



Africa
Policy
Information
Center

Chris + David

Dear Friend of Africa:

I am very pleased to introduce myself to you as the new Executive Director of APIC, appointed on February 21, 1998. Since mid-September, I served as Acting Executive Director responsible for overall administration and management. This included day-to-day supervision of staff and management of APIC's business. I also was responsible for overseeing the transition between APIC and its parent organization, WOA. As most of you know, WOA/APIC's original mandate was the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa. With majority rule coming to South Africa, both organizations needed to reassess their mission and future work. Over the past year the two governing boards met individually and together to deliberate WOA/APIC's future.

The result was a decision to restructure the organizational relationship so that each organization has its own mission and management. This took place officially on January 1, 1998. From September to January, when I assumed this job, I worked closely with WOA and APIC leaders to make the transition as smooth as possible. Presently, WOA is recruiting a new Executive Director whom they should hire in the very near future. Both organizations have agreed to continue working together on key campaigns in support of Africa advocacy.

APIC's Board, staff and I have spent considerable time thinking through ways to make APIC a more effective education and advocacy organization. We will still be learning and changing over the coming months. Nevertheless, I can tell you already that we have an exciting vision of how to continue APIC's twenty years of information for action into the next millennium. In the past several years, APIC has pioneered in the use of new electronic communications to advance Africa advocacy, and has established itself as a leading source of analysis and information on a variety of issues. The challenge facing Africa advocates in the U.S. requires continuing this -- and much more.

President Clinton's trip to five African countries this month promises to raise attention to African issues. But this is far from adequate to build a U.S. policy that truly addresses African grassroots concerns. Activists I talked with last month at the planning meeting in Addis Ababa for 40th anniversary of the Economic Commission on Africa -- which will focus on African Women and Economic Development -- reinforced our convictions that promotion of bilateral trade will be ineffective or even have negative impact if it is not accompanied by increased public investment, debt relief, and a parallel concern with human rights and conflict resolution. APIC Director for Strategic Action Vicki Ferguson is working closely with activists from Africa's ban landmines campaigns, who will be demanding that President Clinton join the vast majority of African countries in signing last December's Ottawa treaty. And, as we note in the enclosed action update, U.S. commitment to democracy in Africa will ring hollow unless there is stronger substantive action to support democracy in Nigeria.

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Our priority is to expand our U.S. constituency base so that APIC educates more people and gets more people involved in strategic support for Africa on key issues. Second, we plan to establish strong communications networks with activists in Africa to bring their voices to our discussion and advocacy actions here. Third, we will be meeting face-to-face with members and constituencies across the country. In 1998 we plan to concentrate on four "strategic action areas" where we see particularly high potential for grassroots involvement and policy impact: Democracy for Nigeria, Debt Relief/Jubilee 2000, Ban Landmine Campaign, and African Women's Rights. We, of course, will also continue our information and advocacy support on a wider range of issues. Lastly, to support all of this, we will be working even harder to bring good analysis and documentation to your attention to strengthen your work on behalf of our colleagues and friends in Africa.

I recognize that the uncertainty over the past few months has created many questions and concerns about APIC and WOA's future. The absence of a strong lobbying voice on Capitol Hill has affected the work of many of our partner organizations. On behalf of APIC, I can assure you that my mandate is to make it a more effective organization and to play a strong advocacy role within our community of partners. The staff and I are working very hard to implement our plans as quickly and effectively as possible.

We need your support. Our work is buoyed by knowing you depend on us. We also depend on you. First, we need you to help increase our readers. Whenever you have the opportunity to promote our E-mail distribution service and website (www.africapolicy.org), please do. Second, we need your help increasing our membership. Our membership is not only our key to a strong advocacy movement. It is also a strategic part of our financial support. Your membership fees help keep us going. Lastly, we need more individual financial support. Besides your membership, you will strengthen APIC if you send a substantial donation to us. Better yet, if you can pledge to send us monthly \$25, \$50, \$100 or an amount of your choice, it will help keep us in business advocating for Africa.

Finally, I would like to hear from you. APIC depends on your values, ideas, suggestions, criticisms and compliments to keep us strong. Please feel free to contact me directly. My E-mail address is pearl@aficapolicy.org. If you need to reach me by phone, (202) 546-7961; fax (202) 546-1545. Of course, our mailing address is:

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On behalf of the Board, staff and myself, I want to thank you for your past support and look forward to an even stronger relationship with you beginning right now.

Sincerely,


Pearl-Alice Marsh, Ph.D.
Executive Director

We're counting on you!

P.S. Thanks to your support APIC was cited in the March 22nd on-line issue of the New York Times!