

**SFRC Africa and Global Health Policy Subcommittee
EEB/TRA DAS Marco Sylvester Testimony
December 10, 2025**

Opening Statement (max five minutes)

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Booker, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss maritime challenges in Africa.

Africa's maritime domain is vital to global commerce, energy, and food security. Under Secretary Rubio's leadership, the State Department is committed to protecting U.S. interests by enhancing maritime domain awareness, supporting American economic interests, and countering malign influence in this critical region.

Strategic African ports are increasingly targeted by our adversaries seeking military and commercial advantages. These nations promote state-owned and affiliated companies, including untrusted port technologies, allowing them access to sensitive information and the ability to disrupt foreign trade. Such influence undermines host nations' sovereignty over their infrastructure and fosters corruption. For the United States, this creates economic and national security risks.

President Trump's unprecedented successes in rebalancing our trade relationships globally and Secretary Rubio's emphasis on advancing U.S. business abroad have opened new opportunities across Africa. Through diplomatic engagement and targeted programs, the Department advocates for transparent port governance and exposes predatory lending. These actions reduce our adversaries influence in the transportation sector.

Our Economic Bureau and the Department's economic officers on the ground in Africa are identifying commercial opportunities and facilitating connections for U.S. firms while supporting fair trade. The Department's 2026 Port Prosperity Partnership will connect U.S. and African ports to share

best practices, improve security, and foster innovation.

In the Red Sea and surrounding sea lanes, Houthi attacks—enabled by Iranian support—have endangered innocent seafarers, disrupted trade, and threatened regional stability. President Trump, through the historic Gaza Peace Plan, is increasing shipping lane security to the benefit American consumers.

Mr. Chairman, the Trump Administration is committed to growing trade with Africa. A stable, secure maritime sector is essential to this goal. We support regional cooperation and African-led solutions that uphold freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and global prosperity. By increasing our engagement and commercial diplomacy with African nations, we help secure vital maritime routes, foster America's prosperity, and safeguard our national security.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.