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Prosperous, Peaceful Africa Vital to World Community, Obama Says

By Susan Domowitz
Staff Writer

Washington — An Africa that is prosperous and at peace is vital to the interests of the United States and the rest of the world, President Obama says, adding that Africa's future is up to Africans.

President Barack Obama

Obama, in New York for the United Nations General Assembly, made that observation during a September 22 luncheon he hosted for 25 sub-Saharan African leaders.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, National Security Advisor Jim Jones, Ambassador Susan Rice, and African Union Commissioner Jean Ping also attended.

In a briefing for journalists following the luncheon, Michelle Gavin, special assistant to the president and senior director for African affairs at the National Security Council,

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U.S. Commits Funds for Economic Development, Health, and Education in Ethiopia

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2009 Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), are providing new funding totaling nearly US $190 million to assist the Ethiopian people in three key areas: economic development, health and education. Today USAID joined the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to officially sign the agreements, which will enable our non-governmental and civil society partners to further strengthen the development of Ethiopia.

This commitment from the United States is the latest installment of a six-year development assistance agenda between the two governments. To date, the total commitment under this six-year plan is over US $615 million, a 107 percent increase over the originally planned commitment. USAID also signed an agreement this week with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide an additional US $890,000 to support disaster readiness.

"This assistance from the American people will continue to help millions of

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Prosperous, Peaceful Africa Vital to World Community, . . .

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described the event as an effort to foster dialogue and build on the themes that President Obama addressed in his speech in Accra, Ghana, in July.

In particular, Gavin said, Obama highlighted the importance of partnership and creating opportunity in Africa, through creating jobs, encouraging investment and strengthening the agricultural sector and agricultural productivity. The president also used his opening remarks to stress the importance of addressing corruption head-on to promote trade, investment and jobs creation, she said.

Obama kept his remarks brief, Gavin said, and used the lunch as an opportunity to listen to what African leaders had to say on these issues.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf addressed the challenges of creating jobs for young Africans. She said Africa's demographic challenge — huge youth populations — adds pressure to labor markets, and she highlighted the need for education. She also stressed the importance of programs that create opportunities for African women and girls.

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda talked about trade and investment in Africa. Rwanda was just named the world's top reformer in the World Bank's report Doing Business 2010: Reforming through Difficult Times (http://go.worldbank.org/DC5JETJPR0), Kagame noted, and he described Rwanda's experience in creating a favorable investment climate. Kagame stressed the importance of regional initiatives and infrastructure, and outlined how the United States could be more supportive of initiatives that will create long-term growth in Africa.

Kagame also talked about health issues in Africa, acknowledging the importance of existing global health initiatives and calling for more attention to be paid to broad health infrastructures.

Tanzania's president, Jakaya Kikwete, led the discussion on agriculture and agriculture-led economic growth in Africa. According to Gavin, participants' discussion of the new $20 billion international commitment on food security, announced at the Group of Eight Summit, was an opportunity to get African leaders' insights on this issue.

For additional information, see the transcript of Michelle Gavin's briefing (http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/September/20090923121017xjsnommis0.2065699.html&distid=ucs).

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U.S. Commits Funds for Economic Development, Health, . . .

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Ethiopians by providing them with much-needed education and health services, more jobs and income-generating opportunities," USAID Mission Director Thomas H. Staal commented. Mr. Staal further stated, "the fact that this year's funding goes well beyond USAID's original commitment highlights the importance of the relationship between the people of our two countries, and the critical development challenges Ethiopia faces today."

Through this year's grants, over US $22 million will improve the quality of primary education, with special emphasis on increasing girls' access and developing schools. The grants add over US $126 million to strengthen U.S. Government efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, control malaria, improve water and sanitation, and support maternal, child and reproductive health. For economic growth, US $40.5 million will be applied toward expanding trade and enterprise, developing agriculture productivity and marketing, including for livestock, and protecting the environment.

In addition to the above-mentioned bilateral assistance, USAID total assistance to Ethiopia this year includes supporting activities to combat HIV/AIDS, control malaria, improve food security, support the Government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program, provide food and other humanitarian assistance, improve governance and accountability, and strengthen conflict mitigation. In 2009, USAID's total assistance to Ethiopia, through bilateral and other mechanisms, totals more than US $722 million. ♦

U.S.-Africa Trade Poised for Tremendous Growth

Washington — There is "great potential for tremendous growth" in trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa and both parties can benefit significantly from an enhanced and even closer trade and business partnership, says Kevin R. Boyd of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Boyd is director of the Commerce Department's Office of Africa, which works to advance U.S. commercial interests in Africa.

Boyd, left, speaks to Jeri Jensen-Moran, U.S. representatives at the 2005 forum on African Growth and Opportunity Act.

In a September 16 interview, Boyd told America.gov, "U.S. total trade with sub-Saharan Africa is less than 3 percent of U.S. total trade with the world, so from that standpoint it is relatively small. However," he quickly added, "last year, total U.S. exports to the region grew by 29 percent, so although it is coming from a comparatively low base, you are talking about tremendous growth, plus you have the potential for quite significant growth further on."

Calling the 29 percent increase "phenomenal," Boyd identified key growth areas for greater U.S.-Africa trade and business involvement: infrastructure, power generation, road building, housing and telecommunications, where he said there is a "tremendous need."

Boyd said that telecommunications in Africa is one of the fastest-growing areas for business investment in the world. "You have some involvement from U.S. firms, but you could have significantly more," he said.

Asked what sub-Saharan Africa gets out of greater trade and closer business ties with the United States, Boyd said: "Through so many different industries, when you are looking at U.S. firms, you are looking at global leaders in terms of the technology that they can bring to the table. Even more importantly, though, in sub-Saharan Africa, U.S. firms are global leaders in training their local workers, providing the transfer of technical know-how and creating a group of local managers."

Boyd said U.S. companies, in contrast to many other multinational companies, often just bring in a small team of Americans, preferring to make a "small footprint" in terms of a U.S. presence and hiring and training local workers and managers.

"When you look at the entrepreneurial class here in the United States, quite a lot of those entrepreneurs were either middle managers or senior managers inside another firm. So for sub-Saharan Africa, if you have U.S. firms training some middle and senior-level managers, you are also helping to create an entrepreneurial class" that can work as a future growth engine for African business.

"An expanding entrepreneurial class will also burnish existing U.S.-Africa trade and business ties that can spawn local firms, which in turn can then supply those larger U.S. businesses. So I think U.S. companies really bring quite a lot to the table," he said.

Surveying the African continent, Boyd said he sees opportunity. "For the past year and a half we have seen a downturn throughout the world, yet when you look at the latest projections from 2009 from the International Monetary Fund, fully half of the African economies are forecast to grow at least by 3 percent. ... If I am a U.S. business taking a look at opportunities throughout the world, I kind of want to do business where you have growth, and here is a region where you have still got significant economic growth."

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Zimbabwe Political Agreement Needs Full Implementation, U.S. Says

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — One year after the signing of the Global Political Agreement between Zimbabwe's leading political parties, the United States is looking to see significant and sustained progress in the implementation of the agreement as a demonstration of the Zimbabwean government's commitment to reform and democratic freedoms.

"There are lots of things that can and should be done that would reflect a genuine change in spirit and attitude towards the implementation of the Global Political Agreement," Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson told America.gov. "If in fact we see significant and sustained progress in the implementation ... I think that we have an obligation to be responsive to that progress" in the form of reviewing U.S. sanctions that target prominent individuals and entities that are undermining democratic reform in Zimbabwe.

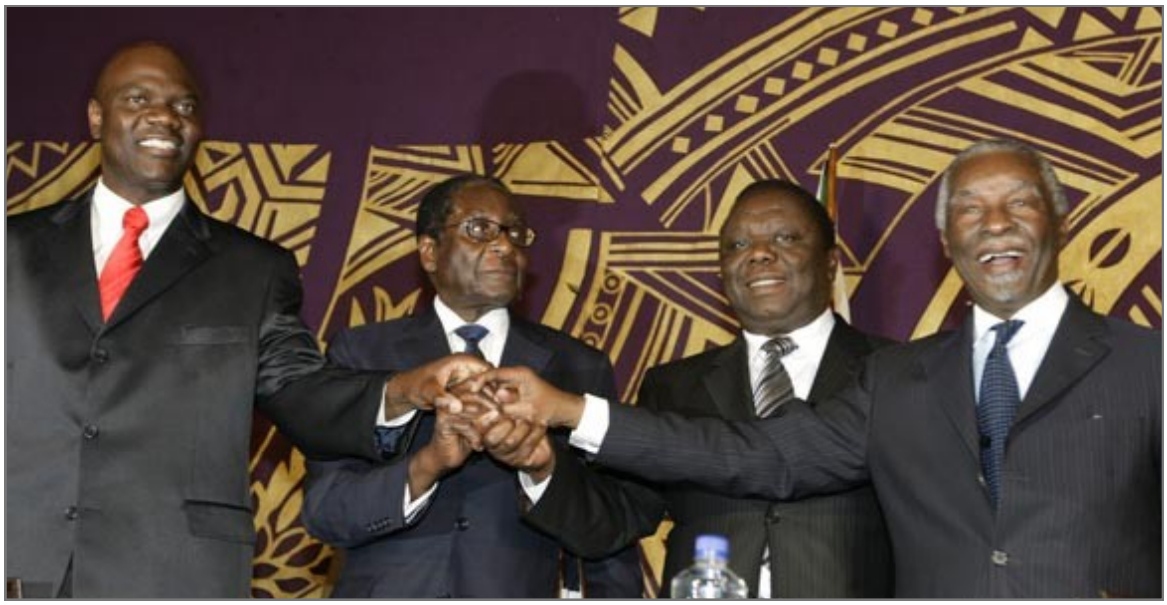
The September 15, 2008, agreement between President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and its main political opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), led by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, paved the way for the current transitional government between the two parties and calls for a new constitution.

Carson says that the full implementation of the agreement also includes the need for ZANU-PF and Mugabe to show more honesty and transparency toward their MDC partners.

"We would like to see the end of all harassment of MDC members ... [and] the end of the very subtle but ongoing effort to discredit elected members of the MDC from their parliamentary positions," as well as the swearing in of MDC members still waiting to take their government jobs following the inauguration of the transitional government in February, he said.

Mugabe, who has ruled Zimbabwe since the country's independence in 1980, also needs to eliminate "all emergency laws that give the executive branch the ability to do things that are of questionable legal means," allow more free and open media in Zimbabwe, and end invasions of white-owned farms in the country, Carson said.

The United States maintains sanctions on 208 individuals and entities that have hindered democracy in Zimbabwe, and the assistant secretary said the Obama administration hopes the sanctions "serve as a political lever encouraging them to make the kinds of political reforms that will ultimately allow Zimbabwe to return to a state of political and economic normalcy."



Arthur Mutmbara, Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and South African President Thabo Mbeki join hands at the power-sharing deal signing ceremony in Harare.

Carson said he reached out to Zimbabwean leaders, including Mugabe, in an effort to encourage reforms and the full implementation of the agreement. He described his July meeting in New York with Vice

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Zimbabwe Political Agreement Needs Full Implementation, U.S. Says . . .

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President Joice Mujuru as "productive and relaxed," saying Mujuru seemed to understand the U.S. desire to see real change in Zimbabwe.

However, Carson described his meeting in August with Mugabe at the African Union summit in Libya as being "strained and difficult," and said Mugabe "saw the dialogue as being an intrusion into the sovereignty of Zimbabwe and an assault on his authority and his power."

Despite targeted sanctions on certain ZANU-PF officials, the United States remains "one of the most significant and largest providers of assistance" to Zimbabwe, Carson said. Working through nongovernmental organizations, the Obama administration expects to have provided more than $200 million to the country by the end of 2009, focused mainly on humanitarian programs to benefit child survival, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and discouraging cholera through the provision of clean drinking water. The assistant secretary said President Obama also announced an additional $73 million aid package in June that provides assistance for combating HIV/AIDS and for furthering democracy and good governance.

Carson said Mugabe and the ZANU-PF leadership are the main elements inhibiting progress in the country because of their "absence of political will and commitment" to reform.

"Again, we see an African country being torn apart at the expense of its people by bad leadership — leadership that consistently puts its own interests ... its own survival, [and] its own desires above those of its people and its citizens," he said. But he said the same leadership that has brought distress to Zimbabwe over the past 10 years can also "help turn the political and the economic situation around."

The United States is continuing to work with Zimbabwe's neighbors in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to encourage change in the country. Carson said he recognizes the impact of Zimbabwe's economic and political instability on countries including South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique, which have had to take care of millions of Zimbabwean refugees.

"The image of the region as well as the economic benefits that flowed out of Zimbabwe into the region have been diminished as a result of the economic downfall" in Zimbabwe, Carson said. While the United States and countries like South Africa may sometimes differ in their tactics to encourage change in the country, "our common objectives remain very much the same, and that is to see the re-emergence of a strong, stable, democratic, economically viable and strong Zimbabwe that can play its rightful role in southern Africa as well as in international affairs."

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (http://blogs.america.gov/obama/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be).

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Zambian Filmmaker Says Democracy in Africa Is Constantly Evolving

By Charles W. Corey and Jane Morse
Staff Writers

Washington — Democracy is not a foreign concept to Africa, but it is a very important concept that is "constantly evolving," says Chansa Tembo, the U.S. Department of State's 2009 Democracy Video Challenge winner for Africa.

Tembo's video was chosen as the African winner in the contest from about 100 entries from Africa. It shows a smoothie fruit drink being blended from a variety of fruits and vegetables.

As a prize, Tembo and his fellow winners — who represented five other major regions of the world — were flown to Washington, New York and Hollywood. Tembo spoke with America.gov midway through his tour in Washington, shortly after meeting Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the State Department and touring New York and just prior to leaving for Hollywood — home of the U.S. film industry — to tour Universal Studios, attend galas and meet with the Directors Guild of America.

Speaking of his experience, Tembo said: "It has been amazing. Everything has not yet registered in my head. I think I will be on the plane back [to Zambia] and then it will click. I will be like, 'Wow, I came to the United States; I met so many wonderful people who put in so much effort.' It is still a dream to me."

While in New York, Tembo and others appeared on the U.S. television show Today, toured the United Nations and were feted at a gala dinner. "There is so much going on in New York — so many different cultures, so many people from so many walks of life. It is an amazing culture, and being at the U.N. was amazing. We got a tour of the U.N. We went to the Security Council and saw what was going on over there. We had a meeting with the head of the U.N. Democracy Fund and that was a very good meeting."

Chansa Tembo

Tembo explained that he came up with his winning video idea while walking through the farm where he lives. "I was thinking about what I was going to do and what kind of video I was going to create.

"I have oranges, lemons, bananas, tomatoes. I was looking at the shapes, the sizes and the different attributes of the fruits, the different colors. They all have unique tastes: some are bitter, some are sweet, some flavors I don't even want to try. ... So when I thought about that, it made me think that people on this planet are just like fruits. We come from different tribes. We come from different cultures. We have different beliefs. We have different colors. We follow different faiths. I thought about us coming together as people and how fruits can be brought together as well.

"Even though you might not be able to appreciate one fruit for its taste, or you might not like the shape or the size or something, when everything comes together or is blended together, perhaps then we can create something that comes together as one that can be consumed by the entire society or at the very least can be tolerated by that particular society," he said.

Peace and tolerance are two qualities often found in democratic societies, he said, and that is why democracy is so important. "I view democracy as a template or a model. I don't view democracy as a destination and say, 'OK, we have gotten here and people now have automatic freedoms and automatic rights.'

"I think it is something that evolves. It is a unique template and something that when it is utilized will evolve and enable people to realize their rights, realize their freedoms. We have seen great success in the United States. It is the greatest democracy in the world. I hope a lot more countries can actually adopt this kind of model and system of governance."

Democracy is not foreign to Africa, Tembo said. "We have had four presidents in Zambia. Our newest president came into power this year. We lost a president last year. ... The very first time multiparty democracy existed in Zambia is 1991, when President [Frederick] Chiluba came into power."

Democracy in the form of freedom of expression is not a new concept to Africa, he added. "We have different cultures and different tribes and different traditions who express things in different ways.

"We have chiefs in some cultures

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... [and a chief uses] concepts and ways in which he can express how he feels society should actually govern itself. For example, if people are drinking too much in a society and messing up," he said, "... in one of the tribes ... the king will meet with his advisers and ask, 'How can we come together and talk about this?' ... Then they have dancers dance in a certain way to convey a message so that people think about what they are doing consciously and make their own decisions." So it is a different form of democracy, he explained.

The regional winners of the Democracy Video Challenge gather at U.N. headquarters in New York City September 15.

Tembo said he hopes to see more multiparty and other forms of democracy in Africa. "I think Africa is slowly realizing democracy. It is not something that will happen overnight. It is a process. It will evolve. It will take some time.

"Even in the United States of America, democracy has been here for a very long time, but then you have the civil rights movements which came a lot later. When you talk about gender equality, you had women who were unable to vote, but after a while, democracy enabled women to vote, and then [Barack] Obama became the first African- American president, number 44. It took 44 presidents for America to realize their first black president. So we can see that democracy is working and evolving."

Tembo called the election of President Obama "very significant."

"America plays a very big role, not only in Africa but across the whole world. People look up to America for the decisions they make. Many countries around the world and in Africa in particular idolize the achievements America has gone through, the governance America has, the freedom which America exhibits. I think people admire those qualities because people want to see it in their own societies and they want to realize those freedoms and rights, so America is very significant in Africa and having an African-American president in America for Africa is very important because African Americans are native to Africa. ... It makes us feel closer and more in touch."

The Democracy Video Challenge is a unique partnership comprising democracy and youth organizations, the film and entertainment industry, academia and the U.S. government. In its inaugural year, the challenge attracted more than 900 video entries from 95 countries. The 2009 winners were selected (as those for 2010 will be) from every region of the world: sub-Saharan Africa; East Asia and the Pacific; Europe; the Near East and North Africa; South and Central Asia; and the Western Hemisphere.

The video platform for the Democracy Video Challenge is provided by YouTube, and the winning videos are selected by a panel of film industry professionals and global online voting. The videos, which complete the phrase "Democracy is...," and biographies of the 2009 winners (http://www.videochallenge.america.gov/video.html) can be seen at America.gov.

Competition for the 2010 Democracy Video Challenge is now under way.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: http://www.america.gov) ♦

Strategies to Counter Climate-Related Threats to Kenya's Economy

By Richard Odingo

Vice chairman of the Nobel Prize-winning United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Richard Odingo is a Kenyan expert on climate science. He is a professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Nairobi.

In Kenya, as in many other African countries, economic survival depends on vigorous action to address climate-linked environmental conditions, which range from severe drought to flooding. Odingo examines some of the problems and suggests remedies.
Like many small African countries, Kenya is vulnerable to the impacts of climate variability in the short term and to climate change in the long term. Virtually all sectors of the Kenyan economy are vulnerable to climate change. The energy sector is over-reliant on hydropower for the modern sector and biomass for the rural sector. Agriculture and food production are plagued by frequent, climate-linked food insecurity crises, and the water sector faces serious shortages in rural and urban areas. Early-warning systems are in place, but the

lack of timely response has led to frequent problems: crises in energy supply, marked by power rationing; famines leading to international appeals for food aid; and rural insecurity because of inadequate water and grazing for nomadic pastoralist populations. Consequently, the government has always resorted to crisis management to respond to climatic threats in these critical sectors. Such obvious vulnerability calls for serious planning efforts to forestall drought and flood-induced disasters, but this has not happened.

Richard Odingo, IPCC Vice-Chair approaches the podium to chair the agenda item on the future of the IPCC.

The greatest concern is that over the years, despite the availability of climate information, including early warning provided by USAID's (U.S. Agency for International Development's) FEWSNET, the economic planners have been slow to recognize the dangers posed and the need to shift gears away from traditional crisis management. The most telling evidence of this reluctance to plan with climate change in mind can be seen from the economic development planning paper Vision 2030, wherein climate change has been given short shrift and

virtually ignored. Similarly, agricultural planners are yet to advance beyond responding to information about annual rainfall variability and start thinking of the impacts of slowly advancing climate change. Climate change and global warming are mentioned as future challenges to the economy but not factored in the 2030 scenarios.

Yet according to the Fourth Assessment Report issued by the IPCC in 2007, by 2030 the first strains of global warming will already be felt in most sub-Saharan African countries. Kenya and most countries in the Great Horn of Africa are highly sensitive to climate change.

Under the ravages of climate variability and climate change, it will be well-nigh impossible to maintain a sustained economic growth of 10 percent per annum over 25 years, as projected in Kenya's Vision 2030. Kenya depends on hydropower for electricity, yet hydropower

is extremely vulnerable to climate fluctuations. As rivers dry up because of drought and glaciers disappear on Mt. Kenya, water for hydropower production will no longer be guaranteed. Another major worry is the drop in agricultural yields attributable to droughts. As warming accelerates, crisis conditions will arise. Water stress will increase geometrically in most arid and semi-arid areas.

Government is not serious enough in addressing the consequences of climate change — or, indeed, factoring climate change impacts in the development process. Hence, food security is threatened, as are the prospects for self-sufficient food production. The economy is always buffeted by climatic considerations, and the nation has yet to graduate to carefully calculated fall-back adaptation action plans. Kenya is considered a leader among the

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Clinton Identifies Food Security as Top U.N. Agenda Item

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — "It takes a village to raise a child," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton famously wrote in a best-selling book, and it will take the entire world community working together to feed the estimated 1 billion people that are undernourished — an approach she will emphasize at the September 2009 meeting of the United Nations General Assembly.

United States food aid headed for Lebanon in 2006 (usaid.gov)

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, one in every six people worldwide suffers from hunger, with children and women the most at risk.

The United States, with its abundant agricultural resources, remains the world's largest food donor. From 2007 to 2008, the U.S. government provided more than 2.6 million metric tons of food valued at more than $2.6 billion to feed people in 49 countries on four continents.

As America's chief diplomat, Clinton has shown a passion for ending hunger in the developing world by focusing on the human dimension of international relations to galvanize world leaders.

Following Clinton's recent trip to sub-Saharan Africa, where she promoted the theme of greater food security, U.N. International Fund for Agricultural Development President Kanayo Nwanze said Clinton's concern "sends a clear signal that the United States is committed to the effort to turn the pledges made by world leaders ... into action."

In a preview of the U.S. agenda for the September 23–30 U.N. General Assembly meeting, Clinton told an audience at the Brookings Institution that the need to "integrate diplomacy with development" is the best approach to ending world hunger.

"By building and strengthening partnerships, institutions and international regimes, we can forge a global consensus" to find solutions to political and economic challenges that affect all humanity, she said.

Clinton said that while in New York, she will participate in an event with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, hosted by the United Nations and the U.S. government, to highlight the need for greater cooperation worldwide on the growing challenge of food security.

For more than 50 years the U.S. government has provided food relief to 3 billion people in 150 countries through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the main U.S. agency responsible for distributing international food aid and administering agricultural training and improvement programs.

Most recently, USAID provided emergency food assistance to 26 countries including Syria, Yemen, Colombia, Afghanistan, Nepal, Tajikistan and 16 African nations. Since 2007, USAID has worked through the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa (IEHA) to train more than 1 million men and 641,000 women in improved farming and marketing techniques, with more than 1,500 women's organizations benefitting.

In April, USAID addressed the plight of refugees in Pakistan fleeing fighting in the North-West Frontier province with a contribution of $21 million of emergency food aid distributed by the U.N. World Food Programme. By the end of May, the agency had provided $71.4 million in food and other assistance to refugees in Pakistan.

Feeding the hungry and helping farmers will continue, according to

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Clinton Outlines U.S. Agenda for U.N. General Assembly

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States will promote an agenda at the opening of the 64th session of the U.N. General Assembly focused heavily on building international partnerships, promoting nuclear nonproliferation, resolving issues in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan and forging economic development initiatives.

"By building and strengthening partnerships, institutions and international regimes, we can forge a global consensus and use that leverage to offer clear incentives to all nations to cooperate and live up to their responsibilities, and we can also devise strong disincentives for those who would act in isolation or provoke conflict," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told an audience at the Brookings Institution on September 18. She laid out a U.S. agenda that seeks to build on multilateral efforts first launched by President Obama and to quash criticism that the United States had too often chosen to act unilaterally in recent years.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks about the United States' agenda for the United Nations General Assembly at the Brookings Institution in Washington, September 18, 2009. REUTERS/Jim Young

Clinton said the Obama administration has launched "efforts to advance our interests and solve today's problems through a global architecture of cooperation and partnership."

No issue poses a greater threat to the security of the United States and the world than the spread of nuclear weapons and the means to make nuclear bombs, she said. In an April speech in Prague, Obama outlined an aggressive plan to move toward a nuclear-free world.

Obama will lead a meeting of the U.N. Security Council on nonproliferation and disarmament. He will emphasize the importance of strengthening the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and the role of the Security Council in enforcing compliance, Clinton said. Bringing nations into compliance includes North Korea and Iran, she said.

"Iran's continued failure to live up to its obligations carries profound consequences for the security of the United States and our allies, our progress on global nonproliferation and progress toward disarmament," she said.

"Our concern is not Iran's right to develop peaceful nuclear energy, but its responsibility to demonstrate that its program is intended exclusively for peaceful purposes," she added.

The U.S. offer to engage with Iran is still on the table, Clinton said, but unless Iran complies with international demands it may face more sanctions and isolation from the international community.

During the week in New York for the opening of the General Assembly, September 22–25, Clinton said, she will meet with foreign ministers from Britain, China, France, Russia and Germany to discuss how to move forward and prepare for talks with Iranian officials on October 1 in Turkey.

The six nations have been working to convince Iranian officials to halt development of a nuclear weapons program in return for a package of political and economic incentives. Iranian officials have rejected the offers and have refused to suspend uranium enrichment activities, a condition for receiving the incentives and eventually the lifting of sanctions.

"We are serious. And we will soon see if the Iranians are serious," Clinton said.

DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN

Clinton said that during the opening of the U.N. General Assembly in New York she will outline how the United States will approach economic development in tandem with diplomacy, coupling the work of the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

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Give Mideast Talks a Chance for Success, Obama Tells Leaders

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says all sides in the Middle East conflict need to act "with a sense of urgency" to find a way forward to an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, and tells Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas that permanent status negotiations "must begin and begin soon."

Speaking in New York on September 22 ahead of the 64th United Nations General Assembly, Obama said his message to the two leaders was clear. "Despite all the obstacles, despite all the history, despite all the mistrust, we have to find a way forward. We have to summon the will to break the deadlock that has trapped generations of Israelis and Palestinians in an endless cycle of conflict and suffering," the president said.

Obama said it is "past time" to talk about starting negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Instead, it is time to move forward and "show the flexibility and common sense and sense of compromise that's necessary to achieve our goals." Along with the necessity to begin negotiations, "more importantly, we must give those negotiations the opportunity to succeed," he said.

"We cannot continue the same pattern of taking tentative steps forward and then stepping back. Success depends on all sides acting with a sense of urgency," Obama said.

He welcomed strengthened Palestinian efforts on security, but said more needs to be done to stop incitement against Israel. Obama also said Israel has facilitated greater freedom of movement for Palestinians and discussed steps to restrain settlement activity, but "need[s] to translate these discussions into real action on this and other issues."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas shake hands in New York on September 22.

Obama also called on Arab states to "take concrete steps to promote peace."

The president said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell have been working tirelessly to create the context for permanent status talks and that the United States is committed to pressing ahead, adding that Secretary Clinton will report to him on the status of negotiations in mid-October.

"It is absolutely critical that we get this issue resolved. It's not just critical for the Israelis and the Palestinians, it's critical for the world, it is in the interests of the United States. And we are going to work as hard as necessary to accomplish our goals," Obama said.

Following the trilateral meeting, Mitchell told reporters in New York that it was helpful for Netanyahu and Abbas to have heard directly from Obama and to see that despite the many issues the president is currently working on, "he is prepared to take the time at this juncture, when there is not an agreement between them to relaunch negotiations, to devote his time, effort and ... what I think is his deep commitment to get this process going, to move to the next stage."

Mitchell said that although many obstacles remain in the way of restarting talks, "there's a very decisive difference in where we are now than where we were when the president took office" in January, citing progress in Palestinian economic growth, "very substantial" agreement on the removal of illegal Israeli outposts in the West Bank,

(Continued on page 13)

Inter-American Network Fights Region's Poverty, Social Inequality

By Eric Green
Special Correspondent

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States is committed to the success of an inter-American network to fight inequality and poverty in the region.

Speaking at a September 22 conference in New York to launch the Inter-American Social Protection Network, Clinton said the initiative "will help lift up the people of the hemisphere." Under the network, she said, governments will make it possible for "people to invest in their futures even when their incomes are just a few dollars a day." The network, she added, is not "charity ... but an investment in every nation's greatest resource, our people."

The network aims to spur the exchange of best practices in social protection, such as lessons learned from innovative "conditional cash transfer programs" in a number of countries in the Americas, particularly Brazil's Bolsa Familia, Chile's Solidario, Colombia's Familias en Acción, and Mexico's Oportunidades.

The network was endorsed by the Western Hemisphere's heads of state at the 2009 Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago.

According to the World Bank, Clinton said, conditional cash-transfer programs have reduced national poverty rates by 8 percent in Ecuador and Mexico, nearly 5 percent in Jamaica and 3 percent in Brazil. In Colombia, the cash-transfer program has led to higher birth weights and improved child nutrition.

NETWORK HELPS REGION'S MOST EXCLUDED

Chile is working with several Caribbean nations on social protection programs, while New York City adapted its program (Opportunity NYC) from the Mexican model. The cash-transfer program provides financial grants to people who take positive actions to improve their lives, such as going for regular medical checkups and staying in school.

The United States joins other countries in the Americas in launching a social protection network to fight inequality and poverty and to help citizens invest in their futures.

The New York conference was hosted by the Organization of American States (OAS), which says the network is designed to identify and promote effective, efficient ways to expand access — especially for the region's most vulnerable communities — to food, health, education, housing, and employment.

Charles Shapiro, senior adviser for economic initiatives in the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, told America.gov that the network promotes the efforts of Western Hemisphere nations to "wrestle with how we can better help those who are the poorest, the most excluded, and who most need help."

The region's nations, he said, "need to be about more than just worrying about political issues and worrying about how to increase trade to [also] worrying about how to help those people who are really not participating in a globalized economy — the people who work and live in the informal economic sector," and who lack educational opportunities. The network, he added, can help get small- and medium-sized businesses involved in trade "so that it is not just the big companies" that reap the profits from exporting their products to foreign markets.

Each country in the network has to decide individually how to deal with its social problems, but the plan can provide "some ideas and show what's worked and here's how people" have tackled the problems of poverty and inequality, said

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U.S.-Africa Trade Poised for Tremendous Growth . . .

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Asked if he is optimistic that there will be a greater awareness of sub-Saharan Africa on the part of U.S. business, Boyd said he is "cautiously optimistic." While there is some interest from U.S. firms, "quite frankly, you ought to have significantly more," he said. He cited a report released recently by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, entitled A Conversation Behind Closed Doors — Inside the Boardroom: How Corporate America Really Views Africa (PDF, 16 pages, 2.43MB).

"So many of the [chief executive officers] in that report," Boyd said, "agreed that, 'Yes, we could be in Africa, should be in Africa, but we see problems in corruption, lack of infrastructure, plus we just don't see the market.'"

Taking those concerns in sequence, Boyd said: "Yes, you do have significant problems with corruption in quite a few places on the continent, you cannot deny that. But if you look at one of the most commonly used measures of corruption, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, you see corruption is pervasive in sub-Saharan Africa, quite a lot in the former Soviet Union and spread throughout many places in the world. So, yes, you have problems in sub-Saharan Africa, but you also have it in a lot of other places where U.S. companies are doing business."

Boyd said the lack of infrastructure in Africa should be viewed as an opportunity. As to the market, Boyd said many of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have at least 3 percent economic growth forecast for this year and that cannot be discounted.

Boyd, who was a participant at the eighth annual U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum (AGOA Forum) in Nairobi, Kenya, said one of the key things that came out of that forum was a realization by many of the African governments that instead of just looking at trading with the United States or focusing on some of the markets in Europe, they should consider greater regional trade. Boyd said there is "a lot of potential throughout the region" that is still to be realized.

Kenya's minister for trade, Amos Kimunya, made that same point in his closing remarks at the forum, Boyd recalled, reminding his audience that countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa need to focus on knocking down trade and customs barriers within Africa to encourage greater trade throughout the region and worldwide. ♦

Give Mideast Talks a Chance for Success, Obama Tells Leaders . . .

(Continued from page 11)

and other actions that "don't get attention precisely because we've passed the stage of disagreement over them."

The United States wants final status negotiations relaunched, he said. "Everything we have said and done in this period has been in an effort to achieve that objective."

"We believe the suggestions that we've made and the requests that we've made would, if accepted and acted upon, create the most favorable conditions available to try to achieve success in those negotiations. But we do not believe in preconditions. We do not impose them. And we urge others not to impose preconditions," Mitchell said.

He speculated that there would be a period of "a matter of weeks" between an agreement to relaunch negotiations and their actual commencement, during which the resolution of outstanding issues would be explored "in even greater detail."

Mitchell also said he anticipates "an active United States presence" in negotiations, but that it would not preclude direct talks between the two sides.

"We're going to try to proceed in a manner that is guided by a single standard: What is the method that will be best calculated to achieve the desired result of a comprehensive peace in the region?" he said.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (http://blogs.america.gov/obama/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: http://www.america.gov) ♦

Obama Says U.S. Economy Must Build on Innovation

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — As the U.S. economy emerges from the deepest crisis since the Great Depression, the great challenge now will be to ensure that the country does not drift into the future by accepting less than its full potential, says President Obama.

"We have to choose instead what past generations have done, to shape a brighter future through hard work and innovation," Obama said in a September 21 speech at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York. To be competitive in a global economy, the United States must be strong enough to avoid the economic cycles of boom and bust, and strong enough to create and support the jobs of the future and the industries of the future, he said.

The president's speech comes three days before leaders of the Group of 20 advanced and emerging economies meet at the Pittsburgh Summit. Among the central issues to be discussed by the world leaders will be the way ahead as the global economy emerges from the recession, and what regulatory elements are needed to help prevent similar economic crises in the future.

Part of the president's innovation strategy builds on more than $100 billion from the 2009 America Recovery and Reinvestment Act that supports innovation, education and infrastructure, and from the president's budget and regulatory and executive-order initiatives, the White House said in a statement.

Obama pushed a $787 billion stimulus plan through Congress in February aimed at bolstering the U.S. economy with targeted tax cuts, expansion of unemployment benefits, funding for the energy sector and social welfare spending, as well as spending for education, health care and infrastructure.

In a speech at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York, President Obama discusses a plan to expand education and innovation.

According to the White House the innovation strategy has three parts:

Ensure the economy receives the human, physical and technological tools needed to perform research and development and to transfer innovations.

Promote competitive markets that create a national environment for the entrepreneurship and risk taking that allow U.S. companies to be internationally competitive.

Catalyze breakthroughs for national priorities that include developing alternative energy sources, reducing costs and improving lives with health information technology, and manufacturing advanced vehicles.

Obama said the strategy is not designed only to boost an economic recovery and return the U.S. economy to where it was; it is also designed to provide sustained growth and more widely diverse prosperity. A significant aspect of the strategy is expanding educational opportunity for more Americans and expanding the number of college graduates in the United States, he said.

"We know that the nations that out-educate us today will outcompete us tomorrow," Obama said. "The ability of new industries to thrive depends on workers with the knowledge and the know-how to contribute in those fields."

Obama said he has set a goal that by 2020 the United States will have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. To help reach that objective, the federal government will increase educational grant programs and simplified tax credits for college tuition, he said. Also, new funding is being used to help U.S. soldiers obtain college educations, he said.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (http://blogs.america.gov/obama/). ♦

Even as Fiscal Deficit Widens, U.S. Can Still Sell Treasuries

By Warner Rose
Special Correspondent

Washington — While the federal budget deficit is projected to reach an unprecedented $1.6 trillion this year, the U.S. government will still be able to raise funds to cover the revenue gap by selling Treasury securities, which continue to easily attract buyers domestically and around the world, analysts say.

China's central bank is the largest foreign holder of U.S. Treasury bills.

"Despite the recession, the U.S. economy is still the biggest and most powerful in the world, and ultimately U.S. government debt is backed by the taxing power of the U.S. government," said Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute, a Washington-based policy research group. "It is an awesome power to be able to tax the biggest and most prosperous economy in the world. So that is why the Treasury securities are extremely secure."

The Treasury Department sells the Treasuries at auctions. The best known is the Treasury bill, or "T-bill," which has a maturity of less than one year. Treasury notes mature in two to 10 years and Treasury bonds are for 20 to 30 years. Treasuries are heavily traded on financial markets.

The value of U.S. Treasuries owned by foreigners has increased. As of July, foreigners owned $3.428 trillion in Treasuries, $804 billion more than in June 2008. The July 2009 total is about 46.7 percent of the U.S. publicly held debt, which was $7.33 trillion at the end of that month, according to the Bureau of Public Debt.

China and Japan, which held $800.5 billion and $724.5 billion, respectively, as of July, were the biggest foreign investors, according to the Treasury Department and Federal Reserve. Both countries increased their holdings during the preceding 12 months.

"In places like China, there are less domestic investment opportunities, less safe investment opportunities," Edwards said. Japan and China have among the highest saving rates in the world. In both countries, the purchasers of Treasuries include private investors and official entities, such as the central banks.

"There is really no place to put money that is so secure," said Peter Morici, a business professor at the University of Maryland and former chief economist at the U.S. International Trade Commission. He predicted that foreigners — China, Japan and Middle East countries in particular — will further increase their Treasuries holdings.

The globalization of financial markets has facilitated the increased U.S. government borrowing, Edwards said. "International debt markets in particular are tightly coordinated and global, and that means that the U.S. government can raise money from savers globally at a pretty cheap cost," he said. "We're able to borrow a lot more now, so politicians do borrow a lot more."

Internationally, there is no other investment bond or note that has the reputation of the U.S.-dollar-denominated Treasuries, Edwards said. In time, the euro will take its place alongside the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency, but not yet, he said. Gold also has its place, but its impact is small compared to the U.S. dollar, he added.

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Clinton Identifies Food Security as Top U.N. Agenda . . .

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President Obama, who in his inaugural address in January told the international community: "We pledge to work alongside you to make farms flourish ... [and] to nourish starved bodies."

Following President Obama's later pledge at the G8 Summit in London to provide emergency food aid, the U.S. government committed more than $5.5 billion in 2008–2009 to combat hunger in poor nations. ♦

While Rising, Trade Barriers Not Different from Previous Slumps

Washington — Despite "slippage" by Group of 20 countries in keeping their vows to abstain from protectionism, the World Trade Organization has found no indication of "high intensity" protectionist measures taking hold around the world.

Since the G20 summit held in London in April, the World Trade Organization (WTO) says in its September report, some G20 members have raised tariffs and introduced agricultural-export subsidies and other nontariff barriers to protect domestic production of steel, motor vehicles and other goods. Also, the fiscal and financial packages designed to ease the recession, which generally supported trade growth, contained policies that favor domestic goods and services over imports, the report says. G20 investment policy changes, however, have tended toward greater openness and clarity.

Global Trade Alert, a research group supported by the World Bank, said in its own report that China is the country targeted by the most protectionist measures and the United States and Japan are also primary targets.

The WTO report says that, overall, the prevalence of trade and investment measures taken in response to the economic crisis are similar to the scale and type of policies pursued during previous economic downturns.

Today's protectionist policies are more varied than the mostly tariff-based measures of the 1930s, measures that led to a trade war that turned a recession into the Great Depression, according to economists.
However, the WTO warns against creeping protectionism, particularly if unemployment continues to rise. Protectionism could worsen the contraction of trade and investment and undermine the fledgling recovery. The report projects the volume of global trade in goods to fall by 10 percent in 2009 and foreign direct investment to drop by 30 percent to 40 percent in the same year.

According to Global Trade Alert's report, governments around the world are considering 130 new protectionist measures that have not been implemented yet, including state help for industries, procurement policies that favor domestic goods and food safety regulations that restrict imports. ♦

Inter-American Network Fights Region's Poverty, Social Inequality . . .

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Shapiro, whose diplomatic career includes serving as U.S. ambassador to Venezuela.

Shapiro, who attended the New York conference, praised as a success the Mexican Opportunidades model, begun in 1997, in which 5 million Mexican households participate. Opportunidades offers conditional cash-transfer programs to Mexico's poorest families if their children undergo regular medical checkups, their children attend school, and if mothers attend monthly discussions at health clinics on such subjects as child-rearing practices. The Mexican model has helped reduce the country's school dropout rate and produced healthier children, Shapiro indicated.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said at the September 22 conference that students in his city improved their school attendance and passed more exams when they received cash rewards for participating in Opportunity NYC.

ANTI-POVERTY GAINS MADE, BUT MORE PROGRESS NEEDED

The United States and other OAS member states will work with nongovernmental organizations, the private sector and other bodies such as the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to promote the hemispheric social protection network.

The OAS says that in recent years, the countries of the Americas have made considerable strides in reducing poverty. Between 2003 and 2008, poverty levels in Latin America fell from 44 percent to 33 percent of the population, while the segment of people who live in extreme poverty — earning less than $1 a day — dropped from 19 percent to 13 percent.

Despite such progress, about 70 million people in the region still regularly suffer from hunger, and millions of citizens lack access to the most basic services, said the OAS.

Forming the Inter-American Social Protection Network shows the continuing commitment by the Western Hemisphere's leaders to improve the lives of the region's poorest people, the OAS said. ♦

World Leaders Gather in New York to Mull Climate Change Response

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington - More than 100 world leaders gathered at the United Nations in New York on September 22 for a day of discussions that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hopes will accelerate the pace of negotiations in advance of a December climate change conference in Copenhagen.

The leaders met as a countdown clock at the Web site of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ticked down the days (75), hours (13), minutes (25) and seconds (43 and counting) to the 15th meeting of the UNFCCC conference December 7–18, where nations are scheduled to complete negotiations on a new agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

World leaders gather at U.N. Headquarters for a day of discussions that U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hopes will accelerate the pace of negotiations over climate change.

Greenhouse gases like water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and others trap heat in the atmosphere. Without the greenhouse effect, Earth's surface would be about 33 degrees Celsius (59 degrees Fahrenheit) colder than it is today. But excess greenhouse gas concentrations created by human activities like burning fossil fuels are responsible, scientists say, for warming the planet and changing the climate system.

An agreement reached in Copenhagen will go into effect in 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol, a UNFCCC amendment with legally binding greenhouse-gas-reduction commitments, expires.

"You have the power to chart a safer, more sustainable and prosperous course for this and future generations, the power to reduce the emissions that are causing climate change, to help the most vulnerable adapt to changes that are already under way, to catalyze a new era of global green growth," Ban said in his opening remarks.

"Now," he said, "is your moment to act."

CONCRETE PROPOSALS

In his first address to the United Nations, President Obama said, "The United States has done more to promote clean energy and reduce carbon pollution in the last eight months than at any other time in our history."

He described the nation's investments in renewable energy that will double generating capacity from wind and other resources in three years, the first national policy aimed at increasing fuel economy and reducing greenhouse gas pollution, progress on the first offshore wind projects, and an energy and climate bill that was passed by the House of Representatives in June and is beginning to move through the Senate.

Internationally, he said, the United States in April convened the first of six meetings of the Major Economies Forum, proposed an Energy and Climate Partnership for the Americas, worked though the World Bank to promote renewable energy projects in the developing world,

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World Leaders Gather in New York to Mull Climate Change Response . . .

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and put climate at the top of diplomatic agendas in relationships with China, Brazil, India, Mexico and others from Europe to Africa.

"Each of us must do what we can, when we can, to grow our economies without endangering our planet," Obama said, "and we must all do it together. We must seize the opportunity to make Copenhagen a significant step forward in the global fight against climate change."

In his address to the summit, Chinese President Hu Jintao said the international community should tackle global climate change through common development. In the years ahead, he added, China will intensify its effort to conserve energy and improve energy efficiency, attempting to cut carbon dioxide emissions "by a notable margin by 2020 from the 2005 level."

China will develop renewable energy and nuclear energy, increasing alternative fuels in primary energy consumption to around 15 percent by 2020; increase forest coverage by 40 million hectares and forest stock volume by 1.3 billion cubic meters by 2020 from 2005 levels; and step up efforts to develop a low-carbon economy and develop climate-friendly technologies, Hu said.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy proposed that the major economies meet in mid-November to "transcend the role-playing, the empty speeches, the petty diplomatic gains to table concrete proposals" for Copenhagen, and that a single world environment organization be created during the December meeting.

Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed, Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and Costa Rican President Óscar Arias also spoke at the opening plenary session.

VOICES FROM YOUTUBE

The summit was not a traditional U.N. meeting, where heads of state make live opening statements as the summit begins. Instead, they were asked to send in opening video statements that are available at the U.N. Headquarters and on the U.N. television page on YouTube.

"Recognizing the right of poor countries to develop and to lift their people out of poverty, and to leave room for developing countries to grow, developed countries have committed to reducing their own emissions by at least 80 percent by 2050," British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said in his video. "The next stage is to agree [to] a climate finance partnership that will help developing countries both adapt to climate change and to shift to low-carbon growth themselves."

"Climate change is perhaps the most important challenge we face today," Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said in his video. "It poses a threat not only to the environment but also to the global economy, international security and ultimately humanity. If we choose to ignore it, we would do so at our own peril and we would live to regret what we did not do for ourselves and for our children."

Thailand will host more U.N. climate change talks in Bangkok, September 28-October 9.

"As a small island state continuously battered by the vagaries of hurricanes that repeatedly undermine its developmental gains," said St. Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Denzil Douglas, "St. Kitts and Nevis uses this medium to join once again in registering deepest concerns regarding the slow pace at which the global community is moving to address this issue."

"It's a complex issue, but the bottom line is simply stated," said James Leape, director general of the World Wildlife Fund International. "Somehow we must ensure that global emissions peak and begin to decline in the next eight years. As world leaders, that must be your priority."

"I will invite all heads of states and governments to engage in the process ahead with a view to concluding a political agreement in Copenhagen," said Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen. "That will be a proper answer to the call for action by science. That will be a proper answer to the call for clarity from industry. And that will be the proper answer to the call for responsibility from our citizens."

More information about the U.N. Summit on Climate Change (http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/lang/en/pages/2009summit) is available at the U.N. Web site.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: http://www.america.gov) ♦

Representatives of 17 Major Economies Tackle Climate Issues

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington — Representatives of 17 major developed and developing countries met at the Major Economies Forum (MEF) in Washington September 17–18 to tackle a range of unresolved issues on climate change.

Months before leaders of 192 countries converge in Copenhagen in December to try to craft an ambitious agreement on climate change, attendees at the forum sought early consensus on critical global challenges, including how to adapt to environmental change and mitigate its effects, and how to measure, report and verify reductions in greenhouse gases.

"I think there was some narrowing of differences," Todd Stern, U.S. special envoy for climate change, said in a briefing after the meeting. "There are plenty of differences that remain, but it was a pretty full ventilation of views in a way that … the MEF is designed to promote."

Forum members are Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States. Denmark and the United Nations also were invited to participate.

President Barack Obama launched the MEF in March to facilitate candid discussion among the members, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and achieve an international climate agreement during the 15th conference of the parties (COP-15) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that will take place December 7–18 in Copenhagen.

SEEKING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT

The UNFCCC, an international treaty outlining general goals and rules for battling climate change, was adopted in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Brazil.

The first assessment report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published two years earlier, played a decisive role in the treaty's creation by stating that emissions from human activities were substantially increasing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, and that this would raise global mean temperatures in the 21st century above that seen for the past 10,000 years.

The Kyoto Protocol is an amendment to the UNFCCC that establishes legally binding commitments to reduce specific greenhouse gases produced by industrialized nations, and general commitments for all member countries. As of January, 183 parties had ratified the protocol, which entered into force in 2005 and ends in 2012. The United States declined to ratify the protocol, partly because developing countries had no legally binding commitments under the amendment.

In a statement to a climate change committee of the U.S. House of Representatives on September 10, Stern characterized one of the main barriers to a climate change agreement in Copenhagen.
"Developing countries tend to see a problem not of their own making that they are being asked to fix in ways which, they fear, could stifle their ability to lift their standards of living," he said in testimony.

"Developed countries tend to see an unforgiving problem with potentially grave and irreversible consequences and that cannot be solved without the full participation of developing countries," he said, "particularly China and the other emerging market economies."

The good news, he said, is that major developing countries like China, India, Brazil, South Africa and others are focusing on climate change and taking significant action.

"In some cases," he added, "they are taking action at the federal level that outstrips our own."

APPROACHING COPENHAGEN

The Major Economies Forum will meet again in October/November, Stern said. In the meantime, several other meetings will focus attention on the run-up to COP-15.

On September 22, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will convene a climate change summit in New York, ahead of the U.N. General Assembly meetings, to promote the urgent need for action in Copenhagen. President Obama plans to attend. "I think that we're looking for this president to make a strong statement," Stern said. "It's an opportunity for him to speak before the nations of the world on this issue."

The summit will focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in developed and developing countries, funding to support mitigation and adaptation, and governance structures needed for an effective regime. ♦

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See also

http://www.america.gov/
Telling America's story

Clinton Outlines U.S. Agenda for U.N. . . .

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"The foundation for our approach will be principles that will move us away from top-down assistance that too often fails to meet the needs of those we are attempting to help or has only short-term effects," Clinton said.

"To solve the complex problems of poverty, hunger, health, climate change, where they intersect, we want to focus on those root causes and look for approaches that really change, transform the environment in which people are making these decisions, and in which governments are held accountable to a higher degree of performance and transparency."

Clinton said she will personally work to advance international efforts to recognize women as drivers of economic progress and social stability, and she will address impediments to women's empowerment and advancement, especially sexual and gender-based violence. During a recent trip to sub-Saharan Africa, Clinton emphasized efforts to curb gender-based violence as essential to strengthening African societies.

"I will chair a session of the Security Council and will speak on behalf of the adoption of a resolution on women, peace and security," she said.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (http://blogs.america.gov/obama/).

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Strategies to Counter Climate-Related Threats to Kenya's Economy . . .

(Continued from page 8)

developing economies of sub-Saharan Africa, but extensive production of tea and coffee for export has come at the expense of food production; self-sufficiency in food-related crops and livestock production have been neglected.

The current drought in Kenya, the second in two years, is a small symptom of what is clearly one of the worst on record. More than 4 million persons at risk from food shortage is an indication of the vulnerability of the food production system. The drought has been

compounded by acute water shortages for agricultural and urban populations and for livestock, which in addition have no grazing. Livestock mortality is at its highest in the last 20 years, and economic growth is bound to be depressed down to 2 percent or less.

Kenya needs the developed world to help with improved agricultural planning and energy development that relies less on hydropower and more on renewable sources. More sober economic planning and adequate funding to help agricultural and pastoral communities weather bad droughts are necessary. Safety nets for food, agriculture, and livestock should be promoted. Looking to food imports as a way out is unwise. The economic importance of climate change must be factored into all development and financial planning.

Water requires urgent attention. Investment in water harvesting at all levels can provide better environmental management to stop deforestation and devegetation, which will slow down the progress of climate change. In the international arena, Kenya can benefit by working with other nations. Technology transfer and adequate funding at national and international levels to help reduce vulnerability to climate change can make adaptation a working reality. Making pastoral areas more productive and integrating pastoral populations more fully into the national economy will strengthen self-sufficiency. In good years Kenya has the capacity to produce enough food for its population, now over 35 million. As time passes, the challenges posed by climate change will be harder to bear. There is no shortcut to finding solutions to all these problems other than sound economic planning that gives governments alternative ways of responding to the climate crisis. ♦