

Opening Statement
Joint Session with European Union Parliamentarians: Africa Matters
June 8, 2007
Mr. Donald M. Payne

I would like to thank European Union Parliament Member Ana Gomes for coming to the United States to participate in the first ever U.S. Congress-EU Parliament joint summit on Africa.

The Honorable Gomes has had a distinguished career as a diplomat in her native Portugal and now serves as Vice-Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Security and Defense in the European Parliament. She is also a member of both the EU parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Delegation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

Ms. Gomes was part of the EU election observation team sent to observe elections in Ethiopia during 2005. We welcome you and appreciate all of the work you have done related to Africa.

Today's session, the first of what I hope will be many, focuses on east Africa, specifically on the situations in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, conflict resolution and prevention, and the Challenge of Fragile states.

Each of the three countries presents a diplomatic challenge for policy makers here in the United States and in Europe. But we must all rise to that challenge, because the situation in those countries will be affected by the courses of action that we pursue for years—perhaps even decades-- to come. Ethiopia presents a particular test for the United States. Since September 11, 2001, the defining principle for U.S. foreign policy has been protecting the homeland from terrorism.

African countries that support America's global war on terror have been the recipient of military assistance and training in order to build their capacity to assist with our efforts to fight extremists, and prevent another attack on U.S. soil. I fully support efforts to combat terrorism, but not at the expense of respect for human rights and rule of law. The current trend of turning a blind eye to atrocities against innocent civilians in Ethiopia and Somalia, and genocide in Darfur, is likely to lead to more chaos and

instability in Africa, and intensify the anti-American sentiment across the continent.

The Administration has given the Meles government a free pass when it comes to respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic freedom. U.S. policy in support of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia needs significant improvement. Nearly two hundred innocent civilians were killed and thousands were arrested by the government in June and November of 2005 when they took to the streets to protest the results of the May 2005 elections. An unknown number remain in prison, including elected members of parliament, civil society leaders, human rights advocates, and journalists. I visited a number of these courageous individuals in prison last August.

The prisoners are charged with treason and other crimes that could carry the death penalty. But their real offense? They ran for parliament and won. They advocated for rule of law and respect for human rights. Let me give you an example of what I call a brutal act against the innocent. (EE TE NE SHE) Etenesh Yimam was killed in her home in front of her family for simply asking why they are arresting her husband, who was elected in May. (EE TE NE SHE) Etenesh is dead, her husband was imprisoned, and her daughter is hiding somewhere in Africa.

In April 2007, Ted Dagne visited EE TE NE SHE's husband. Mr. Teshome, Etenesh's husband, asked "Why did they kill my wife? I am the one who ran for office. I see everyday the place right outside my house where they killed my wife." The security man who killed her still has his job.

We continue to provide military assistance to the government of Ethiopia, while failing to take a consistent outspoken stance in support of democracy and human rights at the highest levels of our government. This is part of the reason that the administration had no—I repeat *no*—credibility when it claimed that it did not support the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia late last year.

It is critical that the United States not be the only voice calling on the Ethiopian government to improve its record related to human rights and democracy, and I am pleased that the EU has been a strong advocate on these issues. The United States cannot afford to allow cooperation on the

war on terror to prevent us from taking a principled stance regarding democracy and human rights in Ethiopia.

Nor can we allow the war on terror to be our only consideration when we develop our foreign policy. Unfortunately, this appears to have been the case with the administration's course of action in Somalia. For years Congress asked the Bush Administration to develop a strategy towards Somalia that would support the formation of a national government. The State Department failed to do so. The vacuum left by the State Department's inaction was filled by officials at U.S. intelligence agencies, who, in their infinite wisdom, decided to fund warlords in Mogadishu-- the very same warlords who were responsible for violence against the Somali people, and our own U.S. military.

It was U.S. funding for warlords that led to the rise of the Union of Islamic Courts last year. The courts banded together, with the support of the Somali people, in order to oppose the warlords to whom the administration was giving money. And it was the rise of the UIC that provided Ethiopia an excuse to invade Somalia. U.S. policy makers got it dreadfully wrong in Somalia, and as a result, all of the policy options we are left with are pretty poor.

We are supporting the Transitional Federal Government, but it has yet to demonstrate that it intends to engage in an inclusive political dialogue with all sectors of Somali society. The same warlords who maimed and killed many innocent civilians are now in charge of government in Mogadishu, with the support of Ethiopia.

Credible allegations of human rights abuses against civilians by the TFG and the Ethiopian military have been made. During the six months the Courts were in power, there was relative stability. Now, we have more chaos and instability. And suicide bombings, a phenomenon that never existed in Somalia, are on the rise in Mogadishu.

I fear that we have dug ourselves into a hole deeper than this administration has the skill to climb out of. The help of the European Union and our international partners is going to be crucial in the weeks and months ahead as we attempt to address the conundrum in which we find ourselves in Somalia. Similarly, the United States and the EU must come to agreement on a unified policy approach if we hope to help bring about an

end to the genocide in Darfur and lasting peace between north and south Sudan.

Last week, President Bush announced new sanctions on the government of Sudan in response to the genocide in Darfur. The announcement was way overdue. Such sanctions should have been put in place six months ago. However, I am under no illusion about what U.S. sanctions will and will not accomplish. In order to end the genocide in Darfur, we must intervene to protect the innocent. In Rwanda one million people died in one hundred days. In Darfur, the killing has continued for four long years. We have the political will to use the military to bomb Somali targets. Yet we stand by and watch while 450,000 people are brutally murdered next door in Darfur.

It is imperative that the United States and the EU unite in our efforts to convince China that it must not block efforts in the Security Council to impose United Nations sanctions on Sudan. If China chooses to continue to help a government engaged in Genocide, we must make sure that China faces the consequences of its actions.

I look forward to hearing from our panelists today and to exchanging ideas with my European counter-parts about areas where we can cooperate in Africa. I would now like to turn to the Honorable Gomes for her statement.