

- Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.
- It's good to be among friends who share my passion for Africa and the vision to eradicate poverty.
- Just last week, I learned that in spite of, or perhaps because of, our commitment to Africa, there is always something new to learn about the continent.
- For example, did you know that in Cameroon, with a population of 17 million, only about 500,000 households currently have electricity?
- While preparing to speak to corporate sponsors at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School where I earned an MBA, I happened to meet a young graduate named Henri Job with an amazing story.
- Henri, a 2004 graduate of Wharton, came to the U.S. from Cameroon.
- Although from a middle class family, many of Henri's friends were without running water or electricity.
- But the lack of electricity didn't keep his fellow students from their studies. They were so dedicated, they often read on the street under the public streetlight.
- While he was at Wharton, Henri returned to Cameroon for an internship in finance. While there he saw his old friends who—never having had the opportunities he had—were struggling. At that moment, he resolved to help.
- After graduation, Henri worked as a mortgage-backed securities trader. But he was soon offered the chance to join AES, a U.S.-based power company, which was ramping up a strategy for Africa. At AES, he helped raise \$350 million to bring electricity to Cameroon.
- Thanks to this project, 60,000 new households will get power each year.

- And Henri doesn't plan to stop there. He'd like to spend his future working in Africa as an entrepreneur.
- I share this story with you to demonstrate that it takes a group to make a difference. Henri is bringing affordable and reliable electricity to his home country which will lay the foundation for future growth. But it wasn't only Henri; it was also his teachers at Wharton, Wharton sponsors and the team at AES. Individuals can make a difference, but often, you find that a person couldn't have done it alone. This unity among those who have an interest in Africa is essential if we are to improve the quality of life for millions of Africans.
- Many of you here know me personally through our work together with such organizations as Corporate Council for Africa, Africare, Shared Interest and TransAfrica. You know that I firmly believe that the world will not prosper until Africa prospers.
- Our work in Africa must be a partnership if we are to give Africans the tools they need for success and in the 21st century, success means full and equal participation in the global economy.
- And this partnership must address two foundations for economic growth: free enterprise and education.
- My company, DaimlerChrysler, recently created a successful partnership that is producing results in both areas.
- In 2004, we gathered a number of U.S. minority suppliers for a trade mission to South Africa. Our goal was to connect our suppliers in the U.S. and South Africa so that they could become more globally competitive by expanding their capacity, technology and capability.
- After returning to the U.S., DaimlerChrysler's Diversity Supplier Development Team worked with minority business enterprises to construct new business ventures through the contacts made on this trip. One-third of the minority businesses that participated in the trip have formed a partnership known as South Africa Holdings, LLC.

- Efforts such as this are paying off. Gobind Nankani, the World Bank's Vice President for the Africa Region, recently noted, "Africa is on the move and is perched on the cusp of breaking out of the long economic stagnation of the 1970s and 1980s. The last 10 years have seen renewed growth and improved governance across a number of African states, setting the stage for taking advantage of opportunities that are emerging from a rapidly changing world economy."
- That's good news for all us, including DaimlerChrysler, which currently has one of the largest foreign investments in South Africa. Our \$200 million investment there has created a modern manufacturing plant where the majority of our 10,000 African employees build the Mercedes-Benz C-Class.
- For other companies and organizations with an interest in Africa, this is a particularly exciting time as barriers to free enterprise are eliminated. Benno Ndulu, a World Bank advisor, explains that in the past, African "costs of contract enforcement, inadequate infrastructure, crime, corruption and regulation can amount to more than 25 percent of sales - or more than three times what firms typically pay in taxes." However, several African countries have recently enacted laws which encourage foreign direct investment and entrepreneurship.
 - For example, Kenya has decreased the number of required business licenses from 1,347 to 195, substantially reducing the cost of starting a business.
 - Madagascar has decreased the time required to register a firm from 38 days to 8.
 - Mozambique has adopted a new investment code and cut the transfer tax for property from 10 percent to 2.4 percent.
 - Burkina Faso has cut, by nearly a third, the time required to start a new company and registration costs have dropped 60 percent.
 - And Mali has completely eliminated registration fees.

- Together with foreign direct investment, education may be one of the most essential factors for economic growth. Thanks to efforts of many in this room, Africa is making solid progress in education. Again, I'd like to look to the World Bank for details.
 - Enrollment rates in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from 83 percent in 2000 to 95 percent in 2002, sending an additional 17 million students to school.
 - In 2003, Kenya abolished school fees and increased enrollment by one million.
 - In 2005, Ghana eliminated user fees and school enrollment increased by 14 percent.
 - Between 1998 and 2003, Niger hired 2,500 teachers per year which led to a 61 percent increase in primary school enrollment.
- I'm encouraged by the progress we've made so far and I hope you are too. But we can't rest. Nelson Mandela may have summed it up best when alluding to South Africa's struggles. He said, "After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb."
- There are still many more people in Africa who need access to education, healthcare and even food and water.
- Nicephore Soglo, former president of Benin has acknowledged the invaluable aid of a particular organization, Africare, which I believe applies to every group represented here. He said, "Africare's name has a happy and familiar ring throughout all of Africa. Your work is known because it is good and real, it has an impact families and individuals truly feel."
- We've just discussed some incredibly large issues that I know you are all familiar with. But I believe it is our duty as leaders and as individuals to stand up together as a community to help Africa eliminate poverty.
- The key questions to ask ourselves are: What can we do to help Africa develop the knowledge base and training of African work forces? And what can we do to encourage the growth of free enterprise?

- With these two goals, I believe that we will see an end to this poverty, hunger, violence, and disease in our lifetime.
- Jeffrey Sachs, author of "The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time," shares my hope to end extreme poverty in Africa by the year 2015. He writes, "The gap between being in extreme poverty and an economic boom is a very small gap."
- I hope this retreat will reinvigorate us to join together to conquer the next hill in Africa's efforts to achieve economic opportunity for all.
- Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today.

#