



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

U.S. Committed to Strengthen HIV Counseling and Testing in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa – In connection with the National HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT) Day in Ethiopia, the United State Government renews its commitment to support the Government of Ethiopia’s goal of universal access



A nurse taking blood test in one of the home to home testing programs

to HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment by focusing on HIV counseling and testing (HCT) in urban and peri-urban areas and selected rural areas.

The U.S. government through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

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U.S. Emphasizes Freedom of Expression at Human Rights Council

By Jane Morse Staff Writer

Washington — The United States will emphasize the importance of freedom of expression as it takes its seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council, says Assistant Secretary of State In an interview with America.gov shortly before leaving for Geneva, where the council is



Esther Brimmer

holding its 12th regular session September 14 through October 2, Brimmer observed that freedom of expression unfortunately has become a battleground between Western states and members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). At issue is whether comment regarding religion, especially Islam, constitutes defamation.

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"We think freedom of expression is actually a fundamental human right," Brimmer told America.gov. Although fighting xenophobia and racism is critically important, she said, constrained speech does not accomplish these goals.

"By providing opportunities for expression, for speech, for people to have an exchange of views to allow lots of ideas to flourish, that's the route to tolerance," Brimmer said. To this end, she said, the United States has been working with Egypt, which is representing the OIC, to find language for a new resolution that will bridge the gap in understanding how religion can be addressed.

"Let's start with tolerance and respect," Brimmer said. "Draw on the themes of [President Obama's] speech in Cairo, and say we can talk about tolerance and respect without going down the road of limiting speech," she said. If adoption of the freedom of expression resolution is a success, it may "heal some wounds, so then we can have a conversation about the defamation issue as well," Brimmer said.

KEEPING WATCH ON THE WORLD

Brimmer, who is the assistant secretary for the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs, said the U.S. hope is that the council will address important human rights issues worldwide. "We think that [the council] should not be imbalanced and disproportionately take up Middle East issues," she said. "There are so many more resolutions and so many more agenda items on the Palestinian-Israeli issues that it sometimes

crowds out all the other human rights issues around the globe. We should be looking across the globe at the most serious issues and not focused so much on one particular region of the world to the exclusion of some other areas which also should get serious attention."

For example, the human rights conditions in Iran after its recent elections are of serious concern, Brimmer said. In addition, the United States is concerned about the human rights situation in Burma, particularly after the recent trial of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and numerous other political prisoners held by the Burmese regime. "So I think we need to also look at these country-specific situations as well as just Middle East issues," Brimmer said.

Brimmer also expressed the hope for "a real integrated relationship between the multilateral-bilateral diplomacy" and that the work done by the council in Geneva complements the work done in capitals.

Brimmer emphasized the U.S. commitment to the idea that human rights are universal. "At times the idea that human rights apply to all people has come under challenge — sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely — but we want to say that we clearly defend the idea that human rights are universal, not particular to one group of people or another group of people."

She also noted U.S. support for the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and maintaining accountability, transparency and good governance.

MORE U.S. ENGAGEMENT

The U.S. decision to seek election to a seat on the 47-member U.N. Human Rights Council is in keeping with the Obama administration's goal for a "new era of engagement" with other nations. The council has had a troubled history; some of its current and past members have weak records for protecting human rights in their own countries. In addition, there have been concerns over how the council deals with Israel. Between 2006 and 2008, for example, Israel was condemned 15 times.

President Obama has repeatedly emphasized the need for nations to work together to overcome global challenges.

"It is only by building a new foundation of mutual trust that we will tackle some of our most entrenched problems," he said in a radio address to Americans on April 11. "With all that is at stake today, we cannot afford to talk past one another. We can't afford to allow old differences to prevent us from making progress in areas of common concern."

Learn more:

Obama Administration Seeks Greater Involvement with U.N. (<http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2009/April/20090414111055ajesrom0.7777979.html>)

President Obama's Remarks at Cairo University, Egypt (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/June/20090603171549eaifas0.6576807.html>) ♦

Business Summit Will Urge American Companies to Invest in Africa

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — As African leaders and U.S. investors prepare to convene in Washington for the U.S.-Africa Business Summit, an official from the federal Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) says investment in Africa is now more appealing for companies than before the global financial crisis.

From the private sector perspective, Africa is “the natural next frontier” for investment, and partnerships between investors and donors on the continent create win-win situations for both as they share the investment risk, says Jeri Jensen, the managing director for private-sector initiatives at the MCC.

The International Monetary Fund expects Africa’s economic growth to be 3.4 percent during 2009, which is higher than many other areas of the world that were hit harder by the global financial crisis. Jensen told America.gov that she is hearing from some U.S. companies that partnering with a donor in Africa “is more appealing now than it was before the crisis,” due to greatly reduced consumer demand in Europe and the United States, and the desire by more visionary companies to “get in on the ground floor of Africa” with long-term investments.

According to press reports, the business summit, which is held every two years, is bringing African government leaders, including 10 heads of state, together with



At the Eighth AGOA Forum held in Kenya in August, Secretary Clinton said democracy is essential for business and trade growth.

American private-sector representatives who are interested in starting or expanding their investments on the African continent. The summit will be held September 29–October 1, and is co-sponsored by the MCC and the Corporate Council on Africa, which represents private-sector concerns

For many U.S. investors, Africa is unexplored territory, Jensen said. Countries currently participating in the MCC’s programs are “already ideal investment partners” because participation requires meeting a series of standards on ruling justly, investing in people and economic reform.

“We’ve seen that foreign direct investment in MCC countries is significantly higher than investment in other developing countries,” Jensen said. “For the private sector, MCC countries are really ... a gateway, as they get their toes wet when they’re thinking about an Africa strategy.”

In his July 11 speech in Ghana, President Obama said good governance is the key to Africa’s economic development, and he urged private-sector partnerships to move the continent toward greater self-sustainability and prosperity. Obama also raised the issue of country ownership, which is a unique feature of MCC agreements, or compacts, Jensen said.

“When a country is deemed eligible for a compact, they are responsible for developing a proposal and implementing the investment, and accountable for the results from those projects,” she explained.

Along with allowing the country the flexibility to reassess the projects as they meet or fail to meet their targets, the MCC projects are also attractive to private investors because they enjoy five years of predictable funding and are tied directly to the country itself, rather than to the donor.

“It is a capacity-building exercise that goes on, and our MCC partners implement these projects, and from a private-sector perspective, it cre-

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Andrew Young to Be Honored for Commitment to Africa

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Ambassador Andrew Young will be awarded a lifetime achievement award at the Corporate Council on Africa's seventh biennial U.S.-Africa Business Summit, to be held in Washington September 29 to October 1.

"Ambassador Young is and has been an advocate of human rights and humanitarian issues as well as dedicated to promoting economic prosperity in Africa," said Stephen Hayes, president and chief executive of the Corporate Council on Africa, in a September 3 statement announcing the award. "We are grateful for the opportunity to honor the commitment he has shown to Africa throughout his career."

Established in 1993, the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) works to strengthen and facilitate commercial relationships between the United States and the African continent. CCA works closely with governments, multilateral groups and businesses to improve the African continent's trade and investment climate, and to raise the profile of Africa in the U.S. business community.

Young started his career as a top aide to Martin Luther King Jr. during the American civil rights movement. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1972, becoming the first African American since Reconstruction to be voted into Congress from Georgia. In 1977, appointed by President Jimmy Carter, Young became the first African American to serve as the U.S. permanent representative



Ambassador Andrew Young

to the United Nations, popularly known as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Beginning in 1981 he served two terms as mayor of Atlanta, bringing in billions of dollars in new private investment. In 1996, he also served as co-chairman of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games.

Young was appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1994 to serve as chairman of the \$100 million Southern Africa Enterprise Development Fund, whose objective is to stimulate the creation and expansion of small and medium-sized indigenous businesses throughout southern Africa. The fund was also founded on the initiative of then-South African President Nelson Mandela. In his role as fund chairman, Young helped establish the Eerste River Medical Centre in Cape Town, alleviating demand on overcrowded hospitals.

Young is also co-chairman of GoodWorks International, a for-profit consulting firm built on the belief that the private sector can promote initiatives that support education, social advancement, economic development and capacity building in Africa and the Caribbean. He travels often to Africa, fostering partnerships that benefit the communities in which they operate. In 2008, the GoodWorks Foundation partnered with the Wanawake na Maendeleo Foundation to award educational scholarships in Tanzania.

ALSO AN AWARD-WINNING TELEVISION PRODUCER

In June 2009, Young won three Emmy awards for Andrew Young Presents, a series of documentaries that appeared in the United States and in Central and Eastern Africa as well. One of the Emmy awards was for "Walking With Guns," which focused on youth violence. The documentary also told the inspiring story of Wheelchair Charities, a New York organization that helps thousands of paraplegic and quadriplegic patients, many of them gunshot victims.

Young also produced the award-winning documentary Rwanda Rising, which showcased modern-day Rwanda on the global stage.

Young's commitment to education and global service is evident at Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, which was created to carry on the legacy of Young's ideals through programs he believes will "level the playing field" for the world's poor.

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(PEPFAR) has been the lead partner in strengthening and expanding HCT services in Ethiopia. The U.S. government has assisted the federal and regional governments since 2001 and will continue to offer support to strengthen and improve coordination of HCT programs and services.

The U.S. government views HCT programs as key entry points into HIV prevention, care, and treatment services. HCT programs enable HIV positive persons to be referred to mother-to child prevention programs, anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment programs, and other care and support services. In addition, HCT programs can also provide links to services for orphans and vulnerable children.

PEPFAR Ethiopia has worked with both the public and private sectors at hospitals, health centers, model

centers, and stand-alone voluntary counseling and testing sites to strengthen the capacity of local organizations, including government, civil society and private organizations.

The PEPFAR Ethiopia Semi Annual report documents that a total of 1,377,672 people were tested in PEPFAR-supported sites in the first half of 2009.

PEPFAR support has already strengthened and extended health systems in areas such as human resources, infrastructure, informatics, commodities logistics, and laboratory services.

The goal of HIV counseling and testing is to prevent the transmission of HIV from people who test positive for the virus to untested or negative partners, including transmission from mothers who test positive to their children. Counseling and testing also helps HIV-

positive people to receive early and appropriate support and treatment, and improves adherence to anti-retroviral drugs and preventive therapies.

The fight against the global AIDS epidemic is a centerpiece of the foreign policy and global health agenda outlined by President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

On July 30, 2009 the United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008 was signed into law. This act expands the U.S. Government commitment to the Presidents Emergency Fund for AIDFS Relief for five additional years, from 2009 through 2013. The Act increased the U.S. financial commitment to the fight against global HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, authorizing up to \$48 billion to support existing and new programs. ♦

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The scholars and researchers at the school operate on the principle that the key to ending poverty is building strong national economies. They, like Young, who occasionally teaches at the school, work to bring economic well-being to developing nations in Africa.

The school works in more than 30 countries around the globe, as well as at home, in the areas of health care, environment, taxation, aging, education, child care and diversity.

Programs at the school include the Mandela Scholars program, a planned student exchange program between the Andrew Young School and the University of Pretoria in South Africa, and an ongoing program on taxation in Russia.

Responding to the CCA announcement, Young said, "I am most appreciative to the Corporate Council on Africa for this award. Since 1993 GoodWorks International and the Council have partnered to promote development, investment and trade on the African continent. I am

looking forward to continuing to work with CCA in this effort."

CCA will also present a business leadership award and business excellence awards in agribusiness, infrastructure, financing and natural resources.

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

Reforming African Economies Continue to Reap Benefits

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Although total U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa (exports plus imports) declined in the first four months of 2009 compared with the same period in 2008, largely as a result of the global economic crisis, many sub-Saharan African countries continue to reap benefits from changes to their economic policies, improved governance and investments in key social sectors undertaken during the past decade.

Holly Vineyard, deputy assistant secretary for Africa, the Middle East and South Asia in the Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, discussed African economies in June 24 testimony to two House of Representatives subcommittees.

"There was a sharp drop-off in total [African] trade of 52 percent for the first four months of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008," Vineyard told the lawmakers.

That trade fall-off tracked with the 28 percent decline in U.S. total trade with the world for this period, she added. "U.S. exports for January to April 2009 decreased by 6 percent to \$5.0 billion, with decreases in exports in a variety of sectors including vehicles and parts, noncrude oil, and wheat and other grains outweighing growth in aircraft, machinery, electrical machinery, medical equipment and corn."

But this decline, she said, was much less than the 23 percent drop in total U.S. exports to the world.

The economies of several African countries are still showing limited

growth, she said, which may explain why U.S. exports to the region have not fallen as sharply as in other regions.

"Most of the decline in U.S. total trade for January to April 2009 was due to the 60 percent decline in imports to \$11.8 billion, [and] this decline was mostly due to a 64 percent fall in crude oil imports with both price and quantity declining," she said. Imports from almost all of the oil-producing countries in Africa decreased as well, she said, acknowledging that "this decline in oil imports was not unique to Africa and closely paralleled the decline in total U.S. crude oil imports from virtually all major trading partners worldwide."

Some 88 percent of U.S.-Africa trade is in petroleum-based products, but the United States is working hard under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to greatly expand and diversify that trade. That was a major focus at the Eighth AGOA Forum, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, August 4-6. AGOA, Vineyard said, stands as the "cornerstone" of the U.S.-Africa trade relationship.

Vineyard said many countries in sub-Saharan Africa continue to reap the benefits of sound changes undertaken during the past decade.

"With the continued growth of representative governments, and the recovery from several lengthy conflicts, much of sub-Saharan Africa is poised to see more robust economic growth and an improvement in living standards in the years ahead," she said. "Many sub-Saharan African countries are becoming, or have the potential to become, key emerging markets for U.S. companies. While the current

global economic situation has certainly had a negative effect on African economies, a significant number of African countries have still maintained positive [though lower] growth. This positive growth is in contrast to some other regions in the world that are experiencing an economic contraction."

Vineyard said sub-Saharan Africa has recently demonstrated sustained economic growth and its countries increasingly are seen as a set of emerging markets. "Even with the worsening of the global economic situation, sub-Saharan Africa's growth in 2008 of a little over 5 percent represents the first time in 45 years that Africa's growth exceeded 5 percent for five straight years," she said.

Citing a World Bank report, Vineyard said 2008 growth in Africa was broad-based, spread across regions and included both oil-exporting and oil-importing countries. The International Monetary Fund, she added, has emphasized that many of the sub-Saharan African countries that have sustained economic growth have followed consistently strong macroeconomic policies with a proactive role by the government.

As the global economy worsened at the end of 2008 and into 2009, sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth outlook shifted downward for 2009, she told the lawmakers. "The effects of the global downturn on many African countries [with South Africa being a notable exception since it is more integrated into the global financial system than other African countries] have been more indirect than in other regions of the world," she added.

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OBSTACLES TO DOING BUSINESS

Addressing the topic of obstacles to doing business in Africa, Vineyard said many African countries will need to address a series of factors to increase the amount of international business being conducted within their borders.

She cited a World Bank report, *Doing Business 2009*, which ranks countries by the ease of doing business based on a series of factors. The 2009 report highlighted positive progress in doing business in many African countries.

The report shows that 28 sub-Saharan African countries enacted 58 positive reforms in 2008, more than in any other year since the *Doing Business* reports began in 2003. Three of the top 10 overall reformers in 2008 were African (Senegal, Burkina Faso and Botswana). African countries showed positive reforms in a range of categories, including the ease of starting a business, registering property, getting credit and trading across borders, she said.

But the overall rankings, she added, demonstrate how far much of sub-Saharan Africa still has to go: out of 181 countries on the list, 40 sub-Saharan countries ranked lower

than 100 and 24 of those ranked lower than 150.

The report concludes that more improvements must be made across the continent to lessen or lift regulatory and administrative burdens to entrepreneurs, which remain higher in Africa than in any other region. By helping themselves, and increasing domestic investment, the report says, these countries make themselves more attractive for investors as well.

More information on the *Doing Business* reports (<http://www.doingbusiness.org/>) is available a Web site of the World Bank Group. ♦

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ates better partners ... who are more capable of attracting investment down the road," Jensen said.

The MCC is trying to diversify African exports to the United States as most exports currently are petroleum products. Jensen said that in Tanzania, the MCC is using part of a \$700 million compact to help lay the groundwork for a public-private partnership in hydropower. The MCC has also helped Africa's Standard Bank team up with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa to make \$110 million available in loans to small farmers and agricultural businesses in Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda who had previously been considered too risky for lenders.

There is much opportunity for

growth. Africa's problems largely stem from the need of its countries to build their infrastructure, Jensen said.

For example, Jensen said, manufacturing costs are significantly higher in Africa than in Asia due to the longer time needed to move a product in or out of the continent. Infrastructure problems also help explain some of the trade barriers among African countries themselves, she said. "Just going from one end of a country to the next can take three days, and it takes less than a day to get to Europe," she said.

Jensen says her organization wants to use the U.S.-Africa Business Summit to increase American private-sector awareness of MCC programs "and the fact that we are helping our countries develop projects that will involve the private

sector."

There are also new procurement opportunities becoming available. "We have probably about a good 50 percent of our \$6.4 billion of commitments for 18 countries that will be going out for bid in the next 18 months to two years," she said, adding "you can expect over time greater private-sector participation in MCC projects, and we're a natural partner for the private sector in Africa."

More information on the 2009 business summit (<http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=a83433d4-f64f-4adb-aeda-0525c94ca0eb>) is available on a special Web page for the event. ♦

Zimbabwe Attorneys Honored for Human Rights Work

The following article was produced and originally published by the American Bar Association's Rule of Law Initiative. Additional information on the initiative's programs is available on www.abarol.org (<http://www.abarol.org/>).

August 2009

ABA ROLI Honors Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights with its 2009 Rule of Law Award

On August 1, the ABA Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI) awarded Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) its 2009 Rule of Law Award. Representing her organization, ZLHR Executive Director Irene Petras attended the Rule of Law Luncheon and Award Ceremony in Chicago and received the award from ABA President H. Thomas Wells, Jr. The award recognizes the ZLHR's efforts to uphold the rule of law and to fight for the human rights of Zimbabwean citizens.

In his introductory remarks, William Taft, IV, ABA ROLI board chair, said that each year the ABA ROLI looks throughout the world "to identify a person, a group of people or an organization that embodies our values and that has acted valiantly in pursuing them to receive our Rule of Law Award." He said the efforts of ZLHR were worth celebrating.

Founded in 1996, ZLHR is a non-profit human rights organization that aims, through the observance of the rule of law, to encourage and

foster a robust human rights culture at all levels of Zimbabwean society. It has 14 full-time lawyers and a membership of 170, composed of 130 professional lawyers and 40 law students from the University of Zimbabwe.

beaten and tortured in bases, only to reappear bruised and battered after several days of incommunicado detention," she said. "Lawyers have had to deal with threats to their own lives and safety, as well as that of their families and colleagues."



William Taft IV (left), Irene Petras and H. Thomas Wells Jr.

In her keynote remarks, Petras said, "Human rights lawyers in Zimbabwe have contributed—and continue to contribute—immensely to the struggle for democratization and observance of the rule of law in our country." She said that the lawyers decided to fight for the rule of law though they could "have left the country for greener pastures at the first signs of trouble".

Petras explained the challenges the lawyers have to face and the risks they take in pursuing their mission. "Some have been subjected to character assassination in the state-controlled media, or assaulted by police in peaceful protests against the harassment of the profession. Others have been abducted by youth militias from their offices,

Though there were hopes for the situation in Zimbabwe to improve following the formation of an inclusive government in February of this year, Irene said, "Democratization continues to prove a challenge." No repressive laws have been repealed or amended, while the ordeals of human rights defenders have not subsided.

With the road ahead "long and difficult," the ZLHR is continuing its

efforts for a comprehensive legislative reform. Petras said, "We will remain as tenacious as we have been thus far in our history so as to ensure that the people of Zimbabwe remain at the center of all transitional and nation-building processes and are their true beneficiaries."

Petras thanked the ABA and ABA ROLI for acknowledging the efforts of the ZLHR. She said, "It encourages us to see that our efforts do not go in vain, and that people are watching, and our peers in the profession are standing with us during these testing times for the legal profession in Zimbabwe."

More than 350 people, including ABA and ABA ROLI leadership, special guests and rule of law supporters, attended the luncheon. ♦

United States Signs Anti-Piracy Agreement

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States joined four other nations in signing an international plan to protect ships and thwart piracy off the coast of Somalia.

“We realize that the fight against piracy in the Horn of Africa region cannot be solved entirely at sea. Other measures that must be taken include having affected states adopt legal measures to prosecute suspected pirates,” U.S. Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo said September 9 at the signing ceremony. Britain, Cyprus, Japan and Singapore joined in signing the declaration.

While the plan, known as the “New York Declaration,” is not legally binding, it commits nations that hold ship registries to adopt “best management practices” for enhanced ship security to protect them from piracy attacks. Some of those practices include increasing lookouts, ensuring that ladders are raised and readying fire pumps to repel boarders.

DiCarlo said that so far this year there have been 138 pirate attacks off the Horn of Africa, and 33 were successful. And according to the International Maritime Organization, in 2008 there were 135 attacks and 44 resulted in hijackings. Pirates have largely enjoyed free reign over Somalia’s east coast and the Gulf of Aden, where approximately 20,000 cargo ships a year sail to and from Egypt’s Suez Canal, carrying a tenth of world trade.

The declaration was first proposed in May by Panama, the Bahamas, Liberia and the Marshall Islands, which represent four of the biggest



Ambassador DiCarlo at the United Nations

ship registries, at the third international Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia conference in New York. They have already signed the declaration. The group of almost 40 nations and international organizations met September 10 at U.N. headquarters.

The Contact Group was expected to discuss coordinating international naval patrols, shipping self-protection measures and efforts to discourage the payment of millions of dollars in ransom to pirates.

Assistant Secretary of State Andrew Shapiro said in Washington September 9 that the New York Declaration represents, in part,

what Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has called “a 21st-century solution to the 17th-century problem” of piracy on the high seas.

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

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

Ambassador Hill Says United States Holding to Timetable in Iraq

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. ambassador to Iraq says the United States will withdraw all combat forces by August 2010 and all remaining U.S. forces, advisers and trainers by December 2011.

“We are holding to this timetable,” Ambassador Christopher Hill told the House of Representatives’ Foreign Affairs Committee September 10. “First of all, I do believe Iraq is making progress such that the president’s timetable for withdrawal of our troops, which was something that was supported by the previous administration when it drew up the security agreement, is absolutely achievable.”

Hill said Iraq will have the economic means to run itself as its governmental institutions stand up and U.S. military forces withdraw. For the first time in many decades, Iraq has a chance to be an engine for regional stability and economic growth rather than a source of tension and dispute, he said.

The U.S. military is transitioning to a largely advisory role, while the civilian effort is helping foster security through active diplomacy designed to resolve internal disputes, he said. The United States aims to foster long-term stability by helping the Iraqis build a market-oriented economy with a fully accountable, representative government.

There has been violence as Iraq has suffered a series of attacks, including the attacks on the Iraqi Foreign Ministry and Finance Ministry Au-



Ambassador Hill testified before Congress 09/10/09

gust 19. “The reality, however, is that the Iraqi people have stood firm and rejected retribution and a new cycle of violence such as the one that brought Iraq to the brink in 2006,” Hill said.

Hill also said he is encouraged by two rounds of successful elections this year — provincial council elections in 14 of Iraq’s 18 provinces in January and elections for the Kurdistan regional government in July.

“Today new provincial councils operate, aware that voters will have an opportunity to judge their performance in the next elections,” Hill said.

Preparations have begun for the national elections scheduled for January. Hill said the Council of Representatives is working on an elections law to govern the conduct of those elections, Iraq’s High Electoral Commission has begun to reg-

ister voters and political parties are negotiating coalitions. Some of those coalitions are likely to include members from across sectarian lines, he said.

Hill said the Iraqi economy remains a work in progress that has been hit by drought, inadequate reforms and declining oil prices. These factors have hampered the Iraqi budget, Hill said. But with oil production and export levels increasing and oil prices recovering in recent months, the budget has improved, he added.

The Iraqi government, Hill said, must pursue a responsible fiscal policy, including negotiating another arrangement with the International Monetary Fund. “It also needs to undertake the economic reforms necessary to join the World Trade Organization and integrate into the global trading system,” he said.

The full text of Hill’s prepared testimony (<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/111/hil091009.pdf>) (PDF, 35 KB) is available on the Web site of the House Committee on Foreign Relations.

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/>) ♦

Obama Urges America's Students to Fulfill Responsibilities

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Drawing from his own life experiences, President Obama urged America's schoolchildren to take responsibility for their education and take advantage of the opportunities that an education offers.

"We can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, the best schools in the world — and none of it will make a difference, none of it will matter unless all of you fulfill your responsibilities," Obama said in a September 8 national address to students.

Most public high schools and elementary schools in the United States have already opened from summer vacation or were just starting their school year the day after the U.S. Labor Day holiday weekend.

"Every single one of you has something you're good at. Every single one of you has something to offer. And you have a responsibility to yourself to discover what that is. That's the opportunity an education can provide," the president said.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan said on early morning television news shows that one of the president's greatest concerns is that the United States has a 30 percent high school dropout rate. Something needs to be done to aggressively stem those losses, he said. The president believed it was critically important to speak directly to America's students to attempt to

improve their academic performance, Duncan said.

"The president is really challenging every single child to step up and build a positive life for themselves," he added.



School students in Manhattan watch a screen as US President Barack Obama addresses school children on September 8.

One of the challenges facing this country is that every year 1.2 million students in city schools, rural schools and suburban communities drop out, Duncan said.

"We need every single one of you to develop your talents and your skills and intellect so you can help us old folks solve our most difficult problems," Obama said at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia, near Washington. "If you don't do that — if you quit on school — you're not just quitting on yourself, you're quitting on your country." His speech was broadcast by satellite to schools nationwide.

Obama recounted for students how his mother, a single parent, would teach him extra school lessons every school day beginning at 4:30

in the morning. It was at a time when he and his family were living in Indonesia for a few years and his mother did not have the money to send him to a school that other American children attended.

"I wasn't too happy about getting up that early. And a lot of times, I'd fall asleep right there at the kitchen table," Obama said. "But whenever I'd complain, my mother would just give me one of those looks and say, 'This is no picnic for me either.'"

Obama called on students across the country to set their own goals

for their education, no matter how great or how small, and do everything possible to meet them. He told students that people succeed because they understand they cannot let failure define them. Let failures teach you, the president said.

The full text of the president's remarks (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/September/20090908163242eaifas0.1114313.html>) is available on [America.gov](http://www.america.gov).

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

Obama Calls for New Financial Regulatory System

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama called on the nation's financial industry September 14 to work with him and Congress in crafting a new regulatory system to prevent a repeat of the current crisis, which is the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In a speech in New York, Obama said there is growing stability appearing in the U.S. economy and it is beginning to return to normal as a result of interventions in the marketplace by the federal government. But he warned officials from the financial sector that "normalcy cannot lead to complacency."

"That's why we need strong rules of the road to guard against the kind of systemic risks that we've seen," Obama said. He chose to address the financial sector from Wall Street about the risks of allowing the nation to again conduct business without regard for the consequences of a marketplace under-regulated and with inadequate oversight from the federal government.

His comments come one year after the largest bankruptcy in U.S. history, when the investment firm Lehman Brothers collapsed. That bankruptcy set off a string of managed mergers to prevent further failures and to prevent the possible collapse of the U.S. financial system.

"We will not go back to the days of reckless behavior and unchecked excess that was at the heart of this crisis, where too many were motivated only by the appetite for quick kills and bloated bonuses," he said. "Those on Wall Street cannot re-



President Obama spoke in New York September 14 on regulatory reform and new regulation for the U.S. financial sector.

sume taking risks without regard for consequences and expect that next time American taxpayers will be there to break their fall."

Obama said Congress and the federal government have a responsibility to write and enforce regulations and laws to protect consumers of financial products, taxpayers and the national economy. He added that the new rules must not stifle innovation and enterprise. Legislation to enhance security in the U.S. financial system is before Congress and Obama wants Congress to move ahead with the legislation.

Financial reform and international regulation will be key issues at the Group of 20 Summit of advanced and fast growing economies in Pittsburgh September 24-25. Obama sought to assure world leaders that the United States is seek-

ing to prevent recklessness and weaknesses in its financial sector. "The United States is leading a coordinated response to promote recovery and to restore prosperity among both the world's largest economies and the world's fastest growing economies," he said.

Several European leaders have signaled that they want much stronger financial regulation, including requiring commercial banks to hold larger capital reserves and to limit corporate bonuses and compensation as a means of preventing excessive risk taking.

"This work will continue next week in Pittsburgh when I convene the G20, which has proven to be an effective forum for coordinating policies among key developed and emerging economies and one that I see taking on an important role in the future," Obama said.

Obama is calling for a new Consumer Financial Protection Agency to oversee home mortgages, credit cards and other financial products that have the most impact on consumers. He also wants to put the Federal Reserve, the nation's central bank, in charge of overseeing the largest, most interconnected firms that pose the greatest systemic risk to the U.S. economy.

"We'll create an oversight council to bring together regulators from across markets to share information, to identify gaps in regulation, and to tackle issues that don't fit neatly into an organizational chart," Obama said. "We'll require these financial firms to meet stronger capital and liquidity requirements and observe greater constraints on

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Muslim American Doctors Give Back to Their Communities

**By Ahmed Mohamed
Staff Writer**

Washington — “I see us as Americans. This is our home, not a home away from home. We chose to come here; we chose this country as our country. America is our country. We were given chances here for education, business; we were allowed to be who we are. Now it’s time for us to pay back the country that accepted us with open arms,” said Rodwan Saleh, president of the Islamic Society of Greater Houston, Texas, during a fundraising event for the Al-Shifa Clinic in Fort Worth, Texas.

Al-Shifa is but one example of a free Muslim clinic that serves the American community regardless of the ethnic or religious background of patients.

Muslim community-based health organizations have emerged steadily since before the turn of this century, a good example being the University Muslim Medical Association (UMMA), one of the oldest free Muslim health care clinics, which has served the Los Angeles community since 1996.

Other examples are the Al-Shifa Clinic in San Bernardino County in California (2000), the Ibn Sina Foundation Clinic in Houston (2001), the Inner-City Muslim Action Network Health Clinic in Chicago (2002), the Compassionate Care Network in Chicago (2004) and the Health Unit on Davison Avenue Clinic in Detroit (2004). Organizations like Zaman International in Detroit are slowly emerging, and are dedicated to providing humanitarian relief as well as end-of-life care and women’s shelters. Other Muslim-initiated community

health programs are developing in Chicago; Baltimore; northern Virginia; Las Vegas; Buffalo, New York; and elsewhere, building on the models established by these pioneering organizations.

A recent report (http://ispu.org/in_focus/mcbho.html) by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding outlined how Muslim community-based health organizations are providing a critical safety net in health care access for the most underserved communities in America. Titled “Caring for Our Neighbors,” the study provides a picture of the motivations that drove Muslim-American health professionals to become involved in these clinics. The report also describes the demographic makeup of the populations they serve and the clinics’ growing role in American public health and community building.

Researchers found that while the clinics’ service models may vary, their services are universally available to everyone, regardless of their patients’ ethnic or religious background, at a low cost or even free of charge. The vast majority of their patients come from families living below the federal poverty level and who almost always lack health insurance.

According to the report’s findings, the clinics operate on lean budgets, relying heavily on donated equipment and volunteer physicians, many of whom are first-generation American Muslims who are driven



Rodwan Saleh

by a desire to give back to the country that welcomed them as immigrants. The report also documents the emergence of a new American-born generation of Muslims dedicated to serving the only country they have ever known.

“What we found is that these clinics are stepping in to meet a critical need in communities across

America,” said Lance Laird, a fellow at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. “That service model remains all the more important today as rising health care costs are leaving a growing number of families uninsured.”

Muslim-American doctors have become a part of the solution for the current health insurance crisis, as seen in four examples of health clinics across the nation.

UMMA Clinic, California. The University Muslim Medical Association (UMMA) provides a good example of these clinics. Located in the heart of south central Los Angeles, the clinic serves an impoverished but culturally rich population that is 73 percent Latino and 25 percent African Americans. It serves the homeless as well as the unemployed and working poor who do not receive insurance or qualify for state assistance, in one of the poorest and most medically underserved areas of the region.

“UMMA shall strive to pursue opportunities for interaction and understanding between Muslim Americans and people of all other cultural, economic and religious back-

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Muslim American Doctors Give Back to Their Communities . . .

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grounds," said Awais Chughtai, community relations coordinator, "to promote the well-being of the underserved by providing access to high quality health care for all, regardless of ability to pay."

Chughtai expressed the clinic founders' vision: "The services, activities and governance of UMMA shall reflect the Islamic values and moral principles which inspired its founders. These include the core values which are universally shared and revered by society at large, such as service, compassion, dignity, social justice and ethical conduct."

The UMMA clinic was launched to "exemplify the positive contributions of Muslims to American society and to serve as a model of institutional excellence for the American community, by upholding the highest standards in all aspects of its services, activities and governance, also to provide medical education and training to future health professionals," Chughtai said.

Al-Shifa Clinic, Texas. The Al-Shifa Clinic is a weekly free clinic in Fort Worth. It operates under the umbrella of the Muslim Community Center for Human Services organization.

"It provides services for general medical problems such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and minor infections. If these problems are not treated at an early stage, they may lead to more serious problems such as heart disease, stroke or kidney failure, which can result in more serious consequences for the patients and their families," said Dr. M. Basheer Ahmed, the clinic chairman.

"Al-Shifa Clinic served 1,200 patients in year 2006, 1,500 patients in 2007, and the number of patients has increased to 1,800 in the year 2008," Ahmed said.

Muslim Clinic, Ohio. Muslim-American doctors in Ohio joined the Give Back Convoy, a group of Muslim doctors who opened the first free clinic in Ohio run by Muslim physicians in 2008. The clinic now offers free health care services to underserved populations. "It is a small attempt by Muslims to help solve the health insurance crisis in America," said Dr. Esam Alkhawaga, a psychiatrist.

The clinic is based in Montgomery County, the region around Dayton, Ohio. "It serves adults and children, regardless of race or religion," Alkhawaga said. The county "has nearly 70,000 uninsured residents, about 13 percent of its population."

Dr. Ramzieh Azmeh, the co-founder of the Ohio Free Clinic, said, "At least 15 Muslim primary care physicians are signed up and credentialed to work at the Muslim Clinic of Ohio," and "another 50 specialists are also ready to contribute." Alkhawaga said, "Our goal is to engage the Muslim community in outreach work, and let people know that Muslims are part of this community."

"Most of us are physicians and we felt as Muslims this could be the least we could do to give back to America for what they've done for us," Alkhawaga said.

Muslim Outreach Free Clinic, Michigan. In June 2009, a group of Flint-area physicians wanted to address the community's health care crisis and decided to use their skills and expertise to help the Flint community. They established the Muslim



Outreach Free Clinic, which opened by offering a half-day of free health care services per week to lower-income people.

"Our main goal is to serve people who don't qualify for any kind of health insurance and don't have enough income to afford anything on their own," Dr. Ahmed Arif said. "We've also contacted diagnostic facilities and labs who'll provide us with free services. A lot of people have been very generous and forthcoming to help us provide all aspects of care for long-term and chronic illnesses."

Muslim doctors in Minnesota also accepted the challenge. The Islamic Center of Minnesota has taken on the role of a first-access, primary-care clinic for anyone who needs it with the Al-Shifa Clinic.

"It is our Islamic duty to address the issue of providing people with equal access to health care. We serve anyone in the community, both Muslim and non-Muslim," said Sobia Sarwar, clinic coordinator. "It's the volunteer doctors that really make it happen. Without their skill set we really would not be able to contribute to the community. The fact that they dedicate their time and effort is enormous." ♦

World Climate Conference Launches Global Climate Services Effort

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Geneva — Global leaders, climate scientists and experts from sectors such as water, agriculture and health finished their work here September 4 at the third World Climate Conference, launching an effort that will help people better understand and adapt to a rapidly changing planet.

The Global Framework for Climate Services, agreed upon by more than 2,000 conference attendees, will strengthen the production, availability, delivery and application of science-based climate predictions and other services.

It will also establish a mechanism for working with communities and other climate-information users to create useful products, and through training and education build capacity in developing countries to produce and apply their own climate services.

"I'm very excited with this conference," said Jane Lubchenco, administrator of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), during a September 3 press briefing. "I believe that today will be remembered as the day that climate services were officially born," she added. "Just as we depend on all sorts of weather services, soon — if we are successful in our efforts — we can expect a range of science-based climate predictions and services.

CLIMATE SERVICES

Within four months, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) will convene a task force of high-level independent advisers who will

consult with governments, partner organizations and other interested parties before recommending elements of the framework.

Some of the elements are already in place and will be strengthened, including the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP).



NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco

GCOS, established in 1992, is an international, operational system of buoys, sensors, aircraft and satellites that monitor the climate system's physical, chemical and biological properties and its atmosphere, ocean, land, water and ice components. It is co-sponsored by WMO, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the U.N. Environment Programme and the International Council for Science (ICSU).

The WCRP was established in 1980 by WMO and ICSU and since 1993 has been co-sponsored by the IOC. It was formed to determine the predictability of climate and the effect

of human activities on climate. Its efforts have made it possible for climate scientists to monitor, simulate and project global climate with unprecedented accuracy.

Two of the elements are new — a climate services information system will create information, products, predictions and services and a user interface program will develop ways to bridge the gap between climate information being developed by climate scientists and the practical information needs of users.

As the framework is developed, it will provide the kinds of services people need to adjust to a changing climate.

"Imagine farmers being able to determine what to plant and where based on drought forecasts three to five years out," Lubchenco said to the WCC-3 delegates September 3.

"Imagine," she added, "coastal communities able to plan for sea-level rise and storm intensity ... coastal planners or water managers able to ensure the availability of water for drinking, energy production, agriculture and many other uses ... public health officials being ready for — or even being able to avoid — outbreaks of malaria based on longer-term precipitation forecasts."

CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFRICA

As a result of the meeting in Geneva, African officials responsible for meteorology announced September 4 that they will meet March 15–19, 2010, for the first time to discuss ways to strengthen weather, climate and water information for decisionmaking. The

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NASA Researcher Fights Loss of Africa's Coastal Forests

Washington — The decline of swampy mangrove forests — essential habitats for fish and shellfish in tropical African countries like Mozambique and Madagascar — is threatening the livelihood of already impoverished fishermen, but a NASA researcher is on a mission to reverse that decline.

Environmental scientist Lola Fatoyinbo of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) began a project while still in graduate school in the United States to gain more information about mangroves and develop insight into their role in the environment, according to NASA.

Fatoyinbo grew up in Cotonou, Benin, where she saw mangroves being poisoned by pollution and leveled by real estate development. Such destruction not only threatens African food supplies and economies, but also can contribute to global warming and reduce the planet's biodiversity.

Mangroves, the most common ecosystem in coastal areas of the tropics and subtropics, are essential — especially in densely populated developing countries — to rice farming, fishing and aquaculture, timber, firewood and, increasingly, ecotourism. Mangroves defend against storm damage by tempering the effects of strong winds and floods, and their large, dense root systems help protect shorelines against debris and erosion.

These coastal woodlands also have a direct link to climate because they sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere at a rate of about 112

kilograms per hectare per day — comparable to the intake of tropical rain forests.



NASA's Lola Fatoyinbo, left, and a research aide from Eduardo Mondlane University stand in a Mozambique mangrove forest in June 2005.

Mangroves are hardy, adaptable trees that can thrive in extreme heat, high salt levels and swampy soil. Rampant clearing of these forests for agriculture and construction, soil toxicity and long-term oil and sewage pollution threaten their survival and that of more than 1,300 animal species that make their homes in mangroves.

RETURNING TO HER ROOTS

Fatoyinbo's studies brought her back to Africa to test a new satellite technique for measuring the area, height and biomass of mangrove forests. Her method, which

can be used across the continent to replace expensive and inconsistent modes of ground-based measurement, recently produced what she believes is the first full assessment of the continent's mangrove forests.

With colleague Marc Simard of JPL, Fatoyinbo used satellite images from the NASA-built Landsat and a complex software-based color classification system to distinguish areas of coastal forest from other types of forests, urban areas and agricultural fields. They also integrated data from NASA's Shuttle Radar Topography Mission to create relief maps of the height of the forest canopy. Finally, they merged the radar maps with high-accuracy observations from a light detection and ranging (commonly called lidar) instrument aboard NASA's Ice, Cloud, and Land Elevation Satellite (ICESat) to obtain accurate height estimates.

Fatoyinbo's measurements yielded three new kinds of mangrove maps: continental maps showing how much land the mangroves cover; a three-dimensional map of the height of forest canopies across the continent; and biomass maps that allow researchers to assess how much carbon dioxide the forests store.

"To my knowledge, this study is the first complete mapping of Africa's mangroves, a comprehensive, historic baseline enabling us to truly begin monitoring the welfare of these forests," said Assaf Anyamba, a University of Maryland-Baltimore County specialist in vege-

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Nonproliferation, Climate Change Top U.S. Issues for U.N. Meeting

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration is considering global issues such as climate change and food security to be immediate security challenges, along with more traditional security topics like nonproliferation and arms control, as the U.S. delegation prepares for the 64th United Nations General Assembly, opening September 19 in New York.

The common theme among nonproliferation, women in conflict, food security and climate change is that those types of issues “have an impact on real people” as well as on governments and have immediate impacts on security, says the State Department’s Assistant Secretary for International Organizations Esther Brimmer.

The Obama administration has said it is pursuing a more multilateral approach to achieving its major foreign policy goals than its predecessor did, and Brimmer told America.gov that the main source for the new emphasis is the president himself.

“Definitely the U.S. is back on multilateral affairs,” she said, and President Obama “in his own understanding of international affairs and foreign policy, realizes that in order to advance key goals you need to work both multilaterally and bilaterally ... to advance major U.S. foreign policy goals.” The major challenges of the 21st century are “transnational in character” and



Assistant Secretary Brimmer says Obama’s emphasis on multilateralism comes partly because today’s major challenges are transnational.

“have to be dealt with by working with other states,” she said.

In addition, the administration believes that the greatest periods of success for the United States have been “when the U.S. has been an international leader able to advance both its interests and to bring others along to support its views.”

The United States no longer approaches climate change from only a health-and-science point of view. “The administration also recognizes that there are immediate security

implications as well,” Brimmer said, such as mass migrations of people due to drought and other factors, as well as disputes over water.

Food security also constitutes an immediate security issue. “Millions of people across the globe face long-term hunger issues,” and recent spikes in food prices have not only caused human tragedies but also incurred local security costs due to food riots, she said. The assistant secretary said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon plan to co-host an event at the United Nations to highlight the issue.

“The idea of putting an emphasis on food security highlights the administration’s food security initiative, which draws on what we consider to be country-led plans,” Brimmer said. “Each country needs to put forward its own program for how it

wants to address food security issues and then marry that up with multilateral support which includes an important component or role for the international food agencies.” Clinton also plans to attend a U.N. Security Council session scheduled for September 30 to create new measures to prevent violence against women in combat zones. The secretary “has taken a really deep personal interest in what the international community ... can do on this issue,” Brimmer said. Clinton took opportunities on her recent

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Nonproliferation, Climate Change Top U.S. Issues for U.N. Meeting . . .

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trip to Africa to speak with victims and caregivers to “understand directly what the impact of this type of violence is, and [she] is trying to think seriously about how do we combat these egregious forms of attacks and violence against civilians.”

The Security Council session could create a task force to investigate how to expand the protection of women in combat zones, propose an annual report and appoint a senior envoy for the issue. “The idea is to create institutional mechanisms to continue to document what’s going on, get information, and also to help actually get support on the ground for helping the victims,” Brimmer said.

Obama’s decision to chair a September 24 U.N. Security Council summit on nuclear nonproliferation is “quite striking,” Brimmer said. “There have only been five sessions which were held at the summit level,” and this would be the first to

be chaired by a U.S. president.

“He’s trying to give real support and show at the highest level that dealing with nuclear nonproliferation is the highest priority for leaders across the globe,” Brimmer said. Obama’s chairmanship is, in a sense, “the kickoff for a whole year when we’ll really be highlighting nonproliferation issues,” including the planned review of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in spring 2010.

The assistant secretary also said Obama’s ability to bring various communities together could lend itself to a renewed U.S. leadership on human rights in the United Nations. Human rights issues “have been the most acrimonious area” among member states, and the United States is looking for possibilities to work with key states and organizations “to have a more positive conversation on freedom of expression, to which many different countries from many different parts of the globe could support.”

The U.S. participation in the U.N. Human Rights Council, which formally begins in September, will be “both new and old at the same time,” she said. Although the council itself is new, the United States has been an active leader in U.N. human rights efforts in the past. “In a sense we are actually recovering our historic role, albeit in a new type of venue,” Brimmer said.

The Obama administration will also continue to pursue U.N. reform in the upcoming session. “You want to have a transparent organization because you want the U.N. to work [and] be well managed and functioning well,” she said. However, the U.S. approach to reform will be “more like a consultant who comes in to talk to you about things you can do better, rather than a prosecutor who comes and says you are doing things wrong and we are going to punish you.”

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

Obama Calls for New Financial Regulatory System . . .

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their risky behavior.”

In addition, the president has proposed the creation of a resolution authority that would manage the failure of large, interconnected companies previously considered “too big to fail.” The proposal is not designed for commercial banks because a federal agency already exists for that purpose, he said. This proposal is for companies such as Lehman Brothers and insurance gi-

ant American International Group and other large companies that currently do not fall under the authority of a federal agency.

Obama said Congress needs to close loopholes where exotic financial instruments such as hedge funds can operate outside of the regulatory system entirely. “We’ve seen the development of financial instruments — like derivatives and credit default swaps — without anyone examining the risks, or regulating all of the players,” the

president said.

A transcript of the president’s remarks (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/September/20090914150208ptellivremos0.1493036.html>) is available on America.gov.

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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See also

<http://www.america.gov/>

Telling America's story

World Climate Conference Launches Global Climate . . .

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meeting will be organized by WMO and the African Union.

The African continent is especially vulnerable to climate change. Already, the number and magnitude of natural hazards are increasing in the face of a warming climate system. All sectors in Africa are affected, from agriculture, water and food security to health and forestry.

African national meteorological and hydrological services have an important role to play in evaluating and monitoring climate change, WMO Assistant Secretary-General Jeremiah Lengoasa said during the WCC-3 meeting, and their early warnings on natural hazards are essential to help prevent natural disasters.

The major challenge in Africa lies in the availability of climate data and processing capacity," Ali Mohamed

Shein, vice president of Tanzania, told delegates September 3. "Meteorological and hydrological services in the region require expansion and modernization of observation networks, an up-to-date telecommunications system to exchange relevant data products, and processing and prediction tools."

The African ministerial meeting will address the contribution of the national meteorological services to efforts by African governments to develop measures to adapt to climate change.

More information about the World Climate Conference-3 (http://www.wmo.int/wcc3/page_en.php), the Global Climate Observing System (<http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/gcos/index.php>) and the World Climate Research Programme (<http://wcrp.wmo.int/wcrp-index.html>) is available at the organizations' Web sites. ♦

NASA Researcher Fights Loss of Africa's Coastal Forests . . .

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tation mapping, who is based at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.

Fatoyinbo checked the accuracy of her satellite measurements by traveling to Africa to measure tree heights and trunk diameters. In Mozambique, she confirmed she had extremely accurate measurements of the forests.

"Beyond density or geographical size of the forests, the measurements get to the heart of the structure, or type, of mangroves," Fatoyinbo explained. "It's that trait — forest type — that drives which forests land managers target for agriculture, conservation and habitat suitability for animals and people."

In North America, the densest concentration of mangrove forests is found in the Florida Everglades, much of which has been federally protected and managed since 1947 as part of the Everglades National Park. The park, also designated an International Biosphere Preserve, is home to more than 300 species of birds as well as alligators, manatees and Florida panthers.

"The United States' largest mangrove forests, Florida's Everglades, are largely protected now and recognized as an endangered natural resource," Fatoyinbo said. "But in many other places, resource managers lack solid monitoring capabilities to counter mangrove exploitation. Better mangrove monitoring will, I hope, mean better management and preservation."

Free satellite data could help ease the problems presented by funding, logistics and political instability that can prevent mangrove preservation. For that reason, Anyamba and Fatoyinbo are working to convince the U.N. Environment Programme and the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to include the study's data in their environmental assessments.

The new technique also distinguishes itself, added Anyamba, "as an excellent example of how we can use different remote-sensing technologies together to address science questions and global social issues."

Adapted from a NASA news release written by Gretchen Cook-Anderson. ♦