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SPECIAL ONLINE BRIEFING

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The Africa Regional Media Hub

MODERATOR: (Inaudible) everyone from the U.S. Department of State's Africa Regional Media Hub. I would like to welcome our participants dialing in from across the continent and thank all of you for joining this discussion. Today, we are very pleased to be joined by U.S. Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs Assistant Secretary of State Molly Phee and National Security Council Senior Director for African Affairs Judd Devermont.

Assistant Secretary Phee and Senior Director Devermont will discuss the U.S. strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa, the upcoming U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, and highlight the U.S. commitment to the African continent. They are speaking to us from Washington, D.C.

We will begin today's call with opening remarks from Assistant Secretary Phee and Senior Director Devermont. Then we will turn to your questions. We will try to get to as many of them as we can during the briefing.

As a reminder, today's call is on the record. And with that, I will turn it over to National Security Council Senior Director for African Affairs Judd Devermont.

MR DEVERMONT: Great. Thank you, Tiffany. Good morning, and welcome. It's a pleasure to be here with my colleague, Assistant Secretary Molly Phee, to discuss the upcoming African Leaders Summit. President Biden is thrilled to invite and host 49 governments, the African Union Commission, civil society, businesses and the private sector, young leaders, and the diaspora to Washington, D.C., for the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit on December 13th through 15th. The summit is a demonstration of our renewed commitment to the African continent. It's an opportunity for us to deepen our longstanding partnership and to focus on new areas and topics that will really define the challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow.

One of the animating themes of the summit is building 21st century partnerships. We believe that this is a decisive decade. The way in which the world will be ordered will be determined in the coming years, and President Biden and Secretary Blinken believe strongly that African voices are going to be critical in this conversation.

So throughout the summit, we're going to talk about some of the most pressing challenges in the world, from the pandemic and climate change and the negative consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to issues that affect all of us – democracy and governance, security, trade and investment, and development. We are going to spend those three days listening, learning, engaging, discussing, and I'm confident at the end that we'll have a stronger partnership that we can build on as we move into 2023.

Molly?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Hey, Judd. It's great to have this opportunity to talk to everybody. I want to recall when President Biden selected Tony Blinken to be his Secretary of State, he gave him one big mission, and that mission was to revive our partnerships with countries all over the world. Secretary Blinken is really excited about engaging in Africa. He's visited twice, first in November of 2021 and in August of 2022. He sees his African colleagues at many global meetings. And he's really thrilled to bring them to Washington to introduce them to the leadership of the State Department and to his colleagues in the Cabinet.

Also, everybody in Washington is excited – think tanks, Congress. We, Judd and I, receive emails every day from folks wanting to participate and engage and meet with Africans who will be visiting us. So I know that Secretary Blinken believes that this is an opportunity to consolidate his working relationships with his peers, and also to really deepen our discussions on issues that are priorities for Africans and for Americans. And those issues include climate change, food security, health security.

So with that, let's turn it over to all of you for questions.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Assistant Secretary Phee, Senior Director Devermont. We will now begin the question and answer portion of today's briefing. We ask that you limit yourself to one question related to the topic of today's briefing, the U.S. strategy towards sub-Saharan Africa and the upcoming U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. The briefing is very full, so please be considerate to other journalists and make your questions as brief as possible in the interest of time.

Our first question is one that was submitted in advance from Ms. Imane Boujnane from Médias 24 in Morocco. She asks: "Who is invited to the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, and who isn't? What's the program of this event?"

MR DEVERMONT: Thank you for that question. We have strived to have the most inclusive summit possible. So we have invited 49 governments, the African Union; but as I said in my opening remarks and Molly underscored, we've invited Africans from all walks of life and Americans to join us to talk about business, democracy and governance, the state of civil society, opportunities for investment. It is going to be, I think, a really robust conversation throughout these three days, in part because we really want to make sure that it's as big of a tent as possible.

The program is jam-packed. Really, for three days, we are going – Washington is going to be the hub for African policy and conversation. We'll start on the 13th of December with a diaspora/young leaders forum. We'll have a four-hour-long civil society forum. We will have our regular conversation about the African Growth and Opportunity Act, this annual ministerial.

We're really excited about a session on peace, governance, and security that will be co-hosted by Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin, and Administrator Power. Of course, on that day we will also have sessions on health cooperation and health security, supporting the conservation, climate adaptation, and just energy transition. And we'll also have a session on U.S.-Africa space cooperation.

Day two will be our business forum. This is the third business forum since 2014, focusing on the issues that really matter to our African partners and to the U.S. private sector from trade, finance, energy, infrastructure, agribusiness, and digital. It will also include a keynote lunch from Secretary Blinken and a – opportunities for American and African businesses to network and announce deals and really deepen this important trade and investment relationship. And then – oh, that evening we will invite all of the heads of delegations to the White House to be hosted by President Biden and the First Lady as well as Vice President Harris and the First* Gentleman.

The last day is the leaders session, which will begin with remarks from President Biden. We've focused on what Africans want and what they have said in their most important documents, the Agenda 2063, about their aspirations for the continent. So we will have a really robust conversation about what – the Africa they want and the relationship that we need to have in the future. We'll also talk about multilateralism and the importance of African voices in shaping the international system, and conclude with an important conversation about food security and what we can do to address this urgent, urgent challenge.

So there's side events throughout the day. There's dinners. There's think tank events. It's going to be really a jamboree of thoughtful conversation, partnership, and dialogue. So I probably missed a number of things in there, but that's how packed this session is.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Judd, I wanted to add one point on the initial question about the invitation list.

MR DEVERMONT: Yeah.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Out of respect for the African Union, we did not invite governments that have been suspended by the African Union for coups. So those countries will not be involved in this session, and we continue to work separately with those countries to encourage a return to a democratic transition, to move to a democratic track, so we're in a better position to have a strong partnership with those countries.

Secondly, we've taken some criticism, I think it's fair to say, from some who wonder why we invited this government or that government about which there are some concerns. But that reflects the commitment of President Biden and Secretary Blinken to having respectful conversations even where there are areas of difference. We think actually engaging and consulting and talking about our different perspectives and seeking to advance U.S. values is an appropriate way to meet challenges that we face in common.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next question will go live to Pearl Matibe. Could you open the line, please?

QUESTION: Good morning. Thank you so much. I really appreciate both of your availability and actually doing this. So thank you so much. This is a single question, but it is a three-part question, and I'd like to hear both of your voices in how you respond to this.

So Africa has been divided by and made by external actors and empires. So in your framework, why is it important for you to separate sub-Saharan Africa from the Sahel, from the Maghreb, from the Horn of Africa, and separation references from Egypt? Why not approach Africa simply as that, Africa?

And to indigenous Africans, there are at least 56 countries. Assistant Secretary Molly Phee, we're referring right now to countries that have been excluded, including Western Sahara and Somaliland. For the avoidance of doubt, please confirm which countries and territories have not been invited?

And then on exclusion of journalism, journalism – do you agree that it's a fourth arm of government and a core pillar in strengthening and reversing democratic backsliding? Like you mentioned in your strategy document, it appears that journalism and freedom of the press is absent from your first forum day. Could you explain your thinking in how you constructed the agenda and how – and if at all this is going to – you're going to be as inclusive as possible, including journalists and indigenous African journalists in particular? Thank you.

MR DEVERMONT: Sure. Thank you, Pearl, for that great conversation. This is a U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, so we are inviting the North African countries as well as sub-Saharan African countries. In the strategy, we note the importance of transcending some of the bureaucratic divides that we have in our government, and Molly and I work very closely with our counterparts both on a day-to-day basis because these issues transcend borders, but also to make sure that this summit captures all of the most important issues that affect all of Africans. So you will see throughout the events that you will – there will be opportunities for countries across the region to talk and to engage.

On countries that we did not invite, as Molly said, countries that are not in good standing with the Africa Union were not invited. So that includes Mali, Sudan, Guinea, and Burkina Faso. We also did not invite countries where we don't have diplomatic relations, such as Eritrea. We do not have diplomatic relations with some of the territories that you named, so they're not invited as well.

I'll let Molly answer the question about media.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Sure. Before I get to media, Pearl, I want to tell you that Judd and I think a lot about the impact of colonialism in African history as well as the impact of the Cold War on African history. And we work very hard to make sure that the United States defines our relationship with Africa on African terms. We're engaged in Africa for our mutual benefit and to advance our mutual interests. It's not – it should not be a battlefield for external powers. Secretary Blinken has also spoken to this issue, I'm sure you've heard. So I just want you to know that I'm glad you raised that issue because we understand the damaging impact that history has had, and we want to make sure that the way we approach our work is with respect and prioritization of African thinking.

I'm sorry that you came away with the false impression that journalism is not important. Of course it's important. There will be many events – African journalists are being brought to Washington to participate. We're going to make sure that we have opportunities to engage with them. And as you know, that's a foundational aspect of U.S. human rights policy, U.S. values. Freedom of the press is sort of a central tenet of our value system and what we advance. So I expect that very much to be part of the conversation going forward. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Our next question will go live to Ignatius Annor from Voice of America. Can you open the line, please?

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you very much. Can you hear me?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Yes.

MODERATOR: Yes, we can.

QUESTION: Thanks. So good morning to all of you. Well, I'm in D.C., so it's good morning here. And thank you very much, Molly and Devermont as well. So my question to you: I spoke to the spokesperson for the chair of the African Union yesterday. Essentially what I wanted to know is if they were contacted at all regarding the list of countries or the African Union member countries that have been invited to the conference. And she did tell me that such a thing did not happen.

And that question follows what Dana Banks, the Special Assistant to President Biden and also Senior Advisor for the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, said in an interview with the VOA a couple of days ago that indeed invitations were issued to states that were in good standing with the African Union. So here on the one hand, the AU says we have nothing to do with it because even ourselves, we're just invited guests. And we're hearing you say that 49 African heads of state have been invited, with the exclusion of the four that you mentioned. You have just confirmed to us that you haven't issued invitations to Eritrea, for example, and Somaliland, because you do not (a) recognize one, (b) do not have diplomatic relationships with the other.

So it brings me to a question, which is: How, then, do you want to deepen a relationship with the continent moving forward if, in the beginning, you are beginning to exclude some people? And (b), you have sent out invitations to states like Ethiopia, to Egypt, whose leaders primarily have allegations of human rights abuses and war crimes on their heads. So how do you respond to these criticisms that are coming up?

MR DEVERMONT: Well, Ignatius, thank you so much for that question. We have been talking with the African Union and the African diplomatic corps about the rubric that we developed for the invitations. I think it's been a very productive conversation. As I said earlier, we have decided to be as inclusive as possible within – consistent with the African Union or, as I said earlier, consistent with our own recognition of governments or the fact that we don't have full diplomatic relations.

So this has been a very productive dialogue that we've had with colleagues and counterparts. I think that this is an important opportunity to talk about our relationship, and I welcome criticism. It's helpful to hear the feedback. We have these kind of conversations all the time. We want to

be – we wouldn't have the partnership that we want if we just wanted to hear things that we like to hear, so it's useful to get that feedback.

But I will tell you that from my own experiences, and I don't want to speak for Molly, it's been a very collaborative, constructive, constant dialogue with our African partners and the African Union about the session. And I think that President Macky Sall and AU Commission Chair Moussa Faki are very excited about coming. We have a number of things that we have been talking to them about so that we can have a summit that represents both our shared values and our shared interests.

And as Molly said earlier – I'll just reiterate it – inviting countries that we have disagreements with is part and parcel of what we think diplomacy is, talking to people that you have disagreements with, being able to raise it in a respectful, candid, and open way. Secretary Blinken does this every day with African counterparts. Molly does this every day. In the summit you will see our leaders across government having hard conversations at times, having productive conversations all the time, about what we're trying to do together.

MODERATOR: Thank you. The next question came in advance from Mr. Nebert Rugadya from Uganda Radio Network. He asks about AGOA, a very important topic. “At all events preceding the summit, I've not heard about AGOA, the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act. The initiative has had challenges recently, with many beneficiaries realizing falling exports. What's happening?”

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: I'm so glad that question was raised. I think when Judd and I talk about the summit you can get lost in the number of events, but on the first day Ambassador Katherine Tai, who is the U.S. Trade Representative, will lead a session, a detailed session, with her trade counterparts visiting from Africa. This session will also include members of Congress. We're looking to the 2025 expiration of AGOA and considering what is the best next step.

We regret that AGOA trade preferences have not been utilized to the maximum. We think it's important to improve our trade with Africa. So that'll be part of the discussion. We'll also need to consider whether or not that program is continued. Is it continued in its current form? Is it modified in some way? And a third element we want to look at is how we can do better to engage with the sort of nascent African Continental Free Trade Area. Are there ways that we can use AGOA to support the development of the free trade area, which holds so much promise for the continent.

So it will definitely be a robust discussion, and we're really looking forward to the African ministers coming and giving us their firsthand assessment of what's working, what's not working, and what we need to do to update that program.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next question will go live to Peter Fabricius of *The Daily Maverick* in South Africa. Can you open the line, please?

QUESTION: Hi. Thanks, Tiffany. Thank you for the briefings from Ms. Phee and Mr. Devermont. I wanted to ask you a question about whether you have any concerns about the sustainability of U.S.-Africa relations given the fact that your summits are rather infrequent and

somewhat unpredictable, the last one having been in 2014 after which there was quite a lot of expectation that there would be another one pretty soon, and then of course governments change and so on, and so it's eight years later, compared to your – some of your competitors, if we want to put it that way – the EU, China, Japan, and so on – which in the meanwhile have regularly held their summits. So does that not disrupt the continuity of building and sustaining relations? Thank you.

MR DEVERMONT: Okay, Peter. Thank you so much for this conversation and for that question, and it's good to hear from you again. What was clear was that 2014's summit was a real marker in our policy that created a lot of excitement about U.S.-Africa relations and was a launching pad for a whole host of initiatives. Many of those initiatives are with us today, and what we work on to build and enhance.

The gap, I think, between 2014 and 2022 certainly is regrettable. And so we've had, I think, a number of conversations with our partners and with counterparts in our own government about first and foremost making sure that whatever comes out of this summit is going to stay here for the long run. One of the things about Africa policy that I think many of you know is it's a bipartisan issue, that the initiatives of President Clinton and Bush, Obama and Trump, have stayed with us and we're working on everything from Prosper Africa to, as Molly said, AGOA and seeing how we can make it fit for purpose in this year and for the remainder of this administration.

So I think at the summit you will hear a couple of things from us. One is a commitment to continue the programs that have been at the bedrock of our policy for many years; two, focus on what are the things that we need to do together for the future; and three, how do we work together so that this isn't a summit that lasts for three days and then everyone goes home and forget about it. And so we're being very deliberate and intentional about what are the next steps after this summit so that the strength of U.S. relations with Africa continues to grow and deepen.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Yeah, I would just add that I really appreciate you bringing up that question. We have heard a lot from African partners about their interest in having this summit, and there's a lot of discussion here about is there a way to institutionalize this approach. But I would just observe that over the course of my career in different fields, I see many different types of diplomatic configurations that help us advance our dialogue and our partnership. So this is a very important version of one diplomatic configuration, but what's more important to me is that we have day-to-day, deep engagement across the sectors that we've discussed and that we sustain those partnerships, we make them durable, we configure them to meet the challenges of the moment.

So I do think it's valuable to focus on the issue of the predictability of having a summit, but I wouldn't want that to overshadow what I think is a really dynamic, comprehensive, and sustainable and durable partnership between the United States and Africa.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next question will go live to Suzy Elgeneidy from *Al-Ahram* paper in Egypt. Open the line, please. Suzy, are you with us? All right, I think we're having a problem reaching Suzy.

Then we would like to turn it to Hariana Veras from Public Television in Angola. Can you open the line, please? Hariana?

QUESTION: Thank you very much for the opportunity. Thank you very, very much. So my question is in regard to the media. I think this summit is extremely important for all the continent. It's a great opportunity for African voices to be heard. And I think by doing – organizing this summit, U.S. is showing to the African people that this country is interested to work well with African countries. And as we all know, in a relationship between people, between nations, it's very important communication. Communication is key in any kind of relationship. I'm saying that because we have seen how difficult it is for journalists – I'm one of them – to get access to the U.S. officials, even in the places like State Department, White House, even the Senate, where I am accredited. It's very hard for African journalists to be treated equal as any other journalist, so to have the same opportunity to interview high officials.

So we are the ones who collect information from the U.S. side, and we inform our African nations. I've been covering for many countries. And I would like to take this opportunity to ask if this summit can also reflect a little bit on how the African journalists have been treating in the U.S., and if we can have more opportunity to have access to high officials so we can better inform the visions, the idea, the way that U.S. wants to work with African nations, because this has been not clear and it's very hard for us as journalists even to communicate to our people, our nations in Africa. So if the U.S. is starting this summit, it's very important to look also and reflect in the communication because this is the key; this is what will make all these meetings and summit work well and bring better results, if there is a very good communication.

So my point is: Is there any way that you guys will be reflecting on the way that you even communicate with Africa, giving more access to journalists to interview high-level officials of the U.S. administration? Thank you very much.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Well, Hariana, thank you very much for your question. I hope this engagement today is illustrative of the commitment that Judd and I have to be available and open to journalists. I understand that more than 800 journalists from Africa have applied for accreditation to cover this summit. Most of the sessions that Judd described earlier will be open to the press and they'll be livestreamed on the summit's website, and I hope all of you will follow that. And we talked about a multi-event session on the first day that includes all actors in civil society, including journalists, and one of the topics during that discussion will be marginalized voices.

So again, I hope there's no doubt in your mind about U.S. commitment to freedom of the press, U.S. interest in engaging with the press. That's why we have a regional hub like this. So I think we're going to have a great event and it will be open to all of you, and I hope you find that that engagement validates our commitment to dealing with the press.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next question will go live to Mohammed Tawakel from Al Jazeera in Ethiopia. Can you open the line, please? Mohammed, are you there? We seem to have a problem getting Mohammed on board.

Can we please take a question from Simon Ateba from Today News Africa? Please open the line.

QUESTION: Thank you, Tiffany, for taking my question, and thank you all for doing this. This is Simon Ateba with Today News Africa in Washington. President Biden extended an invitation to the WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros and the head of the WHO Africa Dr. Moeti to attend the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. It seems that health will be a priority at this summit, and the White House even plans to announce an agreement for cooperation on health workforce. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that, specifically about how this summit will address health workforce issues.

And also, will President Biden apologize to Africans for slavery? Any compensation to be announced? And why wasn't the prime minister of Ethiopia invited directly? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Well, thank you for your question. One of the priorities of the administration, and indeed Secretary Blinken, is how we can strengthen the longstanding partnership between U.S. and Africa on health. As you know, we're very proud of the PEPFAR program in which we've invested for about three decades in helping Africans first deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and, secondarily, develop their health systems. The importance of that partnership was validated when we were dealing previously with the Ebola crisis and then recently with the COVID pandemic. And of course viruses don't respect borders, so what's – it's important for all of us to find ways to engage to meet these challenges, which health experts tell us will increase and proliferate.

So I anticipate there will be a lot of good discussion on how we intensify our partnership in this area. And secondly, we also want to expose African leaders to American businesses that deal in the health sector. When the pandemic broke, the COVID pandemic broke, we realized that there was not a single vaccine manufacturing facility on the continent. That's unacceptable, and we've worked very hard with several countries across the continent to help them establish and expand vaccine manufacturing capability. That's just one example of what we're trying to do to help support health security.

MR DEVERMONT: Maybe, Simon, I can just add a little bit on the health session, which will be on day one, which is I think really going to be an exciting conversation, an important one. And it will be chaired by Health and Human Services Secretary Becerra. There will be representatives from the Africa CDC there, African health ministers, representatives from African civil society and NGOs. And they're going to focus on a couple of key priorities, which is how do we partner to build stronger health systems and better health security; opportunities to invest in the health workforce to build resilient health systems. Those two conversations, I think, are going to really drive a conversation that will demonstrate our commitment to health, which, as many of you know, is longstanding. We're very proud of the work that we have done on health, starting with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and our PEPFAR program to, as Molly said, our response to the pandemic.

So I think there is going to be a tremendous amount on health both in day one and, as Molly alluded, on day two for the business sector that will really convey our commitment and hear from Africans on what are the next steps.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Suzy Said from *Al-Ahram*, Egypt, sent a question also – written – and asked: “Does the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit aim to gather and polarize African countries against Russia? What are the main aims of this summit?”

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Well, I think we’ve already addressed that question. I talked a little bit about how the United States prioritizes our relationship with Africa for the sake of our mutual interests and our partnership in dealing with global challenges. So we’re – we are very conscious, again, of the Cold War history, we’re conscious, again, of the deleterious impact of colonialism on Africa, and we studiously seek to avoid repeating some of the mistakes of those earlier eras.

MODERATOR: Thank you. I would like to try Mohammed Tawakel out of Ethiopia for Al Jazeera. Could you open the line, please? All right, Mohammed’s line is still not available. He did put a question in the Q&A. So, from Al Jazeera: “The military coup d’etats in African countries are rising, and there are some countries accusing that Russia is supporting them. What is your vision in cooperating with African countries in preventing it and restoring democracy? There is a request from Africans on canceling debt. Is that something the U.S. would support? And there’s also” – he asked about that Africa wants a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, and would the U.S. support this request?

MR DEVERMONT: Great, I’ll try to answer that, Tiffany. We’re very concerned about sort of the backsliding, the democratic backsliding in West Africa in particular, with coups in Guinea and Mali and two in Burkina Faso and other unconstitutional changes of power throughout the region. And we recognize that if we are going to return to durable, civilian-led transition, it’s going to take a lot of investment on our part– on our part in partnership with regional bodies like ECOWAS and the African Union, with civil society, with institutions. And so at the summit we are going to talk about the ways in which we can do more to make sure that countries are democratic, which, by the way, is an aspiration in Agenda 2063, and we know that the demand for democracy in Africa is high – perhaps higher than any other region: nearly 70 percent.

So we feel that we have recognized that there’s more that we can do to move towards democratic transitions, to strengthen them, and to work with really all of African society that deeply believes in democracy to make sure that it really does deliver.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: We’re also going to focus on a priority for President Biden and Secretary Blinken, which is: How do we work together to update the international architecture to better reflect current realities and to help us all meet the challenges of this era? So I expect there to be an advance on the conversation initiated by President Biden in New York at the United Nations in September when senior leaders met, when he talked about the importance of having an African seat as well as a seat from Latin America and the Caribbean on the Security Council.

We’re also looking at the multilateral financial institutions to see what changes are appropriate there – again, to reflect particularly the paramount position of Africa in the global conversation and the global economy. So that will be a really important theme that’s running through the summit.

MODERATOR: Thanks. We have time for one last question. This will come from Alphonse Logo, a journalist in Togo for the Turkish agency Anadolu. The questions are: “Will this summit address issues of governance, democracy, and the rule of law, or even terrorism in Africa? And overall, what will be the direct benefits of this summit for Africans?”

MR DEVERMONT: Well, this summit is really focused and has made a priority on democracy and governance and security. As I said earlier, on day one we’re going to be lifting up civil society voices and young leaders, and then we’re going to have a session on governance and security and democracy that is chaired by three Cabinet officials. As we move into the day three sessions, we will be talking about the African aspirations as articulated by Agenda 2063, and one of them is on governance and democracy.

And the President – President Biden – feels very passionately about this issue, and so I suspect that throughout the three days in all of his interactions and Secretary Blinken’s interactions, we will give a huge amount of real estate to this topic; we will talk about what we can do together to deepen democracy and address the existential security threats that many countries in the region face. So that’s going to be a preeminent theme throughout the summit.

Molly, do you want to take the second part?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: I admit I’ve forgotten the second part because this situation was so complex.

MR DEVERMONT: Well, I think the question is what will the benefits for Africans be from this summit.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PHEE: Well, I like to think that the United States is a good partner to have. We are a global force and we are – can be a strong voice. We want to be an advocate for some of the themes that we’ve discussed here today. We want to make sure that we’re aligned with the vision that Africans have for their future, for their continent, and we want to make sure that we are positioned – that we sort of reconfigure how we’re engaged so we can really tackle the challenges that are real and difficult for many people.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, has created huge problems with food insecurity that – for African economies that were already reeling from the impact of the COVID pandemic and also really undermined by the impact of climate change, particularly on sustainability and food production.

So these are real challenges that affect people’s daily lives. So what I would like to see out of this summit is that Africans go home feeling that their partnership with the United States makes a concrete difference in the daily lives of African people in terms of health, in terms of security, in terms of food security, and in terms of increased trade and investment. And that will also benefit Americans because Americans also need good health, need good trading relationships that benefit American workers.

So there’s a lot we can do together on all these thematic areas, so I think both countries – rather, the United States and African countries will walk away from this feeling that we’ve advanced our conversation and our exchanges on – in areas that really make a difference in people’s lives.

Thanks very much, Tiffany, for hosting us. We had a good time talking to everybody, and we hope you find next week to be exciting and impactful.

MR DEVERMONT: Thank you so much.

MODERATOR: Great. That concludes today's call. I want to thank Molly Phee, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State at the Bureau of African Affairs, and Judd Devermont, National Security Council Senior Director for African Affairs, for joining us, and thank all of our callers for participating. If you have any questions about today's call, you may contact the Africa Regional Media Hub at AFMediaHub@state.gov. Thank you.

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