

***U.S. President Inaugural Celebration Event
January 20, 2009
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Public Affairs building***

Good evening, and thank you for coming to celebrate this important day in our nation's history – the peaceful transition of one U.S. government administration to another. It is that which we are celebrating tonight, no matter what one's own political views or which candidate we may have supported. This event is significant for our country but also for what it represents to the world – in too many countries such a peaceful transition is rare or even non-existent.

Barack Obama will take the oath of office on the steps of the U.S. Capitol building in several minutes; after, he will deliver his inaugural address, in which he will present his visions for the United States and set forth goals for the next four years to the American people. Barack Obama has named his Cabinet officials and has had a transition team working for the past two and a half months to get ready for this day – this is nothing new; our country has been practicing these democratic procedures since George Washington took office in 1789.

Yesterday, Americans celebrated Martin Luther King Day, and that will not be lost on viewers of the inaugural ceremony today – on the other side of the Mall from the U.S. Capitol building, at the Lincoln Memorial, was the site of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech 46 years ago. With Barack Obama as the first African-American president, certainly we can say that King's dream has been fulfilled.

I would also like to commemorate the President who led our nation over the past eight years – a President who gave unprecedented support to the continent of Africa, including unprecedented partnerships with Mozambique to help further this nation's development. George W. Bush and Laura Bush will leave Washington today as private citizens. Many former Presidents have gone on to accomplish much after their tours in office – just as Joaquim Chissano is now leading peace efforts in Uganda, our recent former presidents, from Jimmy Carter to George Bush Sr. to Bill Clinton have used their leadership roles after the presidency to contribute to development and peace in the world. While we do not yet know the direction that George W. Bush will take, I am sure that he will always carry with him a piece of Africa in his heart. He truly cares about this continent and spent some of his most meaningful moments here.

So let us turn to the television to watch this historic event; I hope that some of you will be able to remain with us afterwards to listen to the insights of two Mozambican journalists who were in the U.S. during the campaign and the election on November 4th – Jeremias Langa and Salomão Moyane.

