

CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES HOLDS A FORUM ON  
GHANA'S RECENT COMPACT-SIGNING WITH THE MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE  
CORPORATION

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SPEAKERS:

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HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. I'm delighted you're all here. My name is John Hamre. I'm the president here at CSIS. And this is a great event, and I'm glad there's something good happening in Washington today. And this is something very, very good happening in Washington.

You know, I just had one of those very typical Washington experiences. There's no town like this. You know, for all of you when you came, there were six elevators, any one of which could bring you down here, you know? And if you're really important, you set aside one elevator and you have to wait for it, you know, for that to come. If you're the president of a country, you have to come down through the trash elevator, you know?

(LAUGHTER)

This is because security requires that we protect the president, O.K.? So only in Washington do you treat your most famous, prominent people that way.

So, President, I want to apologize. We didn't...

(LAUGHTER)

Well, it was just terrific. And this is great. I really am happy that you are all here, and I'm very, very happy that we have this opportunity to partner with Ambassador Danilovich on this great day.

I want to just say a word why. I really thought it was a remarkable thing that President Bush chose a new approach for the way America would assist partner countries around the world -- very innovative -- and adopted, you know,

a really dynamic and innovative concept behind it, and doubled America's foreign assistance. And this is a very important thing.

You know, to be honest, it's taken us a little while to get our running rhythm. And the Millennium Challenge Corporation has, you know -- we're getting going here, a little bit like in training and the first laps around the track haven't been that impressive. I will tell you, it is just astounding now what's happening.

And, John, I think you deserve great credit for that. I think it's the -- yes, absolutely.

(APPLAUSE)

Because Ambassador Danilovich combines, I think, the best of the sentiments in this country when things work well, and that is the dynamism and the sense of innovation that you get in the private sector, and yet a spirit of public service and wanting to build big things that have enduring value. And it's really terrific what you've done.

So, John, I'm going to turn the podium over to you briefly to open this up, and then I will come right back very shortly to introduce the president.

So please, John, I introduce you.

DANILOVICH: Thank you very much, John. Very nice opening remarks.

Your excellency, President Kufuor, distinguished guests, I'm honored to join the center this morning to examine some of the important issues surrounding the compact between Ghana and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Your leadership, President Kufuor, your outstanding leadership, was instrumental in bringing us to this important milestone in the relationship between our two countries, and I'm very grateful for that.

Ambassadors Poku and Bridgewater, thank you for your invaluable support in developing this agreement and for your ongoing commitment to the compact as we proceed through implementation.

Permit me also to recognize the dedication of the Ghanaian transaction team, led by Minister Nduom, and members of the MCC team who have worked so hard to develop an ambitious program that will benefit over one million Ghanaians.

Helping the world's poor to escape the grip of poverty is one of the greatest challenges of the 20th century. As we become bolder in our fight against global poverty, economic growth must be at the very heart of a sustainable development strategy.

The MCC was established in 2004 as a new way to meet this challenge, by encouraging nations to establish policies that reduce poverty and promote economic growth. With yesterday's signing of the \$547 million MCC-Ghana compact, the MCC has now concluded nine large-scale development projects, worth more than \$2 billion.

MCC's innovative approach to foreign assistance is expressed in our three core operating principals. First, the Millennium Challenge Corporation is performance-based. We believe that policies matter. We annually assemble profiles of the world's poorest countries based on 16 indicators from

independent, non-U.S. government sources to measure how these governments perform in political, and economic, and social categories. We call these political, economic and social categories ruling justly, investing in people, and economic freedom.

Our second core principal is country ownership. Taking an approach much like an investor rather than a donor, MCC puts the onus on the countries to come up with its own development strategy. It is the country, not the MCC, which must identify its barriers to poverty reduction and economic growth.

Our third MCC core principal is that we are results-oriented. From the outset, we insist that each country outline what they believe our joint efforts will achieve. We integrate monitoring and evaluation plans into our programs because we believe that it's not too much to ask that aid invested by the U.S. taxpayer should yield results.

The MCC is not for everyone. Governments that are corrupt, that tolerate poor governance and stifle economic freedom will not receive our assistance. Countries in our program that fail to maintain passing scores on the indicators and that do not demonstrate the political will and commitment to take the necessary steps, should indicator performance fall below the standard will risk being suspended.

Implementing this approach is challenging, and it does take time, but it's absolutely essential for our MCC recipient countries to be the drivers of their own success. What we have seen is that their willingness to take on the job usually transforms into their capability to do it.

The Millennium Challenge Compact with Ghana is a great example of how a bold but practical vision will create an opportunity to transform lives. Through this program, Ghanaians are building capacity within their own country to access and participate more fully in the global market. This investment in Ghana is designed to lift more 230,000 poor Ghanaians out of extreme poverty and will benefit over one million people in total.

As many of you know, agriculture is the backbone of Ghana's economy, making up 40 percent of the country's GDP, and employing almost 70 percent of the workforce. The people of Ghana have developed a program that seeks to improve the lives of the rural poor by raising farmer incomes through private sector-led agribusiness development. And because women make up 70 percent of the agriculture workers, the compact will particularly enhance their quality of life.

The five-year, \$547 million compact is the largest single grant we have signed to date. The agreement funds three integrated projects: agricultural development, transportation, and rural development.

And within these three integrated projects, initiatives such as the following are included: seasonal and term credit to farmers; investment in irrigation; investments in food storage and processing and services to facilitate land transactions; investments in road construction projects that complement the agricultural program by reducing transportation costs for farmers and assisting the transport of crops to market; and, lastly, investment in schools, investment in water and sanitation, and the provision of electricity to homes and businesses in rural areas.

The ultimate success of the Ghana compact and, for that matter, for the MCC as a whole will not be measured by the number of dollars which we spend but by the changes we can leverage with our dollars to stimulate sustainable trade and investment that we hope will follow our programs. If our goal is to help countries, including Ghana, to graduate from poverty, and this graduation cannot be accomplished through perpetual foreign aid, then MCC and other assistant providers must provide an exit strategy.

We at MCC will know when we have been successful and when we are no longer necessary, because our aid investments have been replaced by private flows, both foreign and domestic. While real growth, development and poverty reduction must be homegrown, outside support can be effective when it's targeted to those countries most committed to improving themselves.

Foreign assistance, such as the MCC grant to Ghana, are a catalyst for countries to get their own houses in order so that foreign investment and private sector-led economic activity takes hold and drives wealth creation, particularly to the poorest segments of society. We are confident that the MCC can assist those countries with the political will and good governance to reduce poverty and achieve sustainability economic growth.

We are confident that the MCC-Ghana compact will be a success, and we are proud to be engaged with President Kufuor and the people of Ghana in this great endeavor.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, my task now is to introduce somebody who you know, which is always a hard thing, you know? You know, what is the purpose of introducing a famous man to people who already know him?

So, President, I'm going to actually, for the very few people here who may not know you, I'm going to speak to them. So it's a very small group, but for those who don't know, I'd like to say -- I could go through mechanically his background, but what's really important is that this is a man who looked to the future, a democratic future of Ghana, and he looked at that future through the bars of a prison.

On two occasions, he was forcibly detained, having been in public life when Ghana went through military coups. And he still had the character and the conviction to see a future in a positive way, not in a vindictive way, not in a wounded way. He wasn't a broken or injured man from this experience; he was a man that retained his hope and belief that Ghana had a bright future. That takes special character, and we need that. And Ghana needs it. Frankly, every country in the world needs that sort of character in its leaders.

Anything else I say now would be a diminishment of his accomplishments, so I introduce to you the president of the Republic of Ghana, John Kufuor.

(APPLAUSE)

KUFUOR: The president of the CSIS, Mr. John Hamre, Ambassador Danilovich of Millennium Challenge Corporation, and other ministers, corporate leaders, and distinguished members of the center, ladies and gentlemen, I'm highly honored to

be here today to take part in this panel discussion. I believe this is what it is.

Your organization is filled (ph), for its membership of great minds and think tanks, who together accept as your mission to provide strategic insight and practical policy solutions to decisionmakers' consent (ph) with global security and the changing dynamics of international relations worldwide. Little wonder therefore that over the years your organization has grown to become one of your nation's preeminent public institutions on U.S. and international security.

The compact we signed yesterday has further enhanced the already cordial relations between Ghana and the United States. The Millennium Challenge Account is a new form of development assistance, the pragmatism and transparency of which I believe will capture the imagination of both the developing and the developed worlds. This bold initiative has the potential to transform the lives of men, women and children in developing nations across the globe into a brighter and more prosperous future.

The compact represents the most significant, creative and dynamic initiative in development financing and economic partnerships in current times. It also makes an unprecedented effort to actualize the link between development assistance and the presence of credible and transparent environment for policy implementation. Clearly, this kind of development financing allows countries to earn and drive their economic progress. It indeed holds great promise for a near paradigm of global economic assistance and partnership, as it virtually re-writes the rules of development financing.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, Ghana has been selected thrice in succession as an eligible country for the Millennium Challenge Account. I personally feel very proud of this achievement, as it bears eloquent testimony to the good governance practiced by my administration. We in Ghana are ready and willing to see this unique opportunity, to build lasting human and institutional capacities within our country, to sustain growth and development for great numbers of our population to enable them build a future of hope for themselves and their children.

Ghana's compact proposal has actually been characterized as ambitious and complex. It is by its very nature a product of the nation's basic development policy, titled the "Ghana Poverty-Reduction Strategy," in short, GPRS, which the government developed about three years ago. And this will then, through a broad consultative process among the community at large and institutions, the GPRS has identified as one of the key strategies for poverty reduction increased production and employment in the agricultural sector.

Specifically, the strategy entails, among others, modernizing agricultural practices so as to increase the production of crops for both the domestic and export markets. Agroprocessing, as well as value addition and reform of the land tenure system, are also integral to this policy. Provision of transportation and social services, like education, health care delivery, potable water, electricity, and banking services in the rural areas are deemed critical infrastructure for the success of the strategy.

It is this strategy that the government of Ghana and the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation have refined into the compact that was signed yesterday. It is envisaged that the compact will contribute to the accelerated growth of our economy and consequently reduce the national incidence of poverty by 5

percent annually over a 10-year period. Indeed, we envision that a successful program has the potential to create directly 700,000 jobs and indirectly 1.3 million more jobs over the next five years.

I wish to conclude by recognizing the importance of the rule which the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the machinery set up by the U.S. government to implement its new and bold policy of dispensing development assistance, played in making yesterday's compact signing ceremony a reality. Under the efficient and effective leadership of its chief executive officer, Ambassador John Danilovich, the MCC and its Ghanaian counterparts worked in partnership to overcome tremendous challenges to complete the compact proposals.

Mr. President, I wish to appeal to your center to help make the partnership a sustainable one, through important regular reviews at different stages of the implementation of the compact, to facilitate the agricultural transformation we seek in Ghana.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, with these opening remarks, let me once again thank you for the opportunity given me to speak on this occasion and hope that the ensuing panel discussion will be fruitful and instructive. Thank you for your attention.

(APPLAUSE)

HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to indeed have a panel discussion on the details of this very important signing, but the president has agreed that he is willing to take a few questions before we turn over to the panel. So I am only simply going to choreograph your interest in asking questions.

Please indicate, and then I will pick you out. So if there are any questions that people would like to pose to the president, I'd welcome that.

Yes, please? Please identify yourself.

QUESTION: My name is Mark Hangman (ph). I'm with U.S. fund for Unicef.

Mr. President, thank you for being here. You mentioned that one of the keys for your agriculture program is export. I'm just wondering if, you know, the international trading system is conducive to your exporting your agricultural products and, if not, what needs to change to make it better?

KUFUOR: Ghana has been described over the past almost hundred years as a one-crop economy, and this crop is cocoa, the bean with which chocolate is made. When you come to Ghana, the people hardly eat cocoa, meaning we have benefited from the export market with our agricultural crop.

What we want to do though is to diversify our agricultural produce, tie it in the external market, to increase our hard currency earnings, because we depend very much on hard currency to develop our economy and relate with the rest of the world. We know of the problems in the international markets, subsidies, which the WTO is not proving able so far to get the advanced part of the world to remove, so that perhaps the market would be more easily accessed by the poorer countries of the world. But this is not vitiating the necessity for us to try to access the markets.

And so when we get an opportunity like we have through the compact, we move on with it hoping that the world by and by will realize the necessity to make the markets fairer and more just, more competitive, generally competitive for all of us, especially into globalization, to find a niche of ourselves. So this is what I have to say.

QUESTION: Ofi Buotsay (ph), the Africa-America Institute. First, Mr. President, we congratulate you and your government for making Ghana eligible and surpassing that to actually sign the compact. Thank you very much for passing all those criteria.

My question is this: You described the need and the program as very complex and ambitious, generating 700,000-plus jobs directly and 1.3 million jobs indirectly. Is \$547 million enough for that? And if not, what are you doing or the government doing to leverage that resource? And while Ambassador Danilovich is sitting next to you, can Ghana be considered for more?

(LAUGHTER)

KUFUOR: Thank you. And I like your great feelings for Ghana.

(LAUGHTER)

This we see as only the beginning. We had the ambassador explain how his corporation decided to give the lion's share of the amount the corporation has now, \$2.1 billion, of which Ghana alone out of nine countries has been given \$547 million. By any standard, I believe this is a very impressive consideration by the corporation and the United States government.

We shouldn't forget the history of assistance from the developed world to the developing world. In the 1970s or so, the United Nations decided that the developed world should contribute 0.7 percent of their GDPs to assist the struggling developing world. It's about 30 years now, and not much has been done to us, fulfilling this proposal from the United Nations.

The Bush government, and this was done beside it, to increase assistance, but on conditions, conditions that would sort of justify taking out monies from the United States government's chests, to give to outside nations no matter how poor, to the Congress and people of the United States. It's not a charity I believe Mr. Bush is trying to practice; it's rather his means of assisting other countries to assist themselves, to develop themselves. And this is the first that distribution of this new arraignment of funds that the corporation has called upon to dispense.

And even this first-step disbursement Ghana alone, out of nine, is taking a quarter of what is available to the corporation. I would say just let's say thank you, and then...

(APPLAUSE)

... and administer what comes to us so well that, in the analogy of the parable of talents in the Bible, where some master left monies with some servants, who traveled and left them, came back to ask what they had done with the talents. One said, "I know you, how hard you are, so I locked this money away. You gave me one talent; I give you back your talent."

Others came, then finally the one who got the most came and said, "Yes, master, you left me this. This is how I've used it, made profit and all that." Master turned around and say, "You are a good person. Keep what you've made and continue to work with it." This is, I believe, the mentality with which we should use this compact that has come away.

(APPLAUSE)

QUESTION: His excellency, President John Kufuor, Ambassador John and Mr. John Hamre, of CSIS, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Rosemary Segero. I'm from Kenya. And I've been attending most of the conferences of the African presidents and ambassadors here in Washington, D.C. My organization is -- I work myself for humanitarian and also looking into children to get education with disability and orphans.

I want to thank you, Mr. President Kufuor. You are a wonderful person. And if all African presidents were like you, Africa would never talk of poverty. And keep up, and we will come to Ghana, as well, and we encourage investors to start with Ghana so that, when other African countries see like that, they'll work hard.

And, Mr. Ambassador John, I just thank you for looking and considering women, especially in Africa. If the other presidents don't work hard as President Kufuor, go ahead with women. Empower women. Give money to women.

(APPLAUSE)

So thank you so much, and I thank the president for putting in this Millennium Challenge. So we are here as women, and give us money. Let's help other women. Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

Mr. President, my name is John Barnett (ph). I'm president of Barnett Holding Company (ph). Even though I am an American citizen, I'm Ghanaian and proud to be Ghanaian.

I have led several investor delegations to Ghana. I have invested both privately and have represented Ghana to the corporate community in the U.S. Of everything I've heard so far today about the grant, the biggest thing that pleases me is that there is an exit criteria and an exit strategy, because, as an active investor in Ghana over several sectors, the major thing that we see is that it can be somewhat complicated at times to invest in Ghana.

Even though the opportunities are there, we believe in your golden age of business. That is what led us there. And we strongly feel that the only way Ghana is going to turn around is through private-sector investment and that we hope that this is an opportunity for Ghana to leverage these funds to allow for private-sector investment to come in.

I have seen pineapples in Aburry (ph), tomatoes in the Bringahafur (ph), just an abundance of crops all over the country that suffer tremendous post-harvest loss. We've invested in food processing plants in Tema just to stem this post-harvest lost.

So what I would like to hear are, just what is the exit strategy? What criteria has been set up to allow Ghana to leverage on this opportunity?

By the way, I'll be leading another investment delegation in September. Thank you.

KUFUOR: Thank you very much. When you've had time to look at the compact, you'd see that even though it has been signed between government and Millennium Challenge Corporation, the proceeds or the resources are entirely to be used by the private sector, private sector finance. The government is not going to set up state farms.

Government, as part of the compact, has set up an independent authority of, I believe, competent people to manage the implementation of the compact. All government is going to do is to monitor to ensure minimal abuses. We're going to insist on transparency in the administration for the private sector and also effective that investment processes will want to use time economically. So this is the limit to government's involvement with the implementation.

But within the compact, you'll see that, again to facilitate the work of the private sector in achieving the objectives of the compact, you'll see that infrastructure, like network of feeder roads in the farming areas, trunk roads to link the feeder roads to markets, and even to the ports in Accra, is to be developed. Again, social services like schools, health centers, potable water, irrigation, I believe that Ambassador Danilovich in his opening referred to all these things, they are being put there to support the investment that will be done under the compact.

So the efficiency you talk about to cut out waste will be achieved and to get the produce to go to the market internationally, to generate the resources which will then be revolved, because there will be a payback. For instance, within the infrastructure, there will be banking services in the rural area to sort of introduce the culture of saving and banking among the farming communities. So all these things are finely packaged.

But even outside the compact, government is working hard to rationalize the period or the time businessmen like you will take to establish his business in Ghana. Now we lose about 80 days. We are working to reduce these days. If we can get them down to, say, 30 days for you to -- from start to the launch of your business, can do that, this is what Ghana is working towards, to make us more attractive as an investment destination.

And, of course, the legal system, too, has also -- now we have very modern, digitized commercial courts in Accra. And we seek to replicate this throughout the economy. So this is what we are doing to improve the exit point, as you say.

Thank you.

HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, the press of time, we do have a panel discussion. I think the president has agreed he's going to stay for part of it, and we're delighted to have that. I'd say, panelists, rarely do you have a chance to have a president as a co-panelist, so you ought to take advantage of this.

Why don't you all come up to the stage? And let me just make a few comments here.

I was very moved, President, by your analogy to the parable of the servants. And forgive me, I'm not trying to correct you, but this is not a master-servant relationship. This is a partner relationship.

KUFUOR: It's just an analogy.

(LAUGHTER)

HAMRE: It's just an analogy, but I...

KUFUOR: It's an analogy, and I didn't say master and servant of the parable of the talents. And we'll remove the word "talent," and we use analogy, then you would reject, yes, the other thing...

(LAUGHTER)

HAMRE: This is not a master-servant thing, and it is a partnership. And everybody here is a part of that partnership. We all crave to see success in Africa. This is one of the best things we can do, to make this a success, because it becomes a bright light for all of Africa.

Thank you, Mr. President. This has been really refreshing.

Thank you, John.

Let's ask our panel to come up.

(APPLAUSE)

COOKE: Good morning. My name is Jennifer Cooke. I'm co-director of the Africa Program here at CSIS, and I just want to echo Dr. Hamre's remarks. What an honor and a delight it is to host this event today. It's not hardcore negotiations. It's not conflict. This is something that really we all want to celebrate.

And, Mr. President, what a delight and honor it is to meet you.

There's no doubt that Ghana is on a roll, and I don't just mean their football team, although they've been doing quite well, as well.

(LAUGHTER)

We're looking forward to 2010, not only to see the progress on the MCC. So we have here today -- and the president, I think you'll still remain available for answering questions.

But we have a terrific panel, with Minister Nduom, Kwesi Nduom, who is the minister for public sector reform; with Jonathan Bloom, who is the team leader within the MCC, who led a very focused and hardworking team to help pull this together from the U.S. side; and with Mark Lippert, who is the foreign policy advisory to Barack Obama, Senator Barack Obama, who is about to embark on a trip to Africa and who spent much of his career in the Senate Appropriations Committee, and I think he'll give some reflections on the U.S. congressional perspective.

Let me just say, I said to a colleague who had traveled to Ghana recently, talking about this event, and he said, "Well, Ghana has always been stable."

And I said, "Well, no, actually, it hasn't." And I think we tend to forget -- and tourism as growing to Ghana -- people tend to forget that it did go through some very difficult years. And it's really a testament to the efforts and leadership of President Kufuor, to the hard work of Ghanaians, to his vision that John Hamre referred to, and to management, and to the very strong team that he put together to help lead this change in Ghana.

Dr. Kwesi, we'll begin with you. And Dr. Kwesi has had a long career in the private sector but also has been a key leader in helping shape the compact, in leading the Ghanaian negotiations and has had several key posts within the administration since 2001, including minister of energy, minister of economic development.

So we'll first this as more focused on the specifics, on the process of how this compact came into being, and then we'll open up to questions.

We'll begin with you, Mr. Nduom. Welcome.

NDUOM: Thank you very much. What I will limit my contribution to is to relate our country's strategy to the compact that was signed yesterday. And to begin, by just briefly stating that, as we know, it was in 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico, that President Bush in announcing the Millennium Challenge Account recognized poverty as the key problem in the modern world.

And as a result, the goal of the Millennium Challenge Account is to reduce poverty through growth. And if we're going to do this, then the growth must also come from private-sector development. And it was also in 2002 that the first Ghana poverty-reduction strategy was finalized. So you will see the consistency and the linkages.

And so what I'm trying to do and will try and do in a few minutes is to say how the Millennium Challenge Ghana program is linked directly with our national priorities in a very, very consistent manner.

And I'll just take you back just very briefly that the problem that we've been trying to solve, at least with the administration of President Kufuor since 2001, is the problem of what some of us consider a people made poor, but not a people that are naturally poor, because naturally we have significant resources, human and other natural resources. But if you take it from 1957, the per capita income in Ghana was \$400. This did not rise, but rather through our difficulties, particularly with governance, this in 2000 had gone down to about \$396.

And so, in 2001, the issue that the Kufuor administration has had to wrestle with is: How do we reverse that trend so that we can go on an upward trend to reach a high level of prosperity for individual Ghanaians?

And so we get to 2006, where the per capita income is hovering around \$600. And so we've reversed a trend and are moving in the right direction. And the country has set a target of reaching at least \$1,000 per capita income. And so what we're trying to resolve with our national strategy is to deal with the problem of poverty, but then to do it in such a way as to increase the individual prosperity levels of Ghanaians and to let it exceed the per capita income of \$1,000. That is what we've been trying to do.

But in also going through this, in all the analysis over the years, we also found that agriculture, agriculture that employs most Ghanaians and

agriculture that employs about 70 percent of the workers in agriculture are also women, agriculture tends and has tended to have the lowest average per capita income. And so if we're going to resolve the problem of poverty, then we're also going to need to take a look at agriculture, to modernize it.

But then agriculture also happens in the rural areas. So if you're going to see increase in the per capita income of people who are dealing in the agriculture industry, then we also needed to modernize the rural economy and the life in the rural areas. And that's part of the strategy that has been there.

Now, the challenges to poverty reduction that we've experienced over the years have been the uneven decline in poverty geographically and actually developing solutions that will benefit the majority of the people, but then in also including human resource as a requirement for growth and to set clear targets for growth and poverty reduction. I recall some of the discussions that we had internally about whether to put a number there as a target that we would work towards. And as I'm sure that many of us know, until you have a clear target, then you really don't know what you're working towards. And so, by having that minimal amount of \$1,000, at least \$1,000 per capita income, it gives us something, not just to reach, but also to surpass.

But one of the other issues was overcoming the problems of implementation. And you find that, in many of the development programs that we've had, over the years, we have had to discuss over and over again, how do we successfully implement what we've put on paper and we agree with our partners? And finally, the issue of coordination of development assistance.

And so all of this came together, in all of the national surveys, all the national discussions, consultations that went on around the country, to come up with priorities for our first poverty-reduction strategy. And those priorities, that included infrastructure, to have roads, energy, water, ICT and others, to modernize agriculture for rural development, enhance social services, have better governance and private-sector development. This is what we had worked on, if you will, in the first term of President Kufuor's administration, from 2001 until the beginning of 2005.

I would say that, if you were to go to Ghana, that you will see evidence of how this initial strategy had been implemented. You will see vigorous infrastructure development that is going on, in roads and other areas.

But the important point is that we have seen actual decline in poverty levels within the country that is measurable, and that has encouraged us in preparation of the second poverty-reduction, which is now termed the "Ghana Growth and Poverty-Reduction Strategy." And that is the one that actually talks about human resource development as a priority, that talks about governance and civic responsibility as a priority, and private-sector development as the three key priorities.

Now, I want you to also understand that these three link directly, almost one for one in a significant way, to the criteria used by the MCC in evaluating the different countries. Let me just show you how they link. Human resource development, Ghana; investing in people, MCC. Private sector-led growth, Ghana; encouraging economic freedom, MCC. Good governance and civic responsibility, Ghana; ruling justly, MCC. So it just happened that these two link, and they link very directly, what we are trying to do in Ghana that we set for ourselves, what the MCC is also looking to do in its development assistance.

The critical difficult that we have had, once we've gone through preparing these strategies, had been to find the quantum of funds that we require to finance the development activities. And at the end of the poverty-reduction strategy, the first one, the estimates were anywhere from \$5 to \$8 billion for what was required for us to move to the next level of development.

And so the important need had been, where do we find money in significant quantities, money that is not tied to anything else, and one that we would use directly in the areas of priority? And that is finally -- my final point is how, again, we link to the program and the compact that was signed yesterday. The compact supports modernization of agriculture for development, which is what we've been trying to do, which is what -- the critical area that we focused on agreed on through consultation.

The funding is significant. The \$547 million is significant, but it is also timely, and it is one that is not tied to anything else. It doesn't require for us to go look in any strange ways for other monies for the program. And so it is significant, and it also offers the opportunity for integrated social and economic development in the rural areas. And then, finally, it supports governance, governance at the district level.

So the point and the simple point that I've been trying to make, rather briefly, is that the compact signed yesterday is very, very consistent and links very directly with the strategy for development that Ghana itself had put down and had agreed on as what we should work on in the coming years.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

COOKE: Thank you, Minister. I think that does answer one of the early concerns of the MCC, that a whole lot of money might just create or give incentive to kind of create massive programs that aren't really connected fundamentally to kind of what the internal demands are. And so that point, I think, is extremely important.

Jonathan, do you want to talk a little bit about...

BLOOM: Please. I think Dr. Nduom has done an excellent job of putting it in context. I'd like to dive in a little bit more into the nuts and bolts of the program.

Because we think this compact is not only, as has been stated, MCC's largest to date; we think it's one of our most coherent and integrated programs, in which the components complement and support each other. This compact also reflects much of what we at MCC have learned in the bit over two years we've been around.

So I'd like to talk about a few of the details of this program and a few of the key themes that underlie it.

First, the details, just to put some flesh on the bones of what we've been talking about. This program aims to raise the income of poor farmers in three target zones in Ghana: in the north, in the center, and in the south of the country, and to benefit, as has been said, well over a million poor Ghanaians.

To do that, the program centers on agricultural development, supported by investments in other sectors. But the core agricultural development centers on poor farmers with one or two hectares, who will increase production and marketing of food crops, such as maize, cassava and yams, and high-value horticultural crops, such as pineapple, mangos, and vegetables, for sale, as has been noted, in Ghana, and neighboring countries, and in primary export markets.

The program will also fund expanded production, processing and marketing by larger commercial farmers who will draw on and support a network of small holders. The overall agricultural program is complemented by investments in transportation infrastructure in all three zones, but overwhelmingly in the central zone, in the Afram Plains, as well as completing the key urban beltway around Accra, which will greatly speed access to the primary ports and markets.

And, finally, the third component comprises three different kinds of services to these rural communities: provision of some basic community services, as has been mentioned, in schools and water; also, building government's capacity to procure goods and services efficiently; and strengthening rural financial services, as the president has mentioned, greatly increasing their reach.

I want to spend a minute just talking about the poverty impact of this, because it's clearly something that has been a focus. It begins, just begins, with some 60,000 farmers who will initially participate in farmer-based organizations. These organizations will improve technologies, increase production yield, improve product quality, enhance business skills and marketing leverage. We're targeting some of the poorest areas in Ghana and, within those areas, some of the poorest farmers.

Beginning from a per capita income of 60 cents to \$1.50 per day -- these are very poor people -- we expect the impact of this program will be to increase that by on the order of 40 to 100 percent, doubling farm incomes in many cases. At the end of the program, these farm households will be on a much sounder, more secure base for yet further growth.

Beyond that, by investing along the agricultural value chain, from the input supplies, through the farmers, through the processors, the marketers, we will strengthen the ability of the private sector in Ghana, both domestic and multi-nation, to continue to grow, benefiting the farmers and those employed all along the value chain. So including those who benefit from the on-farm investment, the value chain investment, the transportation, and the community services investments, well over a million Ghanaians will benefit.

I'd like to highlight four of the smaller activities in the program which are illustrative of the kinds of critical institutional investments that have been mentioned. These are various pieces which don't quite get into the headline of the press release but are absolutely critical elements in making this a success.

First, the program will support improved land tenure services. Ghana has one of the more complex systems of overlapping traditional, colonial and now contemporary legal land rights, which constrains investments in improved farming. This problem is not amenable to quick fixes.

Therefore, the program tackles in on two tracks progressively. The first aims near term to ease transactions in land rights, while the second builds on the work by a number of donors, which takes the next step to regularize land

titles, acknowledging that this is a 20-, to 25-, to 30-year process. But over time, this activity should have not only an enormous economic impact; it supports the rule of law in a very successful, emerging African democracy.

The second component, as been mentioned, addressing some very well-documented needs, we propose to invest in some basic community services. By providing basic schools, water and sanitary services and rural electrification, we expect to complement and support the proposed agricultural investments, enhancing the health, and skills, and hence the productivity of the farm labor pool.

We are building on a very strong continuing initiative of the government of Ghana, and the estimated investment requirement is over \$900 million just for this component alone. Therefore, MCA's contribution of \$75 million is intended to make a beginning, directly linking it, again, to the agricultural activities which will benefit from and then sustain these community services and to catalyze the participation of other donors.

The third element I want to highlight is the program will strengthen rural financial services. As in most countries, the rural poor in Ghana have very limited access to banks and financial services. The most present institution are small, privately owned community banks. The program will support computerization of these banks and interconnection with the banking system.

For the rural poor, we expect this activity to greatly reduce their transaction costs and the insecurity of dealing in very large bundles of bank notes. So it will also ease the handling of remittances, both domestic and global, which is an enormous fraction of Ghana's economy, to build the base for expanded savings within these communities and to mobilize these savings for yet further productive investments within them.

The last element I'd like to talk about is really not a program element, per se, but is a critical aspect of some of what MCC has learned, really based on some of the 50 years of development experience which we bring to bear in this program, and that is a distinctive approach to impact evaluation modeled on randomized clinical drug trials, which has been the gold standard for impact evaluation for a number of years.

We are working with the Poverty Action Lab at MIT and Yale and the leading social science research institution in Ghana so that, based on some consistent surveys within Ghana and introducing selective randomization in what interventions are undertaken, with which groups, at one point in time, we and the government and Ghana will be able to assess rigorously the impact of specific program interventions to refine and refocus those during program execution and to then confidently know what was accomplished, how it was accomplished, and how to improve that going forward, both within Ghana and elsewhere.

Finally, I'd just like to talk briefly about three key themes on which these program activities are based, many of which have been mentioned, but I want to stress them yet again: private-sector initiative, decentralization and sound governance.

Private-sector initiative is the key driving force for this program. From the small farmers through the entire agricultural value chain to the final consumer, it is enterprising Ghanaians and their partners who will make this program work and who will reap the benefits. The role of government will be to

support those efforts with key infrastructure, both physical and institutional, includes roads, ferries -- as we've discussed -- schools, security of property rights, a sound, accessible financial system. But at the beginning and at the end of the day, it is the private sector that will drive the entire value of this program.

I'd also like to mention, I learned just this morning as I was coming here, in line with what President Kufuor was saying, that, in the forthcoming IFC survey of doing business report for 2006, Ghana will emerge as one of the very top performers in the world. So it has already...

(APPLAUSE)

So I think we're already seeing enormous progress for which the government of Ghana deserves enormous credit.

A second theme is that the government of Ghana, as Minister Nduom mentioned, has been progressively decentralizing services to the local communities who can best prioritize their needs and ensure that development is sustained beyond any program such as this one.

The MCC compact supports and furthers that initiative with the emphasis on commercial development of farmer-based organizations as the keystone of the program, as well as the provision of community services directly by the local district assemblies and the area councils, the establishment of local offices to facilitate land transaction, and the strengthening of community-based rural banks. In this way, we seek the benefits of local ownership and commitments to ensure investments are soundly made and maintained.

Last of all, the governance of the program aims to ensure accountability to the people of the United States and responsiveness to the people of Ghana. The board of directors of the Millennium Development Authority, created by the Ghanaian parliament, includes empowered representatives of the government of Ghana, of the Ghanaian private sector, of the Ghanaian NGO community, and of the areas where the program will be executed, so that we have together really striven to ensure that a wide range of voices can be heard, that decisions are taken timely and transparently, and to maximize the value created by the hard work and the substantial money invested.

So in summary, we do believe this is a comprehensive, coherent program which truly offers the opportunity to transform the lives of well over a million Ghanaians. And, frankly, we at MCC are gratified to have had the opportunity and to continue to have the opportunity to work with the government, the private sector, and the people of Ghana to implement this transformative program and realize these aspirations.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

COOKE: Thank you, Jonathan.

Mark Lippert, from Senator Obama's office?

LIPPERT: Good morning.

Since we seem to be a little behind, I'm just going to try to quickly summarize my remarks and first of all say that Senator Obama definitely recognizes the strategic and valuable partnership that the United States has with Ghana. During one of the busiest days of the Senate, yesterday, he spent a good chunk of his day with Ambassador Bridgewater, our able ambassador, talking about the particulars of sort of our relationship with Ghana. So he sends his regards to the president and is glad this agreement is on track.

With that, I've been sort of asked to talk about the larger, more regional role that this compact will play in West Africa, sort of the 50,000-foot view, if you will. And what I would sort of just quickly say is that our office has been a bit of what I would call a friendly skeptic of the MCC. I think we like the concept, like the model, but have sort of questioned some of the -- sort of the decisions that have been made, with respect to some of the nations. In short, we've argued that they are of little strategic value and don't have the engine necessary to sort of galvanize regional growth in an area.

I would just say, in short, we think that Ghana not only meets the threshold of the strict formulaic criteria laid out by the MCC, but also of the regional and strategic important thresholds that I think the senator also holds as important when talking about large packages of assistance.

In a word, on the strategic import, we've already seen that, you know, 25 percent of the Ghanaian military is deployed overseas in peacekeeping missions, including in Lebanon. On the region aspect, we've seen that they are an increasingly stable, peaceful and prosperous pocket in an increasingly I think difficult situation in West Africa, you know, that has become enveloped with fragile or, in some cases, outright conflict within states.

So I think, to basically sum up, I think that we think that all three of those tests, in our view, from the Hill have been met here. And I think, as far as the regional impact, I think what we think could be very interesting is we now have a situation where you have more or less an anchor state in the region with a compact, with a very big compact. In addition, you have another compact close by and possibly another compact coming online.

So I think you're sort of at a critical crossroads, using West Africa as a test case, to see if the MCA, MCC will have a truly transformative impact on the region. So I think we're optimistic on this compact and in the particulars, and we're waiting to see, and with a hopeful eye, that things will sort of work for the best in West Africa.

Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

COOKE: Thank you very much, Mark.

What I think we'll do, because we don't have a whole lot of time for questions, is take maybe three or four at once and then turn to our panel. I'd ask that you identify yourself. And if you're directing your question to a specific person, please say that, as well.

O.K.. Let's start back here, to the gentleman here. Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. My name is Theo Botchway, and I'm with Botech Systems International. I happen to be a Ghanaian-American, if I can frame it that way.

First of all, I would like to really commend the President Kufuor and his administration for a historic occasion that we are witnessing here today.

My question or point, comment, goes to Dr. Nduom, and that has to relate to the export market, the implementation, how you link it to the export market. Most of us who have been investors in Ghana over the years, and as the gentleman relayed it previously, it's very important that, as an investor, you look at the return on your investment. And there is a strategy.

The recent failed WTO Doha round will have some implications on the export market. And whether that is resolved early enough so that this very program will yield some sort of products that we can export to the United States, and those of us who are really targeting the markets here, in order to do that, facilitate that. So how will the implementation process itself be framed in order to make products more attractive to the U.S. market?

Thank you very much.

COOKE: I'll stand so I don't miss anyone over here.

Yes, Vivian?

QUESTION: Thank you. Vivian Lowery Derryck, the Academy for Educational Development. And this is a question that goes back to President Kufuor.

Mr. President, thank you very, very much for being just such a role model and a symbol of Africa's development. My question goes back to the Discovery Channel and the Africa Society film that was done, and that film, apparently, really expanded Ghanaian tourism. My question is: Is there a role for tourism within the MCA compact?

Thank you.

COOKE: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you. My question goes to Dr. Nduom. I'm being reminded to say my name. My name is Okyama Sekumar (ph). I work for the U.N. in New York.

Yesterday, I may have embarrassed Dr. Nduom a little bit by buttonholing him in the hole and applauding him for his leadership, of course under the leadership of President Kufuor, in their compact and those with the courage in tackling public sector reform in Ghana. But I have a specific question.

At the U.N., I ran the advocacy and information management function within the humanitarian community. So I'm a little bit interested in the whole communication enterprise. And what some of us have observed with a bit of dismay in Ghana is that the entire public discourse, the center of it has been captured and veered away from policy and development issues.

This compact has potential, as has been outlined by yourself, and the president, and others, of driving, and galvanizing, and empowering development in Ghana. Can you explain to us what is your communication strategy, what

public communication strategy you have developed to ensure that you accompany it with the implementation of this compact, to encourage Ghanaians to project the project in Ghana to the regional community and eventually international community who may want to invest in Ghana. Thank you.

COOKE: Thank you. Very good question.

We'll take one more. Tony Carroll (ph)?

QUESTION: Thank you, Jennifer.

And as someone who learned of the limitations of the land tenure system when I tried to build a fish exporting plant at the Weiija Dam about 15 years ago, and worked with Commander Steve Olympa (ph) to get the license from the federal government, just as soon as we found out, our counsel over here, Nano Cofuoado (ph), discovered that local tenure rights got in the way of the development of that project, which would have provided a nice export earning for Ghana and the export of catfish to West Africa. I look forward to the reform of land tenure so those type of projects can go forward.

Mr. Bloom, you mentioned money remittances and improving the delivery of financial services in the rural area. I believe, in the year 2005, money remittances were four or five times greater of overseas development assistance. And yet frequently and throughout Africa, you find that the money that comes back from the Diaspora -- and nobody has a better Diaspora than Ghana -- the money that goes back into the countries is often used just to buy another home, to invest in assets that don't really deliver economic growth in their economies.

Now, a country like Ghana, which has such a successful Diaspora, how can we find ways to use that money that comes back that is seeking returns on investment and the opportunity for creating economic growth, rather than just buying static assets? Is there a way we can leverage the MCC to try to give greater acceleration and momentum to the powerful role that remittances can play in African development?

COOKE: Thank you, Tony.

I think we'll begin with that set, and we'll come back for another round. Perhaps we want to start with Mr. President. Would you like to answer the question from Vivian, just to give you pride of order here?

KUFUOR: Thank you for your sense of protocol.

(LAUGHTER)

As to whether the compact covers tourism, I would say, no, it doesn't. Tourism is acknowledged in Ghana as a major sector of the economy. And, truly, as young as it is, it is already contributing about the third-largest import in the national revenue. And government is working feverishly on that front.

The compact has been used to focus on agriculture. Perhaps agric is not making the most contribution to the revenue as of now, but the truth is that it engages most of the population. We've heard some say 60 percent, others 70 percent of the people, and that's where the poverty resides. So as of now, we are focusing the compact on agriculture, but we are, at the same time, government, relying on its own resources, is working on tourism. And already

tourism is registering a very, very positive impact on the national revenue. So this is what I have to say.

Tourism has many aspects. Agro, medical, everywhere, cultural, so we'll take account of this. And perhaps I'll leave it with Dr. Nduom and Mr. Bloom to see if you could refine the compact to include tourism. Thank you.

COOKE: Thank you.

Mr. Nduom, would you like to start off on...

NDUOM: Thank you very much. On the point about the export markets, that is really one of the main points of this. And so we have been careful in identifying crops that already have a market.

And I should give you the example in the case of pineapple, we do have a ready market in Europe. And the issue has been our inability to produce as much as the market is really demanding, but also with the right kind of consistent quality. And that is why the program is designed to increase the volumes, but also to work on the post-harvest areas, of having good pack houses so that you can package the products neatly and in a way that would invite sales, but also to have cold facilities to preserve the quality. That's why we're having the road network improved, so you can get to the port quickly.

So a number of things are being put in place with this program to encourage export, but also we have within the authority itself a couple of positions that will be working constantly and consistently to find market for the products, externally and, in the case of the food crops, also internally. So we are taking care of the markets inside and the export side, as well.

As far as communications is concerned, we have taken note of the difficulties that we've experienced in the past and some of what we experience today. But there is a significant monitoring and evaluation component of this that is going to, first of all, keep us honest, in terms of meeting the targets and the indicators that I said, but also to give us the ability to communicate in a more objective manner, so that what we put out isn't just to talk, but also to provide information on achievements and what the gains that the project is coming up with from time to time.

So there is a program for communication, but it is communication based on objective criteria and one that will be grounded in monitoring and evaluation.

COOKE: Jonathan -- and I'm not sure who would like to address the issue of the Diaspora. Perhaps Mr. President or Minister Nduom?

But, Jonathan, would you like to respond?

BLOOM: I won't address the Diaspora, but I will address the remittances. But actually let me start, before I get to the financial aspect of it, one of the striking things about Ghana is the enormous wealth in human capital, the number of talented, enterprising people for whom this program aspires to remove obstacles and empower them to get on with what they are capable of doing. In that regard, the diaspora is a very rich source of human remittances, bringing talent, skill and energy back to Ghana, which I think is an enormous opportunity, in many ways greater than the flow of money.

But you're absolutely correct. I mean, remittances are far larger than official development assistance. It's precisely why we address them in these rural financial systems, because the opportunity is, as you suggest, to capture them in the banking system, make them available for local investment in the rural areas.

Hopefully, and the experience in other places is, by capturing in the banking system, people become much more willing to invest them in productive enterprises, as well as living better, as well as building houses. But some much larger fraction is then captured for productive investments, which begins the virtuous cycle of continued growth and poverty reduction.

COOKE: Thank you.

Let's take a very quick round. Please do keep your questions brief, and then we'll turn back to the panelists for final answers and comments.

We have one in the far back.

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Tom Sperli (ph) from the Energy Department. And this is for Dr. Kwesi Nduom. Has there been planning -- there was much discussion on how to link agriculture and deliverability with modern systems and integrating the whole supply-demand scenario.

Would you be interested or have you used an econometric model that determines and quantifies all the elements of a district cooling system, so that fruits, vegetables, agriculture could be plotted geographically and also quantified? And that is a model that's presently available, and we could discuss that later, if you had not done that already or are interested.

COOKE: Great. Thank you.

Abdulay Duclay (ph)?

QUESTION: My name is Abdulay Duclay (ph). My question goes to the president.

Mr. President, first, I would like to thank you for your leadership in peace processes in Africa, in West Africa, specifically Liberia and Cote D'Ivoire. Both peace, of course, were signed in Accra under your leadership.

But now I would like to ask you: How is the conflict in Cote D'Ivoire affecting Ghana? And how soon do you think they will reach a solution?

COOKE: Oh, O.K.. We'll take a couple more, and we'll leave it to your discretion.

Dr. Peter Lampty (ph)?

QUESTION: Thank you, Jennifer.

Dr. Nduom, you mentioned that 70 percent of agricultural workers are women. How does the agreement address the special needs of women?

And a second related question, we also know of the vicious cycle between health issues and agriculture. And, unfortunately, I didn't hear any mention of

how the health of the agricultural sector was going to be improved in the compact agreement.

Thank you.

COOKE: Thank you. Excellent question. And I just want to kind of re-echo. And it's been said that women in Africa do much of the agricultural work, but as it becomes commercialized, men tend to move in and take over that territory.

(LAUGHTER)

So I'm wondering about the -- so I'd like to ask that question.

All right. Let's take two more questions. We have a gentleman in the red.

QUESTION: Dr. Baruch Ben Yehudah with Plantroleum.

I wanted to know, under the compact, is there any program projected to develop crops that can be harvested for use as plant-derived fuels or for the rapidly expanding alternative energy industry? And this, of course, could strengthen the rural power grid development and also, finally, would provide a way for the rural, as well as overall Ghanaian population, to become more energy independent.

COOKE: Yes, in the very back?

QUESTION: Thank you. My name is Eric Jones (ph) from OIAT International. As a non-profit organization, we just wanted to say thank you, well, congratulate the president and Mr. Nduom on the signing of the agreement.

And my question is: Are there any place in the agreement for the agriculture of cocoa and salt mining?

COOKE: Salt mining, did you say?

QUESTION: Yes.

COOKE: OK.

OK, one last question, to the lady here in the orange.

QUESTION: Hello. My name is Karen Bryant Coachman (ph). And I come in, I guess, two capacities. One is as American business owner. I've traveled to Ghana about the time that President Kufuor came into office. I want to thank you for all of your efforts, and I've kind of been in the background as a cheerleader.

I am import or have been working to import and have imported pineapple from Ghana into the U.S. market. And through that process, I have experienced the incorporation of the business and done everything on the ground in Ghana, 21 days. So I came in under your threshold and have been received very well through that entire process.

The challenges that have come as a result of that effort have been related to transportation. And we resolved that from Ghana and everyone on that end,

very in order and the process running efficiently, ran into trouble here in the United States with our transportation system. But we were able to address that.

I give that background to say this, a couple of things. Under the compact, when you talk about the agricultural sector, to me there are four things: your inter-country, sustainable crops, as it feeds the people; interregional; the European market, obviously a lot of products are going there; then, U.S. market.

One of the things that has made the pineapple a success here in the U.S. market has actually been as a result of what faces the developing countries -- and that is, by virtue of not having resources, the products are near natural, if not almost organic, in terms of production. And that has been the leverage that I've used to bring the products into the U.S. market.

And so when you address the rural development and you talk about those aspects, again, you're dealing with the funds already not being there or access not being there, I think that the question actually moves to: Has consideration been given to addressing the organic status in those rural areas? Because at it comes to the U.S. market, the profit, the proceeds are tremendous in the marketplace.

And I understand that we have to address the magnitude of supply, but I'd asked -- or is that being considered, or I ask you to consider that, because that takes those rural farmers to another level immediately with that kind of support and that certification.

COOKE: Great. I think that's a long list of questions, and we are pressed for time. I think what we'll do is move through our panelists and, in this case, give the last word to the president, if protocol permits.

So why don't we begin with Minister Nduom?

NDUOM: Thank you very much.

On the question about crops for alternative energy, I can just mention to you that we have been approached -- it's an organization in Ghana called BOST that stores bulk energy. And they are interested in one of the zones in encouraging the cultivation of a local plant that can be -- it's called jatropha -- that can be used in producing fuel. They've approached us, and we're waiting to engage them in a more productive and a more objective way, to see how it fits, but within the Afram Basin.

With the pineapple situation, as a matter of fact, we are looking to interact with you specifically. And K.D. Pineapple (ph) and others that have approached us that want to bring, if you will, relatively organic pineapples into the American market to see what we can do to support you, not just on the production side, but on the quality side, so that what you bring can be sustained, and can be bought, and can fetch you a decent profit. So that is an area we are looking to engage with you on some more.

On the matter of the econometric model, we'll be happy to engage with you on it. It sounds exciting.

(LAUGHTER)

On the 70 percent of workers that are women, what we've heard about that situation, but I will tell you that the minister of women and children's affairs, every day she sees me, she says, "We should sit down and see how we turn this thing around, and not just get women to participate, but actually to participate in a profitable way and in a way that is sustained." So there is an advocate in government who is continuously putting this in front of us.

But I am encouraged by the example that is going on in the northern part of the country, with this company we call the International Tamale Fruit Company, that is doing organic mangoes, and involves women, and has empowered women in such a significant way that it is threatening their husbands.

(LAUGHTER)

These are people -- and it's one of those examples that we've worked on. These are people that had zero income. And in four to five years, with one acre of organic mangoes, has reached about two to three million cedis a year -- I forget what two to three million cedis a year is in dollars. But then the estimate is that, when they reach about 10 years, that each acre is going to yield to them between 20 to 30 million cedis a year, which will surpass the \$2,000 mark. That is per acre.

And these are quite a number of women that are engaged in this practice. It's part of the compact area, and it's part of the areas and activities we wish to expand. So there is some promising work that is going there.

Maybe I've missed one or two other areas, but I think those are the things that I could identify.

COOKE: Jonathan, any remarks? Any health component to this compact?

BLOOM: What I might just add to Dr. Nduom's comment is one of the key aspects of better health is better sanitation. And it is probably -- not probably, it is the single largest contributor to greater community health. So that by supporting both improved water and sanitation services in local communities, we think that is the single best step.

By the way, that also has yet another impact on women. Since it's typically women and girls who fetch the water, it liberates an enormous amount of time for productive or for educational uses, so that we think it has a doubly good impact.

COOKE: Mark, would you like to offer any comments as we close up and before we turn to President Kufuor?

LIPPERT: I would just say, on the peacekeeping question, taking a more general view, African peacekeeping is something that Senator Obama has sort of thought a lot about, on the Cote D'Ivoire issue.

But, more generally, I think sort of three basic principals need to apply: One, we have to stop making the U.N. sort of the lender of last resort, putting it into impossible situations where no other nation seems to want or be able to respond.

Two, I think, once we're there, we need to stay there and not pull out prematurely. And we were encouraged a little bit by the decision to keep

UNAMSIL in a little longer. We think that was very helpful to the West African region.

And, three, I think the last point is, once they are there, they need to be resourced accordingly. The Security Council needs to do a better job of ensuring that the mandate is strong and that sufficient numbers of troops, logistics, intelligence, all of that is there.

So that doesn't address the Cote D'Ivoire question specifically, but I think, in going forward, in dealing with West Africa, that's had a history of U.N. peacekeeping and other regional peacekeeping operations, I think we need to keep those three basic principals in mind.

COOKE: Thank you, Mark.

Mr. President, the last word will be yours.

KUFUOR: Thank you. Thank you for appreciating the role we've played so far in the ECOWAS area towards normalizing the region, to improve the image of the region, because we are into the era of regionalization. And in West Africa, our organization is called the ECOWAS. If there's any trouble in any part of it, I believe it reflects on the image of all of us and it reduces our attractiveness to investors. Money does not want to go where there is trouble.

And Cote D'Ivoire has been more or less the nerve center of the francophone Western and Central African areas, in terms of finance, agriculture, a whole lot of things. It's the most important single country in the francophone area of Western and Central Africa. So when that country is in problems, it should go without saying that the entire region loses a lot.

Ghana geographically is next door to Cote D'Ivoire. We share a common boundary, which is artificial, in that it divides tribes between us, Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire, right from the coast to the northernmost parts of the two countries. The border, which was forced on us by erstwhile colonial authorities over 100 years ago, splits same people. So when there's trouble, one side of the border can easily understand the other side would feel very nervous.

We are not even talking of gun-running. We are not talking of people rushing over the border to create refugee problems. We are not talking about the general tensions that we suffer in the neighborhood. Again, as important as Cote D'Ivoire is, we find that the basic protocols of ECOWAS, which provide for free movement of people and goods, are more or less dislocated.

Then, we are talking health. One people are able to rush over, creating problems for immigration and all the related services. They come across with diseases, HIV, so forth and so on. So we are really troubled by the situation there. But as Mr. Lippert has so competently stated, United Nations is there with a blue beret, and Ghana is playing an important role in there, even though our numbers are not as big as we would have wished.

And I believe the U.N. is staying there until we have a solution. We are expecting that the dates proposed under the Marcoussis, Accra III, and Joburg (ph), Pretoria agreements for normal, democratic elections -- that's October -- will be respected by all the parties in Cote D'Ivoire, so that the people will be enabled or empowered to select their next government through the ballot box. And then everybody will then perhaps live happily together in that country.

It has a lot of potential. Perhaps even now with these problems, it's the richest country per capita in the sub-region. While Ghana is moving around \$600, Cote D'Ivoire was there years back. It has got diversified agriculture. I believe the infrastructure is well-developed. A lot of the international organizations were headquartered there. But these troubles have made life near impossible.

And so Ghana is wishing Cote D'Ivoire well, and we are praying that, with the help of the Security Council -- incidentally, Ghana is going to be the president of the Security Council this month. And we hope we may be able to get the international community more interested to support so we find a solution to Cote D'Ivoire.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

COOKE: I want to thank our panelists for, A, their very hard work on this compact all along, B, for their thoughtful remarks here today.

And, again, I want to thank President Kufuor for your regional leadership, not only transforming Ghana's economy, as we've all being here to celebrate today, but also lending a helping hand in Cote D'Ivoire, in Liberia, in the broader region.

Thank you all for attending, and we look forward to watching the progress of this compact as it unfolds. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

END