develop stronger national institutions and market-based economies. A U.S.-Kenya FTA would continue the accomplishments of AGOA and offer greater predictability and security to both the U.S. and Kenya.

This FTA would also augment regional integration efforts by African nations under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which became operational in 2021. The Secretary-General of AfCFTA, Wamkele Mene, is supportive of African nations pursuing bilateral FTAs with nations outside of Africa. A U.S.-Kenya FTA would build on inter-African trade relationships and serve as a model for other FTAs with African nations.

Second, the economic situation in Kenya has strong potential and would be bolstered by a FTA. Kenya has an average GDP growth rate of 5.8 percent and the United States remains Kenya's fourth largest trading partner and second largest export market. Furthermore, 40 percent of Kenya's population of over 50 million are under the age of 14, presenting a great deal of workforce opportunities. A FTA would also help reduce the continent's reliance on U.S. foreign assistance and grow reciprocal economic relations and job security. The American and Kenyan business community is eager to see a U.S.-Kenya FTA completed and make bilateral investments in the infrastructure, healthcare, manufacturing and finance industries.

Finally, a FTA would help U.S. security interests in the region. As the U.S. increasingly partners with Kenya to combat al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups, it is more important than ever to recognize Kenya as an important ally in the Horn of Africa. A U.S.-Kenya FTA would strengthen trade and commercial ties at a time when China and Russia are seeking economic influence across the African continent. The U.S. would ultimately be able to further promote human rights, the rule of law, economic development and positive relations with Kenya and Africa through a FTA.

A U.S.-Kenya FTA presents substantial long-term benefits for the United States, Kenya and the Horn of Africa. Kenya is ready and willing to undertake technical negotiations. We strongly urge you to prioritize a comprehensive FTA with Kenya and we look forward to working with you to secure this agreement.

Sincerely,



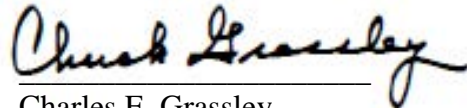
James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



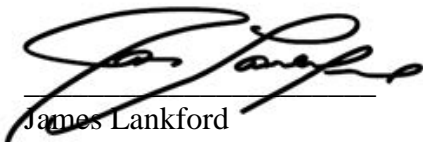
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