



## **Africa Speaks...Arkansas Responds**

Sustainable Economic Development is a major problem of Ghana and the rest of Africa's platform in accomplishing the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The Africa Global Sister Cities Foundation has chosen Arkansas as the location for its third international conference in 2010 with a focus on agriculture and health care for youth. The conference will also encompass especially those states that are contiguous to Arkansas and they are Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia.

The theme of the conference is:

***"To bridge the gap of hunger through the development of sustainable agriculture and economic adaptation with additional emphasis on youth health care highlighting food and nutrition."***

Arkansas is part of the Sister City International family and has been for the last 20 years. Its sister city program is administered by the Secretary of State's office to support the growth and strengthen partnerships among the state's municipalities and international communities. The mission of Arkansas' sister city program is the same vision that President Eisenhower foreseen in 1956 when he held a white house launch Sister Cities International. He said that sister cities' purpose is to, "Promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation, one individual, one community at a time."

In line with the vision of Sister Cities International and Africa Global Sister Foundation, Arkansas is eager to work to help achieve international peace among people of Africa, Arkansas, and the U.S. through strengthening the ties of friendship, dispelling myths, and bridging the gap of misunderstanding among world cultures.

Africa Global Sister Cities Foundation scheduled its 3rd annual Africa International Conference

entitled "Africa Speaks...Arkansas Responds" to focus on economic sustainable agriculture and health care highlighting food and nutrition between the African nation of Ghana, Arkansas, and the United States. This conference will be held in Little Rock, Arkansas, September 28-2 October, 2010 and hosted by the governor of the state The Honorable Mike Beebe and Chairman of the Board of Directors SCI, the Honorable Brad Cole.

As stated in the theme for the conference, agriculture will be one of the main focal points. Agriculture is Arkansas's largest industry, with more than \$6 billion in farm income generated annually. The value of agricultural and food processing and related service industries and agricultural community accounts for 25% of the state's economy. Roughly one-half of the Arkansas' land is devoted to agriculture. Arkansas' 14.5 million acres of farmland is divided among 47,500 farms. The average size of a farm is 306 acres. Crop farms average 500-plus acres each, while livestock operations average 200-plus acres in size.

Arkansas and the other aforementioned states recognize that the future growth of agriculture will be dependent on the international market. Almost one third of Arkansas's total income is derived from export sales (\$1.9 billion). Conversely Arkansas recognizes the importance of building strong bidding international relations both import and export trade. Ghana can benefit from Arkansas commodities such as rice, cotton, and soybeans. Arkansas can intern benefit from Ghana's cocoa and gold. Arkansas is centrally located within the United States and has air, water, rail, and highway near or inside a free trade zone. With these amenities Arkansas can become the conduit for Ghana and Africa to launch other international trade opportunities within the U.S. This is a win – win relationship.

The theme of the conference was chosen to reach out to one individual, one community at a time with the attainable goal to eliminate world hunger through economic sustainable agriculture development.

The conference will also cover how to break down the barriers to the opportunities for better food and nutrition for youth health care. The conference will explore the defined needs for health care such as HIV/Aids and contraception, maternal & child health, oral health & eye care, hunger. Through lectures and panel discussions the conference will also address how to improve socio-cultural access, how to distribute adequate health care, how to implement international poverty reduction strategies, and how Ghana and Arkansas can make a new beginning. A trade and exhibition show will also be a feature of the conference.

The conference is scheduled for September 28-2 October, 2010, in Little Rock, Arkansas. The state of Arkansas, the City of Little Rock, and the Little Rock Sister Cities Commission extend the invitation to all citizens of the world to a conference that views diversity as strength and believes that issues affecting Africa also affect the United States and the rest of the world.