

Clinton star at Abuja, Nigeria summit

By Robtel Neajai Pailey
Special to Sentinel-Voice

ABUJA, NIGERIA (NNPA) - Former President Bill Clinton is on a major crusade, and the continent of Africa is increasingly becoming a narrow focus on his post-presidential agenda. He's saying to the world that the continent needs to be given a chance, and people are listening to the southern accent spin a tale of possibilities.

The seasoned politician was the first head of state, current or past, to address attendees of the Leon H. Sullivan Summit VII held this week in Abuja, Nigeria.

For Clinton, Africa represents a hotbed of potential that has been virtually untapped.

"We need to remember that there isn't unlimited time available to us. We are all here because we've had good lives. We need to use the remaining time to give the same to others," said the politician-turned-humanitarian whose message drew deafening applause.

At Aso Rock — the Nigerian president's residence surrounded by a large boulder — President Clinton was joined on the stage with Olusegun Obasanjo and delivered a keynote address in which he declared the Global Sullivan Principles "profoundly important" because they purport to promote social justice, human rights and



Sabo Adamu is a young tailor who works at his father's shop at Ruga area of Abuja, Nigeria. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton told African leaders last week that they need to strengthen their governments so that they can address long-standing problems of hunger and disease.

economic opportunity.

Clinton currently serves as a board member of the Sullivan Foundation, set up by Hope Masters in honor of her father, the late Reverend Leon H. Sullivan, an African-American philanthropist who was keenly aware of the continent's potential; therefore, Sullivan dedicated the latter part of his life to building enduring institutions that would link the continent of Africa with America — particularly African-Americans.

The chartered flight that arrived in Abuja, Nigeria on July 16 carried primarily brown faces, supporters of Sullivan's vision. Once called the African-African American Summit, the Sullivan Summits have since transformed into a biennial meeting that focuses on private sector investment for the continent. "We have gotten

more from Africa than we've ever given," said Ambassador Andrew Young, Summit VII co-chairman and chairman of the board for the Sullivan Foundation.

At the opening ceremony, Ambassador Young extended a hand to president Obasanjo on a makeshift bridge, symbolic of the conference theme of creating partnerships to bridge the gap between Africa and the Diaspora.

As leader of the continent's most populous nation, Obasanjo was hopeful about the Summit's outcome. "As we go along the next three or four days, we will see and understand the wonderful opportunity for Africans within and outside the continent of Africa to work together so that the gap that history has created that had to be bridged is bridged in our own time."

Obasanjo also encouraged Summit attendees to recast their role in Africa's revitalization process. He was particularly speaking to African-Americans in his opening remarks. "I want you to join us to look at Africa with new eyes and through new lenses. I want you to see Africa as a land of opportunity and boundless possibility. I want you to see Africa as your new home."

The Global Sullivan Principles, which Clinton advocates, is one way in which the Sullivan Foundation is attempting to "give back," by creating corporate social responsibility standards for companies doing business in Africa.

"The whole idea of the principles is to maximize the number of people who can get their dreams back," said Clinton about the eight guidelines. The Global Sullivan Principles, one of the Sullivan Foundation's many programs, is a voluntary code of ethics built on a vision of aspiration and inclusion. The eight principles were born out of the apartheid-busting advocacy applied to South Africa and de-

vised to ensure fair hiring and business practices by corporations throughout the world.

Most corporations do sign-off on the principles that under the agreement that their policies will work to improve the quality of life of communities where they do business.

As of now, there is no mechanism in place to measure or investigate whether or not these principles are being upheld because, according to Director of Global Sullivan Principles Dr. Witney W. Schneidman, the companies that endorse them are doing so on good faith, making some wonder how effective they really are.

Clinton's endorsement adds value, Schneidman said. "Having [former] President Clinton on board is a tremendous help to what we're trying to achieve," said Schneidman, who admitted that the number one goal of the initiative is to get as many corporate endorsers as possible. Schneidman also said that the principles could someday serve as a framework of values for non-governmental organizations and businesses to follow concur-

rently.

The Sullivan Foundation is looking to create a "corporate development index" that measures how well corporations are doing business with specific African countries and the successes to date. Still, Schneidman says much more needs to be done to increase the level of foreign investment. "We need to go further faster," he said in a press briefing after Clinton's address.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, agrees with Schneidman wholeheartedly. That's why she charged delegates who attended the opening plenary session of Summit VII on Monday morning to take a leap into private sector investment with their eyes focused on the potential for growth and rapid returns.

Okonjo-Iweala listed the promises of debt relief, the emergence of good governance on the continent, and the increased cash flow of migrant remittances as indicators that the continent is at a ripe stage for economic prosperity. Dubbed "a finan-

(See Clinton, Page 6)

Nigerian president denies receiving Jefferson funds

WASHINGTON (AP) - Rep. William Jefferson and Nigerian Vice President Atiku Abubakar agree on two important points: Abubakar never accepted and never agreed to accept any money from the congressman.

Jefferson (D-La.) is at the heart of a bribery investigation in which the chief executive of a Louisville, Ky., telecommunications company said he paid more than \$400,000 in bribes to Jefferson. The money was allegedly for help securing business deals for the company in Nigeria and other African countries.

The assertions about money follow the government's disclosure that Jefferson told an FBI informant the congressional representative took the "art," which authorities believe was code for \$100,000 in \$100 bills, to Abubakar's Potomac, Md., home on July 31, 2005. A subsequent search of Jefferson's home turned up \$90,000 of the \$100,000 which the informant had provided.

"It's helpful" to the defense of Abubakar and Jefferson but hardly the final word on the issue that both men agree no money passed between them and that they had no agreement to pass any money, said former federal prosecutor Scott Fredericksen.

Prosecutors could say this was a plan in Jefferson's mind and that the government got there before it could be carried out, said Fredericksen.

Abubakar's statement may give Jefferson "a little bit of a boost" if it gets to the point where he has to call the Nigerian official into court to testify that there was no agreement, said former federal prosecutor Greg Wallace.

Abubakar, a candidate in his country's presidential election, said through his lawyers Thursday that Jefferson never "suggested — in any way — providing any personal economic benefits."

The congressman "agrees with that," said Judy Smith, Jefferson's spokesperson. She said the Justice Department was creating false impressions with selective disclosure of information.

While the two men had contact with each other, Abubakar said he extended "the usual diplomatic courtesies" to Jefferson that the Nigerian vice president would to any American official.

The comments from Abubakar came in response to a series of questions from The New York Times newspaper.

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