**A Conversation with the President of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete**

April 3, 2015

**Participants**

President Jakaya Kikwete, United Republic of Tanzania

Monde Muyangwa (moderator)

Andrew Selee (introduction)

**Event Summary**

On April 3, 2015, the Wilson Center Africa Program was honored to host the President of Tanzania, His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete. As his second and final constitutional term comes to a close, President Kikwete reflected on his presidency, examining his accomplishments, some of the key challenges he has faced, and lessons learned from his 10 years in office.

1. **Economic Growth**

As he took office in 2005, Tanzania was emerging from the difficult times of structural adjustment programs, liberalization reforms, and debt repayment, all of which decreased the country’s ability to provide basic services. The GDP was USD $14.14 billion and GDP per capita was $375. Economic reforms, President Kikwete noted, were painful but necessary, and as a result the country has maintained strong macroeconomic growth over the past decade: the GDP growth rate has averaged 7% over the past 15 years, and Tanzania is among one of the 10 fastest growing economies in Africa and among the 20 fastest growing economies in the world. GDP now stands at $43 billion dollars and GDP per capita has increased from $375 to $944.

1. **Managing National Diversity**

In addition to rapid economic growth, President Kikwete highlighted national unity as a major policy tenant that has guided his time in office. Tanzania is a nation of great diversity - tribal, racial, religious – which made the task of preserving harmony often a challenging one. However, deliberate action taken by the current administration to create equality between different groups has yielded positive results.

As he took office, a political standoff in Zanzibar threatened the security and political stability of the entire country. Yet, in 2010, after years of lobbying to receive Parliamentary support, President Kikwete was able to forge a political accord between two opposing parties in Zanzibar and today, he noted, there is harmony in Zanzibar.

Finally, the threat of politicization of religion and the “religious-ization” of politics have not yet taken root in Tanzania, but is a growing concern given regional and global trends.

1. **Poverty, Health, and Social Service Provision**

Poverty reduction, public health, and the provision of social services have all remained a priority for President Kikwete throughout his time in office and each seen great improvement throughout his tenure. Malaria rates have decreased due to extensive interventions; in Zanzibar, for example, malaria has been eliminated. HIV infection rates have dropped, meeting the Millennium Development Goal target, and immunization of children and mothers is now above 90%. Enrollment in primary education is currently at 98%, and secondary school enrollment has increased threefold. The number of people with access to electricity has improved from 10% in 2005 to 36% in 2013, with emphasis placed on extending the geographic reach of services into rural areas.

Poverty remains a looming challenge for Tanzania. Yet, as the President reiterated, it is important to note the acceleration of poverty reduction: from 2000-2007, reduction was 2%; in the following 3 years it reached 5.5%. Strong foundations have been built to guide Tanzania in the implementation of its development goals to transform Tanzania to a middle-income country by 2025.

Regarding maternal health and the continued drive to reduce maternal mortality, President Kikwete stated:

“*Every life is important, and for a woman to die in the process of giving life to another human being, that is not right. It is not fair, and we should do everything possible to stop that.”*

1. **Governance and Combating Corruption**

With only 13 years of multiparty experience in Tanzania, upon his appointment to the presidency, many of the democratic accountability institutions were at a formative stage. As such, improvements in governance have been a high priority of President Kikwete’s administration and many measures have been taken to promote accountability and transparency.

As the President noted, the Parliament is very vibrant, with open, public debates, and has done well with government oversight. Anti-corruption strategy has focused on institution and capacity building through the creation of more comprehensive legislation, increased staffing and training of corruption officers, and the further development of investigation and prosecution practices. Anti-corruption laws have been strengthened, expanding the number of crimes addressed under the law from 4 to 21, and anti-corruption institutions have been given greater latitude and capacity. The main challenge President Kikwete noted was the lack of skilled prosecutors to successfully convict those charged of corruption.

1. **US-Tanzanian Relations**

Relations between the United States and Tanzania are excellent and stronger than ever before, the President noted. US development aid and efforts have made a huge difference in supporting Tanzanian efforts to improve the livelihood of its people through programs such as PEPFAR (HIV/AIDS), PMI (malaria), Feed the Future, Power Africa, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Gates Foundation, and many other private foundations and individuals.

1. **Post-Presidency**

Providing a glimpse of his plans for the post-presidency phase of his leadership, President Kikwete emphasized that he would like to continue working on issues of agricultural development and health, two issues which have preoccupied him throughout his presidency.

In response to a question by Africa Program Director Dr. Monde Muyangwa on the uncertainty surrounding changes of administration and the frequent desire of outgoing leaders to retain power, President Kikwete stated that while uncertainty is inevitable in periods of transition, after his 10 years in office he is ready to move on and hand the reigns over to a successor who can continue to lead Tanzania along a path of growth, development, and global integration.

*“When I look back to 2005, I hold no regrets, only lessons.”*