



## Most Influential People in US-Africa Relations

The Biden Administration's attempts to restore America's influence in Africa represent a historic shift in policy. With rivals looming large, the US has declared it is "all in on Africa's future," sending its top diplomats and billions in support packages to regain lost ground. FORWARD presents a ranking of the Top 35 most influential political and business figures on both sides of the Atlantic.



**ANTHONY BLINKEN****Secretary of State,  
United States**

America's top diplomat has been instrumental in reshaping US interests on the continent. In his first official visit to the continent in 2022, he unveiled a new strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa that marked a historic shift in American foreign policy, one built on trade rather than aid. "African nations have been treated as instruments of other nations' progress, rather than the authors of their own," Blinken said. It was the central quote that encapsulated a fresh discourse on US engagement in Africa, one built on openness, two-way trade, security, post-COVID recovery and clean energy.





**JANET YELLEN**

**United States Secretary  
of the Treasury**

Secretary Yellen was the first high-level US government official to visit the continent since President Biden's "all in on Africa, and all in with Africa" declaration in December. Her 10-day trip to Senegal, South Africa and Zambia in January provided a clear sign that the "super-charged" US diplomacy in Africa was going beyond the ordinary secretary of state visits that had marked past engagement. A recurring chorus of her visit were warnings of China's dangerous influence over the continent and calls to "end Russia's illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine."





**FLORIZELLE LISER**

**CEO, Corporate Council  
on Africa**

Few have done as much in the last three decades to advance US-Africa relations as Florie Liser. A tireless champion for improving trade ties and sustainable economic growth in the region, she is widely respected as a consummate diplomat and advocate. Before leading the Corporate Council on Africa, she was Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa, leading trade and investment policy towards 49 African nations and overseeing the implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. CCA's annual US-Africa Business Summit has become an engine for two-way trade and a crucial platform for US engagement with the continent and Liser as a valued facilitator for both sides of the Atlantic.





**SCOTT NATHAN**

**CEO of the US International  
Development Finance Corporation**

Scott Nathan leads a development finance institution which is central to fulfilling America's post-pandemic economic recovery and energy transition strategies for Africa. For the US, supporting the development of the world's poorest countries and protecting national security interests are interwoven priorities. With more than \$10 billion spent across sub-Saharan Africa in infrastructure, women's economic empowerment, healthcare, and agriculture, plus climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, the DFC remains a critical nexus point between the US private sector and bankable projects across the continent.





## **Director, US Trade and Development Agency**

Enoh Ebong is a Nigerian-born, American-educated attorney who leads an agency charged with maximizing the value of US exports. At the USTDA one of her priorities has been addressing Africa's infrastructure shortfalls. In December she brought together 13 of Africa's preeminent finance institutions to explore new infrastructure finance solutions for the continent. The conclusion: scaling project preparation efforts to make infrastructure projects more bankable. Multi-lateral cooperation has been a feature of Ebong's approach to the continent, a skill she no doubt honed as the former Head of Strategic Partnerships at the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream.



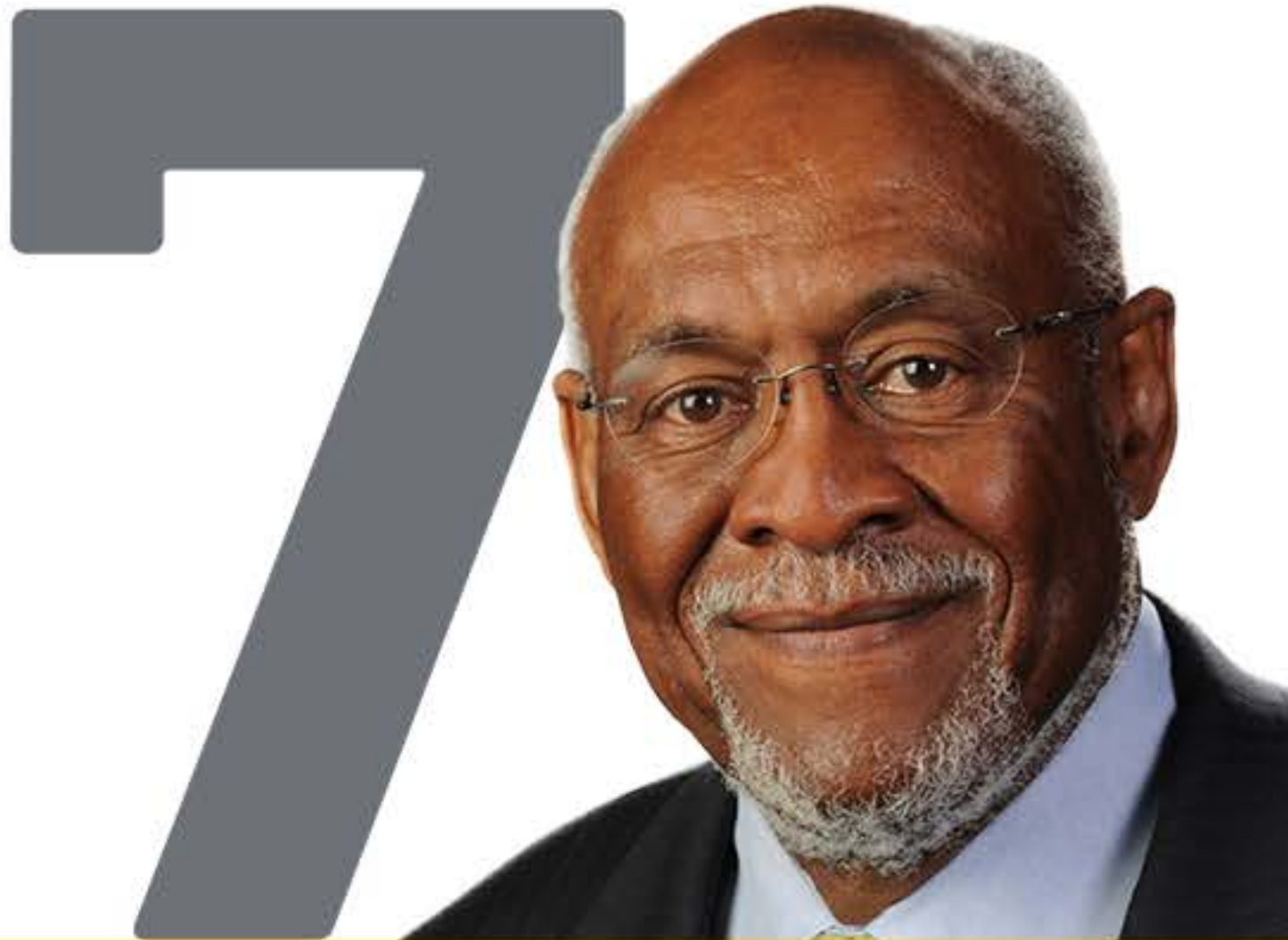


**JUDD DEVERMONT**

**Senior Director for African Affairs at  
the National Security Council**

Judd Devermont is an expert in African politics and U.S.-Africa relations who is widely credited as the architect for President Biden's strategy in Sub-Saharan Africa. A former Director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Devermont's expertise lies in African security, governance, and economic development, and he has provided valuable policy recommendations to governments, organizations, and policymakers. The US strategy for Africa that Devermont helped develop consists of four pillars: fostering openness and open societies, delivering democratic and security dividends, post-Covid economic recovery and climate change response.





## **AMBASSADOR JOHNNIE CARSON**

### **Special Presidential Representative for U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit Implementation**

Shortly after making enormous pledges to the African continent during the US-Africa Leaders Summit in December, President Biden turned to one of his most seasoned diplomats to make good on his promises. Biden's special representative for the US-Africa Leaders Summit implementation, Ambassador Johnnie Carson is an American diplomat and expert in African affairs, renowned for his extensive experience and commitment to advancing U.S.-Africa relations. With a distinguished career in the U.S. Foreign Service, he served as the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and played a pivotal role in shaping U.S. policy towards Africa, emphasizing democratic governance, economic development, and regional security.





**BRITISH ROBINSON**

**Coordinator, Prosper Africa**

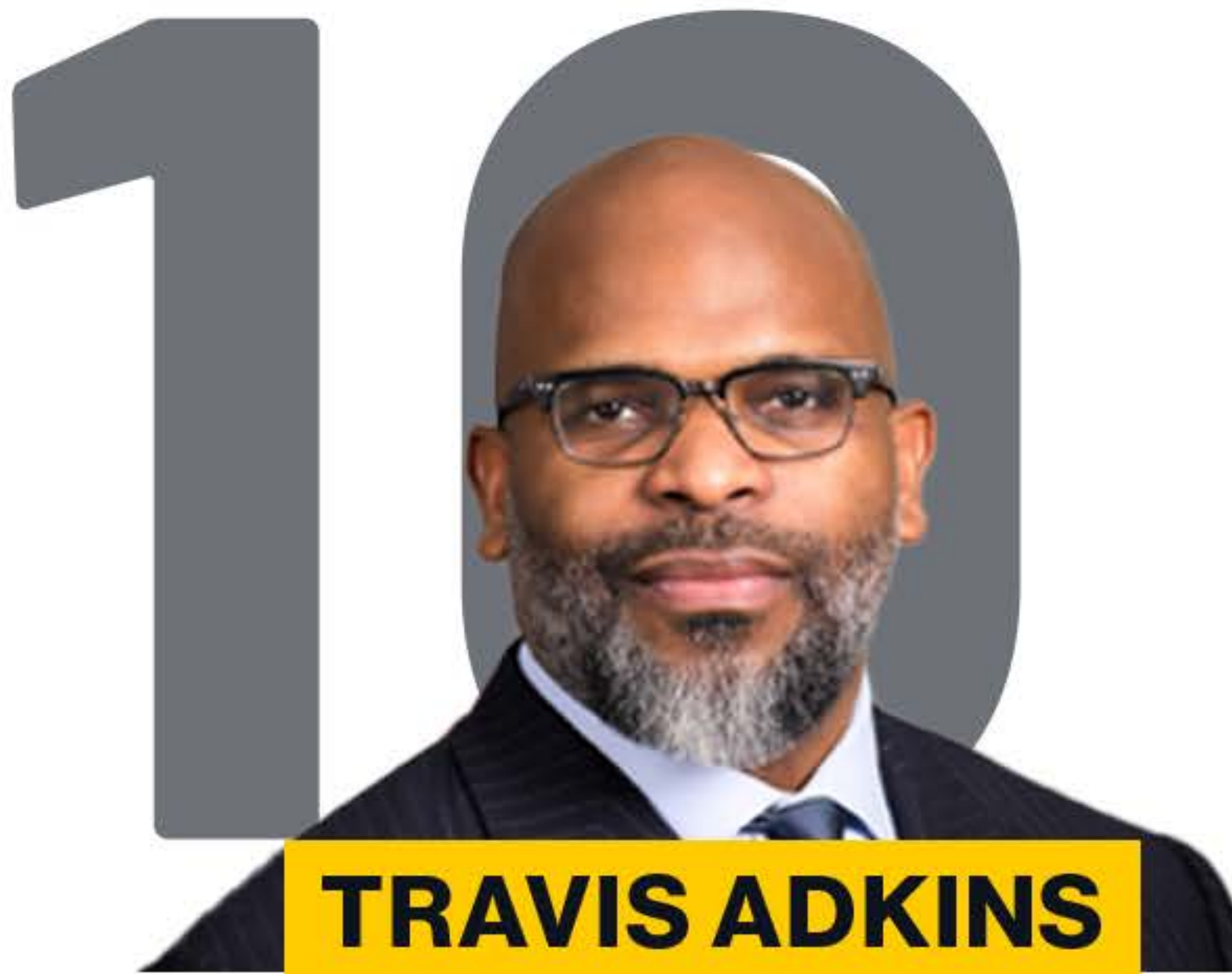
Prosper Africa was established in 2019 to retool the coordination of US government agencies in fostering two-way trade and investment in Africa. Its creation symbolizes a significant shift in American policy in Africa, one that prioritizes mutual economic interests and shared prosperity. Despite all its promise, the initiative remains in many ways an aspirational project. Prosper Africa did not have a permanent coordinator for the first half of the year. That changed when it announced at the 2023 US-Africa Business Summit the appointment of British Robinson, an accomplished non-profit executive, most recently CEO of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. Robinson has the colossal task of coordinating with 17 US Government agencies and the White House National Security Council.



**SAMANTHA POWER****Administrator of the United States  
Agency for International Development**

Samantha Power's engagement with the African continent began long before she became a public servant and one of Time's "100 Most Influential People." She worked as a war correspondent from 1993 to 1996 in Yugoslavia and then reported from Sudan, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Later on, while working in the office of U.S. Senator Barack Obama as a foreign policy fellow, she was instrumental in prompting Obama's interest in the Darfur Conflict. Today, she leads the world's largest international development agency and a global staff of more than 10,000 working on projects that boost agricultural productivity in Africa, strengthen health systems, support democracy and human rights and increase resilience to climate change.



**TRAVIS ADKINS****CEO of the US Africa  
Development Foundation**

For Travis Adkins, strengthening cooperation with Africa is as much a personal calling as it is a strategic priority of the Biden administration. “Being descended from the African continent, I have even that much more incentive to make sure that we’re reconnected strongly and in ways that are mutually beneficial to the US and to Africa,” the former Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa at USAID told Morocco World News last year. The USADF is the only US government foreign assistance agency focused solely on Africa and its prioritizes direct investments in smaller enterprises in the continent.





**LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD**

**United States Ambassador to  
the United Nations**

With a career spanning more than three decades in the U.S. Foreign Service Linda Thomas-Greenfield is known for her expertise in African affairs and diplomacy. She has been a strong advocate for democracy, human rights, and economic development in Africa, with diplomatic efforts focused on fostering international cooperation and addressing global challenges such as climate change and conflict resolution. As a seasoned diplomat, Thomas-Greenfield has been praised for her dedication to diplomacy and her commitment to advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives on the world stage.





**ILHAN OMAR**

## **U.S. Representative for Minnesota's 5th congressional district**

The Somalia-born congresswoman from Minnesota is a divisive figure in Washington DC. Adored by the left as an advocate for marginalized communities and her activism on discrimination and injustice. Reviled by the right as an anti-American radical. Love her or hate her, try at your peril to ignore her. Since Republicans removed her from the Foreign Affairs Committee earlier this year over accusations of antisemitism, she launched the US-Africa Policy Working Group, designed as a parallel body to the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee. Omar is highly sought after by Africa's diplomatic corps for her engagement on violent conflicts and political instability across the continent.





**AMBASSADOR RAMA YADE**

**Senior Director of the Atlantic  
Council's Africa Center**

A Senegalese and French citizen and the first woman of African descent to become a member of the French cabinet (Minister for Human Rights), Ambassador Rama Yade runs the Africa Center at one of Amercia's top think tanks. She is also a professor of African affairs at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Morocco and at Sciences Po Paris. Prior to joining the Council, she was a consultant for the World Bank, advising the institution on education, youth, sports, human capital, and disability issues in Africa.





## **President of the U.S.-Africa Business Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

Scott Eisner's ties with Africa began in Malawi, where he trained political parties on communications and campaign tactics at the International Republican Institute. He has since emerged as an important advocate for strengthening U.S.-Africa trade relations, engaging frequently with senior-level U.S. government officials, international business leaders, and African governments. A former member of the U.S. Trade Representative's Trade Advisory Committee on Africa, Eisner was head of operations for the Chamber's International Affairs Division and vice president, African Affairs.





**DR. J. PETER PHAM**

## **Distinguished Fellow, Atlantic Council**

An American author and expert on African affairs, Dr. J. Peter Pham has long challenged American orthodoxies that once held democracy and human rights as the pillars for US engagement with the continent. During the Trump administration, he served as Special Envoy for the Sahel and Great Lakes regions and helped reorient American interests in Africa in favor of private sector-led engagement. He has since returned to the Atlantic Council as Distinguished Fellow and serves on multiple boards, including Non-Executive Director of Africell Group.