**To**: President Museveni, Minister of Finance Kasaija, The Ugandan Cabinet, Prime Minister and The Speaker of the Parliament

**From**: Michael Ross (916) 923-2215 **Date**: December 30, 2024

**Subject**: **Anticipated U.S. Policy Shifts Under President-Elect Trump An Overview**

**Introduction to Memo**

Before presenting this memo, I want to acknowledge that while it is structurally accurate, it draws from both verified information and informed conjecture. The insights provided are based on two key elements: first, discussions with several administration and congressional sources with whom I have engaged directly, and second, my broader understanding of how the U.S. government operates—or is intended to operate. This memo reflects a combination of these perspectives to offer a well-rounded analysis of potential U.S. policy shifts and strategic considerations for Uganda.

**The President Elect**

1. Anticipated U.S. Policy Shifts Under President-Elect Trump With the election of President Donald Trump, there is potential for significant changes in U.S. foreign policy toward Uganda:

• **Reevaluation of Sanctions**: President-Elect Trump has previously expressed a preference for non-interventionist policies concerning other nations' internal affairs. This stance suggests a **possibility** of reassessing or lifting existing sanctions related to Uganda's domestic policies. Chimp Reports

* Trump's "America First" policy emphasizes economic growth and reducing dependency on foreign aid, potentially signaling a shift toward engagement over punitive measures.
* In his first term, Trump showed a tendency to prioritize economic and security partnerships over human rights enforcement, which could influence Uganda's future relations.

• **Potential Retention of Sanctions**: While Trump has been critical of interventionist policies, his administration has also enforced sanctions in cases where strategic U.S. interests were at stake. Should Trump perceive Uganda's policies as impacting U.S. diplomatic credibility or alliances, he may maintain existing measures.

* This approach could align with his administration's focus on combating terrorism and strengthening partnerships in regions critical to U.S. national security. Uganda's role in regional stability, particularly through contributions to peacekeeping forces, may influence this decision.

• **Restoration of Trade Benefits**: There may be a reconsideration of Uganda's status under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), potentially reinstating trade benefits to strengthen economic ties.

* The U.S. Congressional Research Service reported that in 2023, Uganda exported $95 million worth of goods to the U.S. under AGOA. Restoring these privileges could significantly boost Uganda’s textile and agricultural sectors.
* Conversely, failure to regain AGOA eligibility could reduce Uganda’s competitive advantage, further straining its economy.

• **Resumption of Foreign Aid**: A shift toward a more engagement-focused approach could lead to the restoration of previously redirected funds, aiming to bolster bilateral relations and support mutual interests.

* According to USAID, Uganda received approximately $950 million in U.S. assistance in 2022. Restoring these funds could reinvigorate sectors like health and education, potentially reversing the negative impacts caused by recent budget reallocations.

• **Focus on Security Cooperation**: Trump has historically favored security alliances. Uganda's strategic importance in counterterrorism operations, particularly against Al-Shabaab, may prompt increased military and counterterrorism funding as part of renewed cooperation.

**The Next Secretary of State**

1. **The Next Secretary of State**: Future Secretary of State Marco Rubio, known for his strong stance on democracy, human rights, and fiscal accountability and responsibility, **may advocate for conditional foreign aid tied to Uganda's progress in promoting democratic values and addressing human rights concerns**. Rubio has supported increased oversight of foreign assistance programs to ensure funds promote stability and democratic governance. His approach suggests that Uganda will face pressure to amend controversial policies like the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) as a prerequisite for restored aid and trade benefits.

**The US Senate**

1. **A Reformed US Senate**: The new Republican Senate Foreign Relations Committee is expected to emphasize national security, fiscal responsibility and accountability and economic partnerships, and will additionally evaluate Uganda's strategic importance in counterterrorism efforts in East Africa. Committee members **may** favor restoring trade benefits and targeted aid **only if** Uganda demonstrates willingness to improve governance, enhance their legislative process and tackle economic problems while maintaining regional security cooperation. However, conservative factions **will** **probably** advocate retaining sanctions until Uganda enacts reforms addressing human rights violations or at least until the 2025 elections are fairly and openly resolved. An election oversight commission will also probably be required.

**The House of Representatives**

1. Similarly, the Republican-led House Foreign Relations Committee **may** prioritize economic diplomacy and strategic alliances, **pushing for policies that encourage Uganda to adopt a variety of reforms while leveraging aid and trade agreements to foster stability**. **House committees on Africa are likely to promote specifically focused policies and programs that support the expansion of democracy, fair elections, infrastructure enhancement, educational reforms, and health programs, provided Uganda aligns with broader U.S. foreign policy goals, such as countering Chinese influence in Africa and ensuring regional security**. **They also might suggest direct allocation of fund to a a variety of programs and entities, bypassing governmental structures, ensuring the delivery of needed funds directly to the programs, stemming systematic graft and personal enrichment.**
2. **Engaging a Lobbyist**: The Strategic Advantages of hiring a lobbyist with an understanding of both Uganda’s feelings, positions and needs and the U.S. operations will provide a variety of economic benefits. They include but are not limited to:
	1. **Policy Advocacy**: A lobbyist with excellent written communications skills can (and will) be able to effectively communicate Uganda's positions and concerns to U.S. policymakers, facilitating favorable policy outcomes **IN LANGUAGES THEY UNDERSTAND**.
	2. **Relationship Building**: Establishing face to face connections with key stakeholders in the U.S. government will enhance diplomatic relations and open channels for dialogue.
	3. **Strategic Guidance**: A lobbyist can offer insights into the U.S. political landscape and the meanings of words and actions, all of which will assist Uganda in navigating complex social and policy environments and anticipating legislative developments.
	4. **Business Expansion**: A lobbyist can, and will, help attract business interests to the nation.
3. **Congressional Actions on the Foreign Relations Budget:** The U.S. Congress plays a pivotal role in determining foreign aid allocations:
	1. **Budget Appropriations**: Congressional committees, such as the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, oversee the allocation of funds for international assistance programs. Congress.gov
	2. **Legislative Oversight**: Congress evaluates the effectiveness of foreign aid programs and can influence policy through legislative measures, including the imposition or lifting of sanctions.
	3. **Budget Process Establishment**: For the last few decades, America has abandoned its Budget Process for one of Continuing Resolutions. The incoming administration, along with the House and Senate Leaderships, have made it clear that they will be restoring the Budget Process in every fashion. (This will be covered in memo #3)
4. **Strategic Recommendations for Uganda**: In light of these potential developments, the Ugandan Parliament may consider the following actions:
	1. **Engage Professional Lobbying Services**: Hiring a lobbyist with expertise in U.S. foreign policy can enhance Uganda's advocacy efforts, ensuring that its interests are effectively represented in Washington, D.C.
	2. **Initiate Diplomatic Outreach**: Proactively engage with the incoming U.S. administration and key congressional members to communicate Uganda's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations.
	3. **Review Domestic Policies**: Consider reassessing legislation that has led to international criticism, thereby improving Uganda's global standing and mitigating grounds for sanctions.
	4. **Diversify Economic Partnerships**: Develop strategies to reduce economic dependence on any single foreign partner, enhancing resilience against potential future policy shifts.
5. **Financial Implications**
	1. **Potential Restoration of Aid**: Lifting of sanctions and restoration of foreign aid could result in increased funding for critical sectors, contributing to national development objectives.
	2. **Enhanced Trade Opportunities**: Reinstatement of AGOA benefits could boost export revenues, stimulating economic growth.
	3. **Cost of Lobbying Services**: While engaging a lobbyist entails initial financial expenditures, the potential economic benefits from establishing favorable U.S. policies outweighs these costs.
6. **Conclusion**: The transition of U.S. leadership presents a unique opportunity for Uganda to reassess its diplomatic strategies. By engaging professional services, initiating diplomatic outreach, and reviewing domestic policies, Uganda can work toward the removal of sanctions, thereby enhancing economic prospects and international relations. With that in mind, it needs to be made clear that this will take work, and will not happen immediately.

Disclaimer: This memo is intended for internal use within the Ugandan Parliament to inform discussions on foreign policy and economic strategy.