

Letter to the White House
14 October 2026

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
United States of America

Dear Mr President,

Urgent appeal: Preserve South Africa's participation in AGOA and pursue targeted measures in the bilateral dispute

I write to you on behalf of Solidarity, one of South Africa's largest trade unions representing workers across manufacturing, agriculture, mining, chemicals and related sectors, to urge that South Africa retain its eligibility under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). We respectfully request that any further measures arising from the ongoing diplomatic dispute be carefully calibrated so as not to inflict severe and indiscriminate harm on ordinary South African workers and the productive economy.

Solidarity has consistently engaged constructively with both the South African Presidency and representatives of the United States government over the past twenty months. We have put forward practical, constitutionally compliant proposals addressing the five areas of concern raised by the US Administration. These proposals received broad approval in principle from American interlocutors. The proposals include the clear condemnation of race-based incitement (including the chant 'Kill the Farmer, Kill the Boer'), the formal prioritisation of rural crime, including farm attacks, the expansion of the equity-equivalent investment model into the mining and telecommunications sectors as a means of reducing reliance on race-based legislation, and a commitment to a more consistent, interest-based foreign policy.

We share the United States' legitimate interest in seeing these matters resolved. At the same time, we are deeply concerned that exclusion from AGOA - or the imposition of additional broad-based tariffs that effectively nullify AGOA preferences - would disproportionately affect workers and exporters who have played no part in the diplomatic decisions of the past two decades. Up to 250,000 jobs in the automotive, agricultural and chemical sectors are partially and/or wholly dependent on access to AGOA markets. These jobs support ordinary employees, many of them Solidarity members, whose livelihoods would be placed

at immediate risk. Such an outcome would weaken the very economic constituencies most aligned with open markets, property rights and constructive international engagement.

The visa restrictions already announced represent a significant and targeted signal. Further measures - such as expanded individual visa measures, financial sanctions on specific officials, where warranted, or adjustments to security and technical cooperation - could continue to convey the seriousness of the United States' concerns without dismantling preferential trade arrangements that benefit productive enterprise and support employment. AGOA has long served as a mutually beneficial framework. Its abrupt curtailment for South Africa would also cede market share to competitors and weaken the commercial ties that have historically supported American influence and interests on the continent.

South Africa currently has a Government of National Unity (GNU) comprising several political parties. Solidarity has asked two of these parties - the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Freedom Front Plus (FF Plus) - to treat the crisis in relations between South Africa and the USA as a dispute within the GNU. The DA has undertaken to raise the matter at Cabinet level, while the FF Plus intends to declare a formal dispute within the GNU. This means there is currently an active process within the South African government to rectify the blatant anti-American and anti-Western conduct characterizing the ANC-led foreign policy. We believe this process should be given a fair chance to succeed and that South Africa should not be excluded from AGOA prematurely.

Solidarity therefore respectfully appeals to the Administration to retain South Africa's eligibility within AGOA while the remaining outstanding issues are addressed through diplomacy. We remain available to support any process that produces credible, time-bound commitments on the five asks. The South African Presidency is fully aware of the negotiations that have taken place and of the workable proposals already on the table. Preserving South Africa's AGOA eligibility would allow those proposals to be implemented without inflicting unnecessary economic damage on workers who have no interest in prolonging the dispute.

We trust that the United States will continue to distinguish between the actions of particular political actors and the interests of the broader South African economy and its workers. Solidarity stands ready to assist in any way that contributes to a lasting and mutually respectful resolution.

Yours sincerely,

Solidarity

(on behalf of its members and affiliated workers)