



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

USAID Inaugurates Andido Livestock Market in Afar Region

Addis Ababa – The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is pleased to announce the inauguration of the Andido Livestock Market completed under the Pastoralist Livelihoods Initiative (PLI) on July 14, 2007. The Andido market, located in Amibara Woreda of Afar Region, represents the first link in an improved “value chain” to improve livestock sector performance that will



USAID director Glenn Anders cuts a ribbon at the opening of Andido Livestock Market

lead to economic benefits for pastoralists.

The inauguration ceremony, organized by ACDI/VOCA (formerly VOCA-Ethiopia) was attended by Glenn Anders, USAID Mission Director, as well officials of the Federal and Regional governments.

In October 2005, USAID launched the PLI project in Somali, Afar and Oromia Regions of Ethiopia to

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African Growth and Opportunity Act Creates Thousands of Jobs

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Trade under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) continues to create tens of thousands of jobs that better the lives of countless Africans, a panel of trade experts told U.S. lawmakers at a congressional hearing.

Seven years after the law was passed by Congress, AGOA's trade benefits continue to spur African economies through ex-

port-led growth. The result is improved living standards on a continent that, while blessed with abundant natural resources, has lagged behind global trade expansion because of a lack of investment and poor infrastructure, the House Africa Subcommittee learned at a July 12 hearing.

The landmark legislation, signed into law in 2000, offers liberal access to U.S. markets for 6,000 African products ranging

from oil and gas to agricultural products and textiles. President Bush signed revisions of the trade act in 2002 and 2004, expanding its provisions for nations willing to reform their economies. So far, 38 nations are eligible for AGOA benefits.

The development effort has been an outstanding success, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) for Africa Florizelle Liser told the House

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African Growth and Opportunity Act Creates Thousands of Jobs...

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subcommittee. "AGOA continues to have a significant impact on U.S.-Africa trade" and on development on the continent, Liser testified.

Speaking on the eve of the sixth annual AGOA Forum, set for Accra, Ghana, July 18-19 -- which she plans to attend -- Liser pointed out that in 2006 exports from AGOA nations totaled \$44.2 billion, or more than five times the level of 2001, the first full year the trade act went into effect. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2007&m=July&x=200707091135201EJrehsiFO.2811853>).)

The increased trade, she told lawmakers, "translated into thousands of new jobs in some of the poorest countries in Africa and hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment in the region."

Sindiso Ngwenya, assistant secretary-general of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), hailed AGOA for playing a "crucial role in raising the profile of U.S.-Africa trade relations and providing a solid platform for political dialogue between the U.S. and AGOA-eligible countries on trade matters."

At the same time, Ngwenya said AGOA has proven "a vital U.S. effort toward economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa. The remarkable progress we have achieved so far under AGOA has helped create many jobs and generated substantial investments in Africa."

While acknowledging the "tremendous gains" in two-way

trade since AGOA went into effect, the COMESA official said too much of that trade still is in the energy sector.

African oil and gas exports to the United States accounted for 82 percent of all AGOA trade in 2006. The high percentage of energy trade also concerned Subcommittee Chairman Donald Payne, who said he wants to see more diversification, especially in agriculture, which he said was "critical to growth, stability and development in Africa."

Noting that product diversification would be a key theme at the upcoming AGOA Forum, Liser said such efforts were part of the \$200 million African Global Competitive Initiative (AGCI), launched by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2006.

As part of the initiative, she said, the U.S. International Trade Commission is looking at "factors that affect African trade in key non-oil industries."

It is reviewing a number of industries -- including agricultural products such as cashews, cocoa butter and cut flowers, as well as fish, textiles, financial services and tourism. It also is examining constraints on growth, such as poor infrastructure.

African trade ministers, Liser said, have "informed us that this study will be an integral part of their strategic planning on how to better take advantage of AGOA."

Many women who play a large role in the economic life of Africa, especially in agriculture, have benefited from AGOA, said Katrin Kuhlmann, senior vice president for global trade of Women's Edge Coalition, a

Washington advocacy group. She told the subcommittee that "AGOA has led to the creation of jobs, many of which have gone to impoverished women with few economic opportunities."

Kuhlmann said AGOA has generated thousands of textile/apparel jobs -- 45,000 in Swaziland, 26,000 in Lesotho and 30,000 in Kenya -- and "75 percent to 90 percent of these jobs have gone to impoverished women."

For more information, see African Growth and Opportunity Act (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/trade_economic_development/agoa.html).

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USAID Inaugurates Andido Livestock Market in Afar Region...

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help pastoralist communities build more sustainable livelihoods and become less vulnerable to drought and other shocks. The livestock marketing component of PLI, implemented by ACDI/VOCA, seeks to strengthen Ethiopia's livestock marketing system by increasing sales to high value domestic and export markets. An essential activity toward achieving this goal is to construct key livestock market facilities to reduce costs and improve pastoralists' access to markets.

The market sites to be constructed were selected based on agreed criteria and through consultations with pastoralists, livestock traders, government officials and NGOs, as well as on recommendations from a value chain analysis conducted by

ACDI/VOCA and other PLI partners. Factors taken into account include weekly volume of animals supplied to market, availability of water and feed resources in a given locality, alignment with the Ethiopian Live-



Local girls performed for USAID officials at the opening of the Andido Livestock Market

stock Development Master Plan and, most importantly, linkage to export markets.

The Andido market is one in a series of market sites to be constructed to boost pastoralists' livelihoods with integrated services such

as water, feed and veterinary care. In the short term, pastoralists will be able to boost their bargaining power by providing the option of holding their animals until the next market day to obtain a higher price.

In the medium and long term, these market improvements will increase Ethiopia's competitiveness at an international level.

"The new Andido livestock market is one of 25 sites to be built with USAID support, making a tremendous difference in the lives of pastoralists," said Ms. Brutawit Dawit Abdi, ACDI/VOCA Country Representative for Ethiopia. ACDI/VOCA is an international devel-

opment organization which has been working in Ethiopia since 1994 to improve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and pastoralists through enhanced market opportunities.

AFRICOM Chief Nominated for Unique New Command

Washington -- General William E. Ward, an Army officer, is President Bush's choice to be the first chief of the new U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will coordinate U.S. government support for nations across the continent.

Ward is currently deputy chief of the U.S. European Command, where he oversees day-to-day operations of American forces and military interests in 92 countries, including a majority of African nations.

Bush announced in February the creation of AFRICOM. Instead of being a traditional military command, the new headquarters will coordinate existing security cooperation with African nations while consolidating U.S. government support for partner nations. Humanitarian, health and develop-

serve as deputy for civil-military activities and a three-star military officer will serve as deputy for military operations. As currently envisioned, the headquarters will include staff specialists from the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other federal agencies currently working with African partners.

Under the U.S. Constitution, Ward's nomination must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Ward's nomination hearing and annual public hearings on the status of AFRICOM are expected to create more visibility for African issues within the U.S. government. Until now, the U.S. European Command has coordinated U.S. military interests in much of Africa.

The new AFRICOM headquarters is



General William E. Ward

of the U.S. European Command. But U.S. officials have said they want to move part or all of the headquarters' offices to one or more African countries. Pentagon officials have said they would like the new AFRICOM chief to establish a personal presence on the continent soon after being confirmed by the Senate.



General Ward visits an injured soldier in Europe

"The goal of U.S. Africa Command is to help build the capacity of African nations and African organizations," the Defense Department said in a July 10 news release.

Ward has been a U.S. Army officer since 1971. From March to December 2005, he was designated by the secretary of state as U.S. security coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority. He also has commanded the NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia and commanded an infantry brigade in Somalia in the early 1990s. In addition, he has served at the U.S. Embassy in Egypt and, early in his career, commanded an infantry company in the Republic of Korea.

ment efforts are intended to be important parts of AFRICOM's mission. The headquarters is expected to have two deputy commanders: a State Department ambassador will

scheduled to begin initial operations in October and to be fully established by October 2008. The AFRICOM transition team currently is based in Stuttgart, Germany, home

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African Textile Designers Seek U.S. Markets

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Accra, Ghana -- An African textile designer hoping to sell more apparel and fabrics in the United States may see her dream realized because of a landmark American trade initiative that is designed to spur export-led growth in sub-Saharan Africa.

"I send a few things to the U.S.," says Eva Yebuah, owner of Naa Dee Designs, but "my great dream is to expand fabric exports there and acquaint Americans with African fashion."

In addition to dresses and shirts, Naa Dee Designs also makes cushion covers and table cloths using original designs. "These are all in an Afro-centric style and I think they would be very popular in America," especially among African Americans, Yebuah said during a business exposition.

Yebuah is one of about 100 exhibitors taking part in an exposition in a large tent next to the Exhibition Hall where the Sixth Annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum is meeting July 18-19. The businesses -- most of them small textile, food processing and agricultural companies -- want to take advantage of the U.S. duty-free entry provisions for 6,400 products now allowed under AGOA.

Since becoming law in 2000, 38 African nations that have under-

taken open-market reforms have become eligible for AGOA benefits.

This year's AGOA Forum, which features ministerial, business and civil society components, is focus-



The AGOA trade forum will make it easier for African businesspeople, like the producers of these textiles, to find international markets for their products.

ing on the theme "As Trade Grows, Africa Prospers: Optimizing the Benefits of AGOA."

Yebuah is following in the footsteps of market women who have traditionally been small traders, and in some countries like Togo they have featured prominently in the clothing and textile trade. Now, in the era of globalization and its free flow of goods, information and people, many of them want to expand their trading horizons. AGOA offers them an avenue.

Increasing textile and apparel exports from Africa has been a par-

ticular aim of AGOA's provisions. Since the law went into effect in 2001, close to 100,000 new jobs in the clothing industry have been created in sub-Saharan nations, many going to poor women, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Florizelle Liser, U.S. trade representative (USTR) for Africa, said African apparel exports under AGOA have almost doubled since the trade act went into effect in 2000, increasing from \$748 million that year to more than \$1.3 billion in 2006.

"One of the things we've been delighted about AGOA is that we've been able to expand trade with African women-owned businesses," Liser said.

"A lot of the fabric and apparel industry in Africa is run by women, and we are seeing

many of them using AGOA to expand their exports while partnering with women and small businesses on the U.S. side."

Nana Yaa, an executive with Ranyros Ltd., a textile and apparel import-export company, says her firm also seeks to take advantage of AGOA's entry-free provisions for finished apparel. "We'd like to export uniforms such as nurses' and doctors' gowns as well as bed sheets," she said.

"If we could get large orders from U.S. hospitals our firm would grow,

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Burkina Faso Artisan Cooperative Yields Export Opportunities

The artists' business group Village Artisanal de Ouagadougou (VAO) has perfected the notion of one-stop shopping. Its campus, in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, houses a boutique, a café and workshops for more than 500 artisans who create a wide variety of handicrafts and home décor.

The number of artisans under its roof makes VAO the leading producer of handicrafts in Burkina Faso. Master craftsmen and their apprentices produce large volumes of bronze and ebony sculptures, handwoven cloth purses and wall hangings, traditional musical instruments, wooden children's toys, wrought silver and gold jewelry, dyed baskets, pottery and leather bags and boxes.

That product diversity means VAO can meet international market demands. The artists' group now exports to the United States, Canada, Europe and North Africa. And many

of its products are duty-free when exported to the United States, since Burkina Faso became eligible in



An artisan who practices his craft at the Village Artisanal de Ouagadougou works on a painting.

2005 to benefit from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) West Africa Trade Hub has sponsored VAO exhibits at U.S. trade shows, provided technical assistance and linked VAO products with U.S. buyers. In 2005,

the cooperative shipped Tuareg leather boxes to the parent company of retail giants T.J. Maxx and Marshalls. In 2006, VAO expanded its U.S. client base, selling to Cost Plus World Market, Tesoros Trading Company and others.

VAO provides training for its artisans, holding sessions on such subjects as product design and pricing. The aim is for graduating artisans to improve their businesses using the lessons learned.

In 2006, VAO's products were spotlighted at Pangea, the educational retail shop and café at the headquarters of the International Finance Corporation in Washington.

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African Textile Designers Seek U.S. Markets...

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we would hire more workers and Ghana's economy would be strengthened."

Ghanaian entrepreneur and small manufacturer Harold Otabil spoke enthusiastically as he prepared a cup of his special cocoa powdered drink. Otabil is founder and owner of Hords Ltd., maker of Brown Gold Natural Cocoa Powder.

Otabil said his aim is to use AGOA to give his company an export boost into the health conscious U.S. market. Cocoa, which abounds in West Africa, is "a natu-

ral anti-cancer agent," he said.

Otabil said, "We are the first in West Africa to promote cocoa as a health food and this is the message we want to give our potential American customers."

His company exports to England, but "we really want to enter the U.S. market and this is where we think AGOA can help us."

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Trade Hub in Accra is one of four one-stop information centers located in Africa offering information and advice on AGOA eligibility and benefits as well as general tips

on how to enter the U.S. market.

Leah Quin, USAID communications director of the Accra Hub, noted the impressive turnout of exhibitors and their desire to showcase products they hoped Americans would embrace with the help of AGOA.

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Americas-Africa Democracy Ties Must Benefit Regions' People

By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- A burgeoning democratic partnership between the Americas and Africa must translate into better lives for people in those regions, says Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Speaking July 11 at the Organization of American States (OAS), Rice lamented the "great and tragic suffering" by too many people in the Americas and Africa who are excluded from opportunities for economic advancement and social justice.

Such conditions, said Rice, are causing people in those regions to "wonder whether democracies really can deliver" on citizens' "rightfully high hopes for a better life."

When citizens' hopes for advancement are frustrated, Rice said, the seeds for social and economic upheaval are sown. To foster stability and peace, the democratic governments of Africa and the Americas must "liberate the creativity and industry of their people," and help them "seize the opportunities of regional and global trade," Rice said.

The right to vote, she added, isn't enough when people "lack opportunity, personal security, health care and education."

The secretary spoke at the opening of a two-day OAS-African Union (AU) Democracy Bridge Forum, which is focusing on applying the

tenets of separate pro-democracy charters adopted by the OAS in September 2001 and the African group in January.

Rice said the Americas and Africa have "enshrined" within their regions a commitment to democracy through these two "visionary" charters. The Washington meeting now establishes a commitment to democracy "between our regions ... to



Secretary of State Rice says that suffering in places like Darfur, Sudan is undermining democratic progress and threatening peace and development.

each other," said Rice.

"That is the great vision that brings us together today," said Rice.

The partnership between the OAS and the AU grew out of the Community of Democracies, a coalition of countries that works to promote and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. Mali, which serves as chair of that coalition, will host a Community of Democracies Ministerial Conference in November.

The secretary said the democratic partnership must be used to fight corruption and protect civil liberties and the rule of law. Through free and fair elections, she said, "governments earn legitimacy in the

eyes of their people, and it is through good governance that they earn people's trust and confidence that life will get better."

SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WORLDWIDE

Rice said the pro-democracy charters must help the people of the Americas and Africa and in the wider world gain a "future of freedom." She pointed to Cuba, Zimbabwe and Burma as examples of nations where people still are being deprived of basic rights. And in Sudan's Darfur region, Rice said, the world's democracies must "resolve to end the suffering and violence."

Rice said the world community must not let the government of Sudan continue this "game of cat-and-mouse diplomacy" of making promises and then reneging on those promises.

"It is our responsibility as principled democracies" to hold the government of Sudan accountable for what is occurring in Darfur, said Rice. She said a planned AU-U.N. peacekeeping force is "essential to increasing security for the people of Darfur so that they can begin returning to their homes."

Rice said that in centuries past, the peoples of the Americas and Africa met in a "more tragic way ... across the bridge of slavery" spanning the Atlantic Ocean.

"The ties that bound our people were literally the shackles and the

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Mozambique, Lesotho Awarded Multiyear Grants To Boost Growth

By Kathryn McConnell
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Mozambique has joined a group of African nations that will get additional U.S. aid because of its actions to boost economic growth and implement poverty reduction measures.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and Mozambique signed a \$506.9 million, five-year agreement intended to expand access to clean water, improve roads and increase agricultural productivity.

Through the compact, the people of Mozambique will break down barriers to economic growth with a plan they developed and will implement for their own benefit, said John Negroponte, U.S. deputy secretary of state, at the July 13 signing ceremony.

"Mozambique's diligence and determination to adopt reforms, even difficult ones, and to build the necessary capacity to qualify for MCC funding are commendable and a testament to the deep will of the Mozambican people to pull their country out of poverty and on to the path of prosperity," he said.

The accord is expected to benefit approximately 5 million people by 2015, according to a June 27 MCC press release. "By providing safe water for nearly

2 million people, the devastating toll of water-borne diseases, including malaria, will be reduced," U.S. first lady Laura Bush said when she announced the agreement during her trip to Mozambique in June. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile->

than their peers on the policies that support growth and poverty reduction," the agency said in its 2006 annual report.

The corporation requires aid-seeking countries to develop their grant proposals in consultation with their populations. The proposals should have clear objectives and specify ways to measure progress and procedures to ensure fiscal accountability.

The MCC is "one of the many initiatives that benefit Africa" that the United States has taken under President Bush, said Armando Guebuza, Mozambique's president at the ceremony.

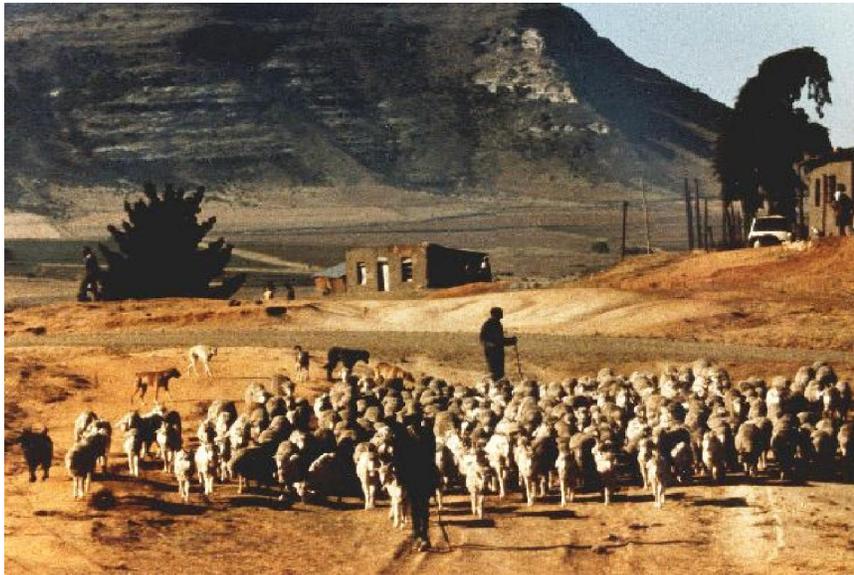
Since emerging in the early 1990s from three decades of civil war, Mozambique has had one of the most rapid rates of growth

in Africa. The MCC grant will allow the country to sustain that growth rate, the agency said.

In addition to targeting the country's northern provinces, where poverty is the most severe, the funding also aims to help Mozambique improve its main north-south road transport route. It will establish a more secure land access system, providing an incentive for foreign investment, improve the productivity of the country's coconut farms and help farmers learn to grow other crops.

Lesotho is located strategically within the rapidly growing Southern Africa Development Community,

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A five million dollar agreement is expected to increase economic development opportunities for poor farmers in places like Lesotho.

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MCC also recently agreed to award a five-year \$362.6 million grant to another African country, Lesotho, to help it increase water supplies for industrial and home use, strengthen its health care infrastructure and remove barriers to foreign and private investment. The agreement, scheduled to be signed later in July, is expected to benefit 1.8 million people, MCC said.

MCC, which administers Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) grants, rewards "countries that have already shown they perform better

Mozambique, Lesotho Awarded Multiyear Grants To Boost Growth...

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which will become a common market in 2008. MCC's grant will help that country improve its water systems and the health of its workers, enabling it to benefit from the region's expected private-sector expansion, according to MCC.

The grants to Mozambique and Lesotho, called compacts, bring to nearly \$2 billion the amount MCC has awarded to seven countries in Africa. The grants range from \$110 million for Madagascar to \$547 million for Ghana.

MCC also has awarded a total of approximately \$1 billion in smaller progress assistance grants to another six African countries under its "threshold" program, which help nations that do not qualify for MCC "compact" assistance but are being encouraged to continue reforms based on progress having been made in improving governance, rooting out corruption and making

investments in health and education.

Money granted to reform-minded



Workers at a US-funded greenhouse in Mozambique

countries has encouraged leaders of other developing countries to re-evaluate their national priorities and energize their own reform efforts, according to an MCC report.

"Mozambique is an outstanding

model of how our incentive approach is working," said MCC head John Danilovich, who signed the agreement.

A video link (http://video.state.gov/?fr_story=1be93Eec84ff00d27b2551c4c094aa343bdae5bc) to a recording of the signing ceremony is available on the State Department Web site.

For more information, see Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html).

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Americas-Africa Democracy Ties Must Benefit Regions' People...

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bindings of slavery," Rice said.

"Now we have a different and hopeful binding," Rice said. "We meet here [at the OAS] to build these new bridges between us -- bridges of liberty, justice, dignity and human rights which transcend all differences in culture, race, and religion."

"History will remember the new bridge of democracy and freedom that we build together," Rice said.

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Young American Muslims Encouraged To Seek Public-Service Careers

By Jane Morse
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Young American Muslims should make their voices heard in American society and consider careers in public service, U.S. government officials say.

Officials at the U.S. Department of State met July 12 with 27 accomplished individuals aged 20 to 25 from across the United States.

There is a "huge receptivity to ideas" at the State Department, according to Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli.

Tahir-Kheli is the senior adviser on women's empowerment issues to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Of Pakistani heritage, Tahir-Kheli said she is the first Muslim to be appointed as a U.S. ambassador.

Among the State Department officials available to answer the young people's questions was Seema Matin, who joined the State Department in 2002 and currently is a public diplomacy officer working for Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes. Matin has been recognized for her contributions to one of Hughes' "War of Ideas" initiatives, which focuses on countering ideological support for terrorism.

Matin, who was born in the United States of Pakistani immigrants and chooses to wear the hijab, told the group of young American Muslims that her head covering signals the

world that highly educated professional women can wear this expression of their faith proudly.

Matin told USINFO that she is grateful to see more young American Muslims becoming interested in careers in politics, journalism and nongovernmental organizations. Also on hand was Kareema Dauod,



The U.S. government is encouraging Muslim young people, like these young men and women, to get more involved in American civil society.

who works for the State Department while studying for her doctorate in Arabic linguistics at Georgetown University. Dauod urged the group of Muslims to become more involved in the American public sphere. "Citizens, whether they be Muslim or not, have a responsibility to engage and collaborate with their government on issues that affect the common well being. Being proactive means having a goal in mind, addressing those individuals who can help actualize that goal, and then following through on the steps necessary to making that goal a reality," she said.

The young adults' trip to Washington was arranged by the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), which describes itself as "a public service agency working for the civil rights of American Muslims, for the integration of Islam into American

pluralism, and for a positive, constructive relationship between American Muslims and their representatives."

Although it was founded in 1988, this is the first time MPAC has organized a nationwide Youth Leadership Conference such as this, according to Salam al-Marayati,

MPAC's executive director. During their stay in Washington, the group met with members of Congress, officials at the departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and visited the White House to talk to the director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

In assessing the conference afterwards, al-Marayati told USINFO that the group found it an "empowering experience" and appreciated meeting with officials who explained opportunities in the U.S. government for Muslim-Americans.

He added that the participants of the Youth Leadership Conference have strong views on Islamic identity in the United States.

"We want to define ourselves as having a Muslim-American identity," he said, "and show that U.S. values are compatible with Islam."

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Press's Relationship with U.S. Presidents Rocky but "Necessary"

By Stephen Kaufman
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- After nearly a year in temporary quarters across the street, the White House press corps has returned to the Executive Mansion complex, resuming its base of operations in the West Wing, just steps away from the Oval Office of the president of the United States.

At a July 11 ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the reopening of the renovated press area, White House Correspondents Association President Steve Scully said, "Nowhere else is the press this close to the head of state," adding that former President Nixon once tried to move the press corps to an adjacent building, but reporters prevailed in their campaign to maintain their close proximity.

In a humorous reference to the often contentious relationship between U.S. presidents and the reporters who cover them, President Bush welcomed the press corps back to the West Wing, saying, "We missed you -- sort of."

Bush went on to describe as "unique" and "necessary" the relationship between presidents and the press.

"[S]ometimes you don't like the decisions I make, and sometimes I don't like the way you write about the decisions. But nevertheless, it's a really important part of our

[democratic] process," he said.

Since 1969, the press briefing room has stood over an indoor pool that was built by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933. Before the pool was built, the area had been



President Bush takes questions from the press at the White House

used at times as an ice house, a laundry and servants' quarters.

When President Nixon ordered that the swimming pool be covered up to convert the area for the press, White House reporters were crammed into an office inside the West Wing that now is used by National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley.

But, relatively speaking, reporters, since the mid-20th century, have had less access to the president than their predecessors. In the late

19th century, reporters covering the White House enjoyed the use of a small office just down the hall from the president's bedroom on the second floor of the White House.

The relationship between U.S. presidents and the press often has been rocky. Before becoming the third U.S. president in 1801, Thomas Jefferson, a long-standing champion of individual freedom, wrote in 1786 that "Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press, nor that be limited without danger of losing it."

But in 1819, nearly 10 years after his final experience with public office, he quipped, "Advertisements ... contain the only truths to be relied on in a newspaper."

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, President Bush said he was looking forward to touring the new press working spaces, but until now he has not ventured beyond the briefing room podium.

"As a matter of fact, I've always felt comfortable behind the podium in front of you, kind of as a shield," he joked.

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/07/20070711.html>) of the president's remarks is available on the White House Web site.

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

Preserve America Links Economic Development with History

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Communities and places throughout the United States that have ties to historic events or once-booming industries come to life when they tell their stories to residents and tourists.

“Heritage tourism,” now a growing industry, is preserving the legacy of small-town America and in many cases rescuing towns from decline.

In Easton, Pennsylvania, for example, whose rich past dates to the Revolutionary War and where the first color crayons were produced in 1903 by Binney & Smith, makers of slate pencils, heritage tourism is bringing some 300,000 visitors a year to the formerly industrial canal town.

In the 1820s, Easton flourished with tanneries, distilleries and flour mills. But when the town’s industries fell into decline, Easton’s downtown went with them. Now, Easton’s Crayola Museum is the heart of the historic community that also boasted one of only three public readings of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 1776.

“A million stories combined to tell one story is the story of America,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne at a ceremony July 12 on Capitol Hill to announce newly designated Preserve America communities that aim to educate generations about their historic towns.

More than 600 communities and neighborhoods in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands have applied to be-

come Preserve America communities since the program was initiated by the White House in 2005. To date, 514 communities, including

ing programs that help interpret history, and more than 40 communities were awarded grants at the July 12 ceremony. The grants total



First Lady Laura Bush launches the Preserve America program

Easton, have been designated.

“Preserve America recognizes communities that use their historic assets to educate visitors and local residents about their town’s important links to our nation’s past,” first lady Laura Bush, honorary co-chair of Preserve America, said at the July 12 ceremony. The program encourages citizens to improve access to their local treasures for the benefit of all, she said.

The White House initiative designates communities that use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.

Preserve America communities are eligible to apply for grants support-

\$2.6 million. Individual grants ranged from \$25,000 to \$150,000.

The town of Ketchikan, Alaska, will use its Preserve America grant to develop a “wayfinding” system to introduce and educate visitors to the historic and cultural resources of the Ketchikan waterfront. Durango, Colorado, will use its grant to develop an interpretive guide and video to enhance visitor interest at the town’s 1893 power plant, soon to be the site of the Durango Discovery Museum, an interactive science and technology museum focused on energy resources.

Fairmont, West Virginia, is already popular with tourists – including foreign students attending nearby West Virginia University in Morgantown and their families – according to Vera Sansalone of Main Street

(Continued on page 13)

Preserve America Links Economic Development with History...

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Fairmont, a nongovernmental organization that works with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to protect the buildings of the quaint Civil War town. "They see the 'Historic District' sign on the highway and are curious enough to pull into Main Street," Sansalone told USINFO.

Fairmont, population 19,097, was founded in 1819 at the confluence of three rivers. Decline of the region's coal economy affected the city in the late 20th century, but a renaissance is under way, Sansalone said, including revitalization of the historic downtown. The city was designated a Preserve America community at the Capitol Hill ceremony, and Sansalone said she

hopes to apply for a grant to develop walking and audio tours of the town.

Small communities are the stewards of the nation's history, said U.S. Representative Brad Miller of North Carolina, who co-chairs the Congressional Historic Preservation Caucus. "They know about their town's history, they enjoy it, they appreciate it, and we encourage them to actively protect and enhance it."

When communities preserve their heritage, they tell the story of how our country came to be, Turner said, and how the fabric of the nation has importance in our own lives.

Additional information ([\[www.preserveamerica.gov/\]\(http://www.preserveamerica.gov/\) \), including the list of designated Preserve America communities and grant recipients, is available on the Preserve America Web site.](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/07/20070712-6.html>) of Laura Bush's remarks is available on the White House Web site.

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The Heritage Tourism Foundation of Dallas, Texas is working to preserve each of these historic homes for future generations.

Lady Bird Johnson, an Activist First Lady, Mourned by America

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Lady Bird Johnson, who died at the age of 94 on July 11 at her home in Austin, Texas, gave new meaning to the role of U.S. first lady. As wife of the 36th president, Lyndon Baines Johnson, her well-organized and vigorous support of important causes made her an indispensable asset to his presidency.

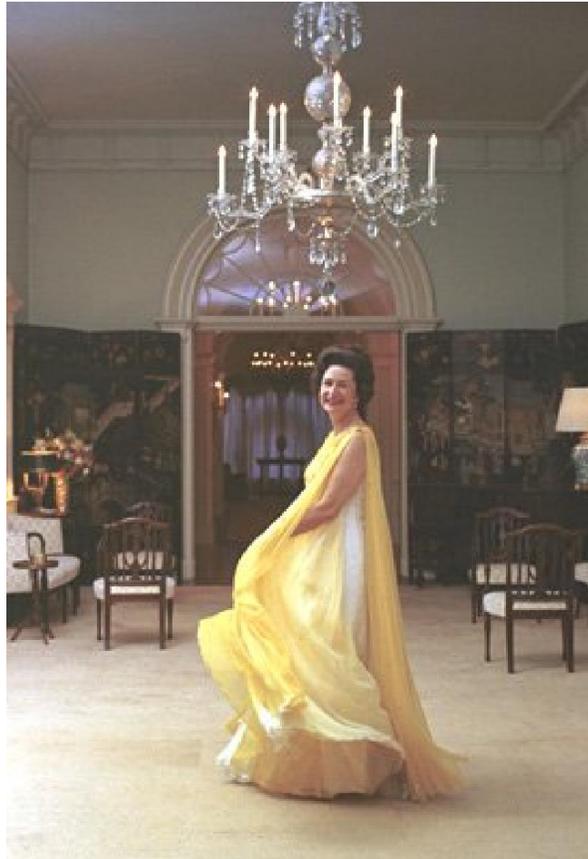
Mid-20th-century sightseers had been frustrated by the profusion of billboards that obscured the view along many American highways, but thanks to this soft-spoken lady from the South, spectacular vistas were re-opened and native wildflowers adorned roadsides. She led a campaign that resulted in the Highway Beautification Act of 1965.

Nature was Lady Bird Johnson's lifelong love, but her activism was not confined to conservation. Her grassroots dynamism had not been seen in the East Wing -- the offices of the first lady -- since her inspiration, Eleanor Roosevelt, left the White House in 1945. During the Johnson administration, the first lady's office for the first time acquired a press secretary, a chief of staff, speechwriters and a staff dedicated to public outreach, all appointed by Lady Bird Johnson. She strengthened links to Congress, something for which her decades as a political wife had prepared her well.

Lady Bird Johnson was thrust into the post of first lady by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. She and her husband were two cars behind

John and Jacqueline Kennedy when shots were fired at the motorcade in Dallas.

"So I felt like I was walking on to a



Lady Bird Johnson in a White House portrait

stage for a part I had never rehearsed, hadn't even read," she says in an audio diary about becoming first lady. The years of her tenure, from 1963 to 1969, she described as "like shooting the rapids, every moment a new struggle, every moment a new direction -- trying to keep the craft level and away from the rocks."

This was particularly true as protests against the Vietnam War mounted.

She stood in the shadow of her husband, but nonetheless threw her considerable energy into issues that

became key achievements of the Johnson presidency: civil rights and the War on Poverty.

Braving the unpopularity of the Civil Rights Act in the South, the first lady made a whistle-stop tour -- dubbed the Lady Bird Special -- to eight southern states, speaking in her southern drawl to people about the importance of the bill.

"You may not agree with all I say, but at least you can understand the way I say it," she told one audience. She persevered in her support for civil rights despite threats and verbal abuse from opponents. Her dignity was a great asset to Lyndon Johnson, a man whose short temper was legendary.

Lady Bird Johnson campaigned for the Head Start program, which still provides educational, nutritional and other assistance to children of poor families. She served as the program's honorary chairman.

SOUTHERN LADY, POLITICAL WIFE

Born Claudia Alta Taylor, "Lady Bird" was a childhood nickname that stayed with her throughout her life. She married Lyndon Johnson in 1934, when he was a congressional aide. He was not always an easy man, but she was devoted to him and became an exemplar of wifely support. From a wealthy family, she used some of her inheritance to bankroll her husband's first congressional election campaign.

She said that her chief duty was to

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Lady Bird Johnson, an Activist First Lady, Mourned by America...

(Continued from page 14)

"make a comfortable area, an island of peace" in which he could "do his best work."

Lady Bird Johnson was a business entrepreneur in her own right, buying a radio station and building it into a successful broadcasting, real estate and investment equity business, LBJ Holding Company.

Likely, this first lady will be remembered most for her commitment to the environment. Her efforts to beautify the United States were reflected in her large-scale planting of trees and flowers all over Washington. Today, those cherry trees, azaleas, dogwoods and daffodils planted at her urging help make the nation's capital one of the most appealing American cities. Not content with simply planting flowers and tearing down billboards, she helped promote more than a hundred environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act, during the Johnson administration.

Her passion spread across the coun-

try. "The native wildflowers that bloom along roadsides today are part of her lasting legacy," President Bush said in a July 11 statement. He described her as "our



Lady Bird Johnson in a later portrait

good friend, and a warm and gracious woman."

Lady Bird Johnson remained active in environmental conservation work after her husband died in 1973. In 1982, she co-founded the National Wildflower Research Center in Austin, Texas, which later was named for her. The center researches native and invasive plant species, sustainability and other conservation issues. It is a participant in the

global Millennium Seed Bank Project.

Lady Bird Johnson received many honors in her life, including the

United States' highest civilian award, the Medal of Freedom, which was presented to her by Gerald Ford in 1977. The Congressional Gold Medal was presented to her by President Ronald Reagan in 1988.

Three days of memorial ceremonies honoring the late Lady Bird Johnson began July 13. A private funeral will be held July 14, followed by a burial July 15 at the LBJ Ranch next to the body of the former president.

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

Al-Qaida Remains Significant Terrorist Threat, Report Says

By David McKeeby
USINFO White House Correspondent

Washington -- The terrorist organization al-Qaida remains a persistent and evolving threat to the United States, according to a new report from the U.S. intelligence community.

"The main threat comes from Islamic terrorist groups and cells, especially al-Qaida, driven by their undiminished intent to attack [the United States] and a continued effort by these terrorist groups to adapt and improve their capabilities," according to declassified key findings based on the National Intelligence Estimate The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland.

As a result, the U.S. remains in "a heightened threat environment," White House counterterrorism adviser Frances Townsend said.

National Intelligence Estimates are produced for the government's most senior officials and represent the consensus of top intelligence analysts from the 16 agencies that make up the U.S. government's intelligence community. The reports are on long-term security issues and are not linked to specific threats. Portions of the documents occasionally are declassified for public release to explain pressing policy issues to the general public.

Although most of al-Qaida's top leadership before September 11, 2001, has been killed or captured, the report says a new generation of

less experienced lieutenants has come up the ranks as replacements, found safe haven in the tribal region straddling Pakistan and Afghanistan, is encouraging Sunni militants to follow its example across the Middle East, and remains focused on efforts to acquire chemical, bio-



Al-Qaeda has caused untold destruction in Baghdad. The group continues to be a threat internationally as well as in Iraq.

logical and nuclear weapons for use in future attacks.

Al-Qaida is stepping up efforts to smuggle operatives into the United States to launch future attacks, according to the report. They are among many terrorist groups using the Internet to extend their reach to radicalize disaffected youth into forming their own terror cells to bypass improved security measures.

"We assess that globalization trends and recent technological advances will continue to enable even small numbers of alienated people to find and connect with one another, justify and intensify their anger and mobilize resources to attack all without requiring a centralized terrorist organization, training camp, or leader," the report says.

The report also says that al-Qaida

also will continue to compensate for its diminished operational ability to strike the United States by forging closer cooperation with regional terrorist groups, such as its "most capable and visible affiliate," al-Qaida in Iraq.

The United States has responded to a continually adapting terrorist threat by expanding its international intelligence networks and deepening its security partnerships around the globe, Townsend said.

"We are strengthening our cooperation with partners in key regions to undermine al-Qaida's attempts to tap into and to co-opt regional networks for their own strategic purpose," she said.

Although the report expresses concern that international cooperation may wane in the future as national interests diverge, Townsend -- who recently returned from consultations with leaders in Morocco, Algeria and Libya -- said counterterrorism cooperation is stronger than ever.

"Terrorism is not a threat we face alone; it is a threat faced by our allies around the world in London, in Bali [Indonesia], Madrid [Spain], Riyadh [Saudi Arabia] and Islamabad [Pakistan]. We cannot win this war alone; we need our allies to win," Townsend said.

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

Proposed Mideast Conference Targets Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Washington -- A proposed high-level Middle East conference this fall to push for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is intended to foster regional stability and speed the formation of a Palestinian state, says a senior U.S. diplomat.

At a July 16 State Department briefing, Assistant Secretary C. David Welch said the United States is supporting three efforts -- continued direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, enhanced regional security and international support to resolve a nearly 50-year-old conflict peacefully.

"We believe that this is a moment for everybody to push the 'go' button and try and make this work," Welch said.

President Bush announced a diplomatic and financial commitment July 16 to resolve the long-standing conflict.

He said this move is intended to show support for Palestinian leaders President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad and the new interim government.

However, Bush acknowledged that for peace to work, everyone involved has to want peace.

The conference, which will be chaired by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, would be held this fall in the region with senior envoys from Israel, the Palestinian West Bank and their neighbors. Bush said those invited to attend would have to be committed to finding a "two-state" solution to the present conflict, meaning that Israel and a Palestinian state will be living peacefully together. Welch, who is responsible for Near

Eastern affairs, said the United States is not trying to make specific demands of the participants attending the conference, but instead is asking them to view the conference as a time to take stock of where conditions are and where the current situation will lead. He said the



Militants in Gaza

participants have to accept certain fundamental principles -- support for a two-state solution, reject further violence and terrorism, and recognize the right of Israel and Palestine to co-exist.

Included in the financial package outlined by Bush July 16 is \$144 million for food assistance, education, health and social services this year for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The United States also is providing \$50 million in assistance for Palestinian basic human needs, democracy and civil society, and private sector development through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In addition, Bush authorized the Overseas Private Investment Corpo-

ration to support a program that will generate \$228 million in lending to Palestinian small and medium-sized businesses. The United States also is providing additional food assistance to the Palestinians.

Welch said these steps underscore the U.S. commitment to providing vital financial assistance to the Palestinian people.

Rice will be returning to the region along with Defense Secretary Robert Gates in late July to work on broader regional security issues, "but also will devote her presence, again, to advancing the Israeli-Palestinian track," Welch said.

Later in the week of July 15, the Quartet -- which includes the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia -- is scheduled to meet in Lisbon, Portugal, to discuss the Bush peace initiative and to welcome the Quartet's new

envoy, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who will be instrumental in any peace negotiations.

The terrorist group Hamas won control of the Palestinian legislature in early 2006 and seized control of the Gaza Strip in June, at which point President Abbas dissolved the coalition government and installed a moderate interim government.

Hamas spokesman Ismail Radwan has condemned the proposed peace conference, according to Agence France-Presse.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

U.N. Priorities Focus of White House Meeting

By David McKeeby
USINFO White House Correspondent

Washington -- President Bush held wide-ranging discussions with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Iraq, Middle East peace, climate change, North Korea and efforts to stop the violence in Sudan's Darfur region.

The forces of radicalism and extremism unleashed on September 11, 2001, are committed to rolling back the advance of democracy supported by the United States and the United Nations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, Bush said after the July 17 meeting.

"We are steadfast in our determination to not only protect the American people, but to protect these young democracies," Bush said.

Ban reiterated the U.N. commitment, in coordination with the U.S.-led coalition, to Iraq and pledged continued support for the international compact process, reconstruction projects and Baghdad's efforts to heal the rifts among its Sunni, Shia and Kurdish communities.

Ban also welcomed Bush's July 16 announcement of his plan to convene a meeting later this year with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

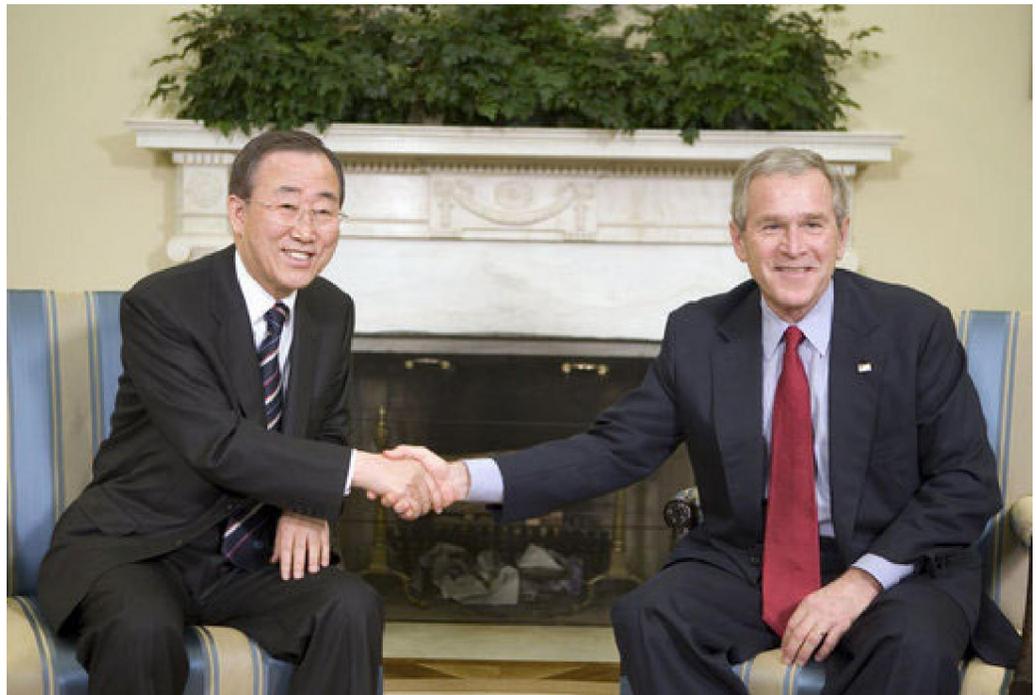
"As a member of the Quartet, I am prepared to work very closely to see expedited peace process in the Middle East," Ban said. The Quartet includes the United Nations, United States, Russia and the Euro-

pean Union.

Ban invited Bush to take part in a high-level U.N. debate in September on new approaches for the international community to address global

an agreement reached with negotiators from China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States on February 13.

"I hope that the parties concerned,



U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and U.S. President George W. Bush

climate change.

He updated Bush on recent progress in Libya toward deploying a hybrid force of African Union and U.N. peacekeepers to Darfur and previewed upcoming talks on Darfur in Tanzania.

"I'm going to step up efforts to deploy hybrid operations as soon as possible in Darfur to resolve this issue," Ban said. "In that regard, I appreciate U.S. government strong support in this matter."

The leaders also discussed recent progress in North Korea, where Pyongyang's shutdown of its Yongbyon nuclear facility marks an important first step in implementing

including [North Korea], will take necessary measures to implement this joint statement to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula as soon as possible," Ban said.

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/07/20070717-6.html>) of remarks by Bush and Ban is available on the White House Web site.

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

Regional Groups Key to Building Community of Democracies

By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Regional and inter-regional cooperation lies at the "very heart" of the Community of Democracies, the State Department's Paula Dobriansky says, referring to the coalition of countries created in 2000 to promote and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide.

Speaking July 12, Dobriansky, under secretary of state for democracy and global affairs, stressed the importance of regional cooperation in reinforcing "core principles of democracy." In addition, she said, a "democratic bridge" between regions is crucial in supporting fair and impartial electoral observation missions worldwide, promoting human rights and fostering civil society.

Democratic bridges are essential in the face of a recent "pushback" against civil and human rights defenders globally, such as in Venezuela and Zimbabwe, she said.

Dobriansky spoke on the second and final day of a "Democracy Bridge Forum" between the Organization of American States (OAS) and the African Union (AU), held at OAS headquarters in Washington. The forum focused on applying the tenets of the OAS Inter-American Democratic Charter and the AU's Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The OAS adopted its charter in September 2001 and

the African group its charter in January 2007. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=July&x=20070>



Solders in the streets of Zimbabwe. Soldiers shot and killed two pro-democracy activists in March in what some are calling a "pushback" against democracy.

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Dobriansky said the forum is a direct outcome of an April 2005 Community of Democracies ministerial conference in Santiago, Chile, where participants expressed their commitment to strengthening democracy worldwide. The group's fourth ministerial conference is scheduled for November in Bamako, Mali.

Although the Community of Democracies is still relatively new, Dobriansky said, the group has made "considerable progress" in building what she called the "architecture of democracy." She said the organization can serve as a "cornerstone" for a global network of democratic states and regional and inter-regional groupings that share similar values in working toward common goals.

Dobriansky said the community also backed the creation of the U.N. Democracy Fund, which was formed at the suggestion of President Bush to help established democracies support new democracies and

strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. Since its inception in 2005, the fund has provided about \$36 million in direct grants to more than 120 projects globally, with a particular emphasis on supporting nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in emerging democracies, she said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060306181320MVyel-warC0.8435938>).)

The Democracy Fund, in turn, supports the International Center for Democratic Transition, an initiative which arose from the 2005 Santiago meeting, Dobriansky said. Based in Hungary, the center provides guidance to countries making the transition to democracy.

In applauding the center's creation, President Bush said in a May 2005 speech that established democracies "must help the world's newest democracies succeed. The United States will continue to call upon our friends and allies across the world to help in this noble cause."

The United States, said Dobriansky, strongly urges the OAS and the AU to become partners with the U.N. Democracy Fund and the Center for Democratic Transition. She said both initiatives show "great potential" in supporting democracies in

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Regional Groups Key to Building Community of Democracies...

(Continued from page 19)

the Americas, Africa and elsewhere.

As "democratic governments and societies, we must support and protect freedom of expression," Dobriansky told her audience. She said the Community of Democracies has "pledged to foster positive environments for civil society, both domestically and internationally," and that through such actions, "regional organizations like the OAS and the AU are very essential in encouraging civil society to take action against those who seek to curtail and abuse" fundamental freedoms.



Students rally for democracy in Zimbabwe in the 1980s. Although the country has made significant democratic progress, recent "pushback" against democracy has focused attention on the need for regional groups to help in the promotion and maintenance of democ-

OTHER FORUM SPEAKERS

OAS Secretary-General José Miguel Insulza told the forum that the most crucial challenges facing his region are economic growth, poverty and social inequality, and the increase in crime.

The secretary-general said free and fair elections are not enough to make a government truly democ-

atic. Governments, he said, also must be able to provide for freedom of the press, respect for human rights and citizen participation.

Alpha Oumar Konaré, chair of the African Union, said his region does

not lack resources, yet it is the poorest continent in the world. Nations "need to promote the values that we know will make a difference: the values of democracy, the respect of the rule of law and the respect of liberty," Konaré said.

Abdoulaye Diop, chair of the con-

vening group of the Community of Democracies, pointed to concrete benefits citizens derive from democracy, such as the encouragement of stability and good governance.

Diop, also Mali's ambassador to the United States, said the group hopes to use the results from the OAS-AU conference in a final document that will be issued at the Mali event in November.

Additional information (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/c10790.htm>) on the Community of Democracies is available on the State Department Web site.

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