



Eric Silla Speech at the French Institute of International Relations (English)

Doctor Eric Silla, the special advisor to the assistant secretary for African Affairs spoke at the French Institute of international relations on promoting stability and democracy in Africa through collaborative diplomacy

(Beginning of transcript)

Narrator:

This is a U.S. Department of State, Africa Regional Services, podcast.

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Dr. Eric Silla, Special Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, spoke at the French Institute of International Relations recently on “Promoting Stability and Democracy in Africa Through Collaborative Diplomacy.” We asked Dr. Silla about this foreign policy approach to Africa and this is what he said:

Eric Silla:

An overarching objective of United States policies in sub-Saharan Africa is to nurture the development of stable and democratic partners who are committed to the rule of law, human rights, and the welfare of their citizens.

The United States and international community need stable and democratic partners throughout the world to deal effectively with the complex challenges we face in the twenty-first century and to spur global economic growth. African countries that are undemocratic and unaccountable to their populations are prone to instability, vulnerable to collapse, and therefore less reliable over the long term.

The African continent and its people face formidable challenges. Despite some noteworthy exceptions such as Ghana, Botswana, and South Africa, the democratic performance of many countries is uneven or in decline. Living conditions in many places are either stagnant or deteriorating. Although conflict is less widespread than in the 1990s, many corners of the continent remain susceptible to violence and millions of civilians are still displaced.

Narrator:

Dr. Silla then explained how the U.S. is attempting to address some of the challenges faced in Africa through collaborative diplomacy:

Eric Silla:

Our strategy for achieving a more democratic, stable, and responsive international system is best described as “collaborative diplomacy,” the act of persistently engaging all major stakeholders in the planning and execution of policies that aim to resolve specific problems or affect broader change.

We are pursuing collaborative diplomacy in sub-Saharan Africa in five priority areas: 1) democracy and governance; 2) conflict mitigation; 3) economic growth and development; 4) health; 5) and transnational issues such as terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, and climate change.

Pre-existing programs such as PEPFAR, the Global Health Initiative, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation are being reformed to improve coordination within the U.S. government and with host African governments and other international partners so that they are more strategically focused, sustainable, and supportive of African-designed and led initiatives.

New programs focused on food security and climate change are being designed with unprecedented input from African and international partners with similar overarching goals.

Narrator:

We then asked Dr. Silla about the effectiveness of collaborative diplomacy, and this is what he said:

Eric Silla:

Collaborative diplomacy depends as much, if not more, on the initiative and capacity of African players as it does on ours. Quick fixes imposed from outside have proven ineffective and not self-sustaining. Developing stable and democratic partners through collaborative diplomacy in this environment will therefore be slow, painstaking, and a long-term endeavor. Nonetheless, we believe this is the best approach for building African will and capacity to meet the daunting challenges effectively.

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