



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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Peace Corps Officially Reopens in Ethiopia

Director Tschetter travels to Ethiopian capital to swear-in 42 Volunteers

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, Dec. 13, 2007 – Director Ron Tschetter swore-in 42 Peace Corps Volunteers today, marking the return of Peace Corps Ethiopia. All 42 Volunteers will focus on the prevention, care, and treatment of HIV/AIDS in the East African country.

"I've been looking forward to this day, the day we come back to Ethiopia. All 42 new Peace Corps Volunteers have a life-changing experience ahead of them. I cherish our relationship with the people of Ethiopia

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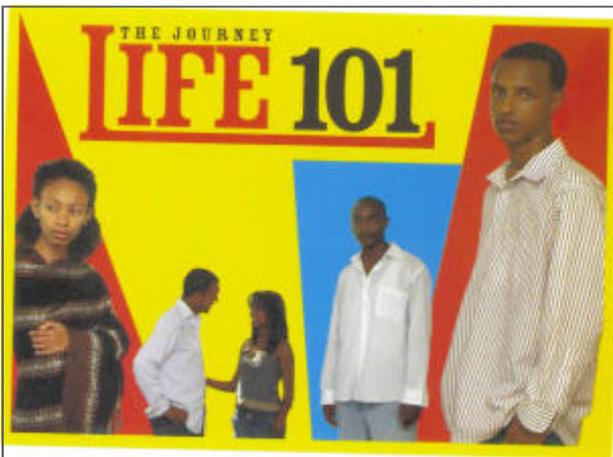
Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter opening the swear-in ceremony

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Addis Ababa University Confronts HIV/AIDS Through Entertainment

Exciting New Program Uses Entertaining Comic Books and Student Led Campus Activities To Increase Health Seeking Behavior Among University Students

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia— An exciting new HIV communication program targeting university students was introduced to the Addis Ababa University (AAU) community on Thursday, December 6, 2007. The program uses en-



The main characters on the comic book titled "The Journey Life 101".

tertainment education and a certificate training course to promote better health practice among students in their daily lives and to promote these behaviors among their

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Peace Corps Officially Reopens in Ethiopia . . .

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and hope to grow this program year by year. I congratulate the Peace Corps staff that has been working hard to re-start our program. Today I have the honor to swear-in 42 people who will serve as un-official American ambassadors, they represent the best of our country," said Director Tschetter.

The 42 newest Peace Corps Volunteers were sworn-in by Director Tschetter at an outdoor ceremony hosted by U.S. Ambassador Donald Y. Yamamoto. The ceremony was attended by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who once served in Ethiopia, local dignitaries, and government counterparts. Ambassador Yamamoto said at the event, "This partnership between our two countries, our two peoples, unites us in a shared endeavor to create a more peaceful and prosperous place for future generations." The group of 42 Volunteers included six experienced Volunteers who have served in five other African countries: Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Guinea, Swaziland and Tanzania. The group also includes two 50-plus Volunteers, two married couples and an Ethiopian-American.

The East African nation of Ethiopia was one of the first countries to invite Peace Corps to establish its program in 1962, just one year af

ter the Peace Corps was founded. The primary focus of the program was on education, with the goal of training skilled workers and promoting economic development. In addition, Volunteers worked in agriculture, basic education, tourism,



health, economic development and teaching English as a foreign language.

The Peace Corps remained in Ethiopia until 1977 and returned again in 1995 but suspended the program again in 2000 due to security concerns during the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. A total of 2,934 Peace Corps Volunteers served in Ethiopia over those years.

Peace Corps re-entered Ethiopia in partnership with the Government of Ethiopia, specifically the Ministry of Health. The new program is in cooperation with the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

(PEPFAR). The Volunteers will be developing HIV/AIDS education and prevention through: care and treatment; orphan and vulnerable children services; and treatment, including home-based care (palliative care) services.

The Peace Corps is celebrating a 46-year legacy of service at home and abroad. Currently there are more than 8,000 Volunteers abroad, a 37-year high for Volunteers in the field. Since 1961, more than 190,000 Volunteers have helped promote a better understanding between Americans and the people of the 139 countries where Volunteers have served. Peace Corps Volunteers must be U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age. Peace Corps service is a 27-month commitment. 4♦

Fact Sheet

Peace Corps/Ethiopia

Ethiopia was one of the very first countries to invite Peace Corps to establish its program in 1962, just one year after the Peace Corps was founded. The primary focus of the program was on education, with the goal of training skilled workers and promoting economic development. In addition, Volunteers worked in agriculture, basic education, tourism, health, economic development and teaching English as a foreign language.

The Peace Corps remained in Ethiopia until 1977 and returned again in 1995 but suspended the program again in 2000 due to security concerns during the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Forty-two Peace Corps Volunteers will be officially sworn-in by Director Ron Tschetter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on December 13, 2007. All 42 will serve as Community Health Volunteers working on HIV/AIDS, specifically in three areas: 1) Care and Treatment; 2) Orphan and Vulnerable Children services; and 3) Treatment, including Home Based Care (Palliative Care) services.

- 42 Peace Corps Ethiopia Volunteers in health and HIV/AIDS will be officially sworn-in by Director Ron Tschetter on December 13, 2007.
- Six experienced Volunteers who have served in five other countries: Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Guinea, Swaziland and Tanzania.
- Peace Corps re-entered Ethiopia in partnership with the Government of Ethiopia, specifically the Ministry of

Health. The new program is in cooperation with the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

- Peace Corps Volunteers served in Ethiopia from 1962-1977, and from 1995-2000.
- A total of 2,934 Volunteers have served in Ethiopia over the years.
- The diverse group new Volunteers include:
 - o 34 females, 8 males
 - o 38 single, 4 married
 - o African-American (2), Hispanic (3), Asian (1), and mixed ethnicities (3)
 - o 34 between the ages of 21 and 30; 5 are between 31 and 40, one is between 41 and 50; and 2 are over 60 years old. ♦



Peace Corps Volunteers pausing for a photo

Universities Partner to Improve Disaster Risk Management

Wednesday, December 12, 2007 (Addis Ababa) – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched today a program that links a U.S. university to an Ethiopian university in a partnership that will improve disaster risk management and reduce the vulnerability of millions of Ethiopians. The three-year \$200,000 grant will help Bahir Dar University (BDU) create a regional institute of excellence on disaster risk management and sustainable development with support from the University of Arizona (UA). The new project is being implemented in partnership with the Higher Education for Development.

“USAID strongly believes that institutionalizing disaster risk management skills and capacity will, in the end, save millions of Ethiopian lives,” Glenn Anders, USAID Mission Director said. Mr. Anders officially announced the partnership today, alongside faculty from both universities. The UA staff will travel to Bahir Dar later this week for a needs assessment and collaborative talks.

The new partnership between the universities will provide graduate training for faculty at BDU through a combination of face-to-face interaction with UA counterpart faculty

UA will also provide major capacity-building support for the newly established Department of Disaster Risk Management and Sustainable Development at BDU. UA faculty will develop annual internships for the graduate faculty. In addition, the project will help develop the ability of the university to offer a range of short-courses for community leaders and for disaster management specialists from government and NGOs. Ultimately, the department will become a core repository of information for research and analysis, which will better inform disaster management and development policy debates.



Glenn Anders, USAID Mission Director, announcing the partnership

as well as distance-learning through a web-based portal, owned by USAID and co-managed by UA. The partners will develop a graduate curriculum and establish a distance-learning platform that is complemented by faculty exchange between UA and BDU. The portal will be used to manage the knowledge resources needed for the successful completion of the graduate program.

The project will culminate in a major national and international conference held at BDU, which will highlight the new department and provide an opportunity for faculty to present research. The conference will establish BDU’s credentials as a leader in both disaster prevention and mitigation and in distance and web-based learning. ♦

Addis Ababa University Confronts HIV/AIDS Through Entertainment . . .

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peers.

The AAU's Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS (MARCH) Project is implementing the program. It is designed to empower students with the knowledge and skills needed to make safe, healthy, responsible, and respectful decisions about sex and relationships, to live productive and healthy lives (for those living with HIV) and to reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV. The project uses the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) MARCH behavioral change model to encourage positive behavior by modeling behavior change over time in an entertaining serial drama. Positive behaviors are then reinforced through reflection, discussion, and other community-level activities.

This program is funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through CDC-Ethiopia. To date, a total of \$820,000 (more than 7.3 million Ethiopian Birr) has been awarded for the support of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care activities at AAU. Technical assistance is provided by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs (CCP) and CDC.

"This project is one of three MARCH projects that have been

launched in Ethiopia; we are proud to be a part of such a life changing program for university students who need to own the skills that will allow them to make decisions that positively affect their health and wellbeing.," says Dr. Endale Workalemahu, BCC Technical Officer for CDC.



At the press conference after the event (L-R) Abbiy Alazar (MARCH Program coordinator), Dr. Sori Ararsa Weyesa AAU-MARCH Project Coordinator, Professor Tsige GebreMariam, Vice President of Graduate Program (AAU), Dr. Endale Workalemahu (CDC Technical Officer), Dr. Daniel Fekade, AAU MARCH Project Director.

The AAU MARCH Project is developing a 2 year long photo comic book and a certificate course for students that will reinforce the ideas covered in the comic book. Both activities are a departure from approaches taken in other MARCH projects recently launched in Ethiopia. *"We had to give the comic book a more modern and stylish look for university audiences. So we've used photo comics rather than cartoon comics. Also, instead of peer discussion groups, a certificate curriculum has been designed to enable students to conduct events that will promote positive and healthy behaviors among their*

peers using the comic book," says Dr. Daniel Fekade, AAU MARCH Project Director.

The comic book, *"Life 101, The Journey,"* uses drama, humor, and heartbreak to explore the challenges facing Addis Ababa university students today, such as HIV/AIDS. It follows the story of three students and a couple at AAU as they traverse daily university and city life, and deal with issues such as transactional sex, condom use, relationships, testing for HIV, and gender equity. The reinforcing certificate training program will train students on how to use strategic communication to design, implement and monitor campus events covering these and other issues.

Trainers consist of AAU professors and NGO staff who will utilize experiential learning techniques to educate students about various topics such as HIV/AIDS, gender, stigma, entertainment education, and health communication *"The curriculum was designed to allow students to explore their own ideas about these pivotal issues and gain important life skills such as negotiating condom use, effective communication and group facilitation. We are excited to see how their newly acquired skills will make them change agents among their peers,"* says Abiy Alazar, CCP MARCH Coordinator. ♦

The Power of Partnerships to Fight HIV/AIDS

Remarks by Michele Moloney-Kitts, Assistant Coordinator, Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator at a press Teleconference with Ethiopian journalists at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa on December 11, 2007

(begin remarks)

World AIDS Day took place on December 1. While World AIDS Day is an opportunity to remember the more than 20 million people who have died from AIDS and support the approximately 33 million people who are currently living with HIV, we must remember that the fight against HIV/AIDS is an everyday battle.

Recognizing that HIV/AIDS was and is a global health emergency requiring emergency action, President George W. Bush and a bipartisan Congress led the United States to lead the world in restoring hope through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR), the largest public health initiative ever undertaken against a single disease. America followed through on this commitment and now leads the world in its support for the fight against HIV/AIDS thanks to the power of partnerships around the

world.

The U.S. Government theme for World AIDS Day this year is "The Power of Partnerships" to highlight the successes and future promise of partnerships in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Working together through the power of partnerships, the American people and the people



of the world can and will achieve much more in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The success of the Emergency Plan is firmly rooted in partnerships, in the American people working hand in hand with the people of the world -- including governments, non-governmental organizations including faith- and community-based organizations and the private sector -- to build systems and to

empower individuals, communities and nations to tackle HIV/AIDS. And in just three and one-half years, it is working.

Ethiopia is one of the Emergency Plan's 15 focus countries, which collectively represent approximately 50 percent of HIV infections worldwide. Under the Emergency Plan, Ethiopia has received approximately \$497 million from fiscal year 2004 to 2007.

As of September 2007, PEPFAR supported antiretroviral treatment for approximately 81,800 men, women and children in Ethiopia. When the Emergency Plan was announced, only 50,000 people living with HIV in all of Sub-Saharan Africa were receiving antiretroviral treatment. Globally, the Emergency Plan supported life-saving antiretroviral treatment for ap-

proximately 1,445,500 men, women and children through September 2007.

This is a dramatic achievement, made possible through partnerships between the American people and the people of Ethiopia. The American people will stand in partnership with the people of Ethiopia until the fight is won.

(end remarks)

Zimbabwe Human Rights Lawyers Fight State-Sanctioned Violence

By Jane Morse
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- A group of dedicated Zimbabwean lawyers that defend victims of politically motivated persecution in their country is being honored by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with her first Freedom Defenders Award.

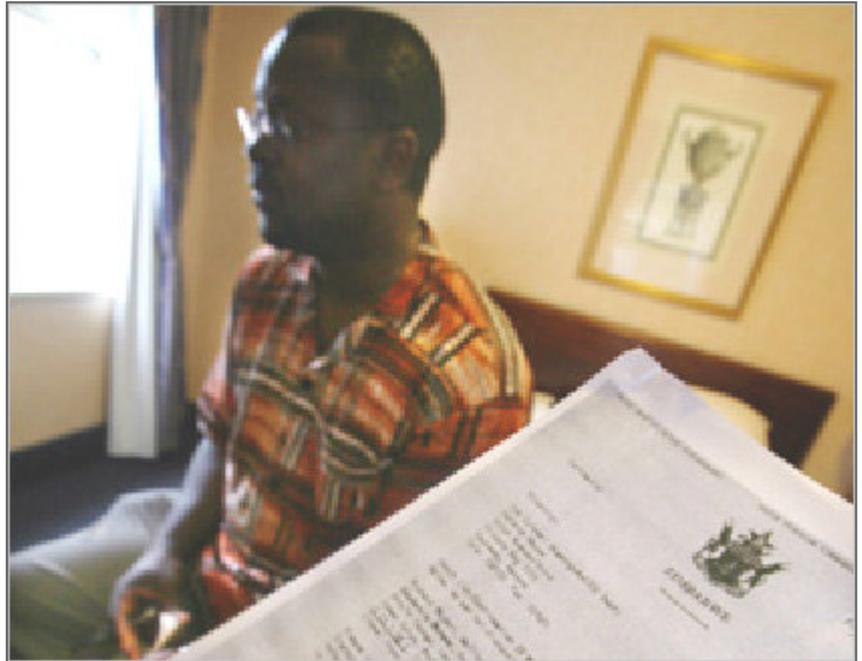
Arnold Tsunga accepted the award on behalf of the nongovernmental organization Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) at a special ceremony held December 10 at the U.S. Department of State. Tsunga, ZLHR's executive director, has suffered police raids on his home, arrest and death threats for his work in defending human rights in his country.

In its 10 years of existence, ZLHR has worked to foster a culture of human rights in Zimbabwe and provide legal representation for pro-democracy activists who often are illegally arrested, detained, beaten and tortured under the brutal regime of Robert Mugabe. In the process, the lawyers, law students and staff of ZLHR have themselves become targets of persecution and vilification. Many, along with their family members, have received death threats and have been arrested and assaulted by police.

In recognition of their bravery, Rice awarded ZLHR the Freedom Defenders Award, instituted to honor foreign activists and/or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that demonstrate outstanding commitment to advancing liberty and courage in the face of adversity.

ZLHR, despite the abuses it has been forced to endure, has been instrumental in maintaining international and regional pressure on the Mugabe regime by filing challenges to government policies and actions in international and regional bodies as well as in local courts.

ZLHR also presented compelling testimony to the African Union's African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), highlighting the destructive and



A list of people targeted for death by the Zimbabwe government is displayed by Arnold Tsunga, head of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR). Tsunga says he left Zimbabwe in 2006 after credible reports that he was on such a government list. The ZLHR was honored by the State Department December 10 for advocating human rights and democracy in the face of government repression (© AP Images)

abusive nature of Operation Restore Order, the Mugabe government's disastrous 2005 campaign in which more than 700,000 people lost their homes. In a stinging rebuke of the Mugabe regime, ACHPR adopted a resolution condemning the human rights situation in Zimbabwe and urged the government to implement a series of recommendations.

WORST YEAR EVER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

The 2007 crackdown by the Mugabe government has been the worst ever. Nongovernmental organizations have reported more than 6,000 instances of human rights abuses; 3,463 victims of government attacks have required medical treatment -- triple that of 2006. Attacks, arrests and abductions continue unabated, with more than 500 instances of human rights abuses reported each month.

In the last year, the ZLHR caseload has increased by more than 20 percent.

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Nigerian President's Visit Represents Start of New Relationship

By Charles W. Corey
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The visit of Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua to the White House December 13 represents the beginning of a "new relationship" that will signal closer bilateral relations between Nigeria and the United States on a broad range of important issues.

Previewing the visit, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Todd J. Moss considered the U.S.-Nigeria relationship in a December 10 interview with US-INFO.

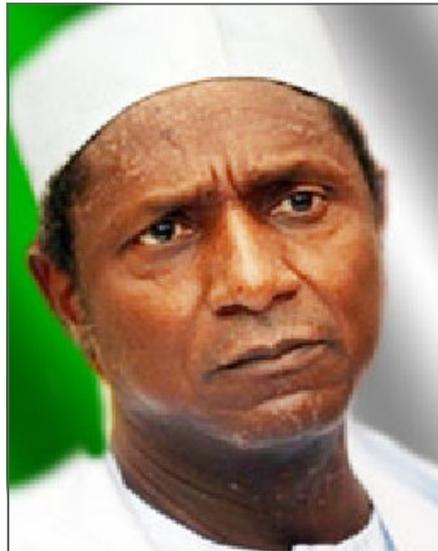
"Because of the problems" that surrounded Nigeria's recent presidential election, Moss said, "there was a pause in our close relationship."

The U.S.-Nigeria relationship had been "very strong" under the previous Obasanjo government, which ran from 1999 until early 2007, he said, but the elections of April 2007, which brought Yar'Adua into office, were "deeply flawed."

The conduct of those elections, he said, "gave us some serious pause as to how close we could be. We expressed our concerns with the Nigerians ... and we set some very clear expectations. I am happy to say that, so far, those expectations have been met."

Moss said the expectations included allowing the electoral tribunals that are reviewing the elections "to move forward unimpeded by politics." As a direct result, he said, "we have already seen several governorships overturned. We have seen no evidence of political interference from the [presidential] villa

in these tribunals or in the judicial process. We think that is moving forward in a very positive way. We want to continue to see that play out."



Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua

Moss said the United States and Nigeria are having a series of reciprocal visits and that Yar'Adua's White House visit is part of that process.

"President Yar'Adua was in New York for the United Nations General Assembly meetings. [Deputy Secretary of State] John Negroponte and [Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs] Jendayi Frazer were just in Abuja, and now President Yar'Adua has been invited into the White House. We think that this represents the beginning of our new relationship, which will signal closer relations in a host of issues that we have of mutual interest."

Looking ahead, Moss said Nigeria is "clearly going to have to fix its broken electoral system for the next cycle."

As part of that process, he said, "a very substantial and credible electoral reform panel has been established. They are just beginning their work, but given the makeup of the panel, who has been put on there, it is not whitewash -- it is actually a very serious group." Moss said the United States is "extremely pleased to see that, and we will be watching closely the outcome of their work."

Moss said that Yar'Adua, in coming to power, "has recognized that his legitimacy was potentially in doubt." The Nigerian leader "has ruled so far in a way that has been very inclusive and in a way that we think has been very productive for rebuilding the legitimacy of the government. He has also made it very clear that if the tribunals rule against him, that he will stand down."

One of the governors who have been overturned is Yar'Adua's son-in-law, Moss explained, but despite that development the United States has no evidence that the president did anything to stop the action from taking place. "He allowed that to go forward, so I think he has really shown that he is trying to respect the checks and balances of the Nigerian system and to allow the judicial process to go forward without interference from the executive," Moss said.

While working closely with the Nigerians on many fronts, he said, the United States will continue to look for progress in three key areas: the continued battle against corruption; government budget issues, which includes a continuing and deepening of economic reforms pushed down

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Nigerian President's Visit Represents Start of New Relationship . . .

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to the state level; and, most importantly, the Niger Delta.

"Nigeria needs to deal with the problems in the Niger Delta," Moss stressed. "There have been some very positive signs that President Yar'Adua understands how important the Delta is and is taking steps to deal with that, but we want to see that it is more than just a series of ad hoc measures -- that there is a real strategy there to stabilize and begin to promote development there in the Delta. We are willing to help them with that where possible," he pledged.

Moss said Sudan and Somalia also are expected to be discussed at the White House meeting, mainly in the context of peacekeeping contributions and "getting the peacekeepers on the ground" in both areas.

Moss called Nigeria "an absolutely pivotal nation for the future of West Africa and the future of Africa. The United States has to have a relationship with Nigeria.

"We have too many crosscutting issues of mutual interest for us to not have a robust relationship with them. Of course, this includes energy security, but it is much bigger

than that.

"Nigeria is the lynchpin of African peacekeeping. They are the key players in regional security, and Nigeria is an important partner for the U.S. for a whole range of transnational threats ... terrorism, narcotics trafficking, international disease. We need to work with the Nigerians to tackle these threats," Moss said.

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

Zimbabwe Human Rights Lawyers Fight State-Sanctioned Violence . . .

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UNITED STATES TO IMPOSE ADDITIONAL SANCTIONS

The United States is responding by imposing additional sanctions against the worst perpetrators of the regime's brutality.

Financial sanctions will be imposed in the coming days against individuals and companies who have played a central role in the regime's escalating human rights abuses, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer announced December 3.

The United States also will impose travel sanctions against 38 additional individuals, including nine state security officials involved in human rights abuses and anti-democratic activities in recent months. The affected individuals will include at least five adult children of the Mugabe government officials implicated in the December activities who are currently studying in the United States, Frazer said.

But despite increased sanctions, she said, U.S. food aid, assistance to HIV/AIDS victims and other hu-

manitarian aid will continue in order to help ordinary Zimbabwean citizens.

In 2007, the United States will deliver more than \$170 million in food aid to feed more than 1.5 million Zimbabweans.

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

Agriculture in Mozambique Advancing Through Joint U.S.-U.N. Efforts

By Kathryn McConnell
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Food security in Mozambique and the nutrition of people affected by HIV/AIDS are improving, thanks to close cooperation between U.S. and U.N. agencies, says U.S. diplomat Gaddi Vasquez.

The collaboration also is helping establish an early flood warning and response system, Vasquez, the U.S. representative to United Nations food agencies, told USINFO at the end of a four-day December visit to the country. Mozambique frequently is hit by Indian Ocean cyclones that cause severe flooding.

The coordinated responses of agencies to Mozambique's problems "is some of the best I've seen," said Vasquez, a former Peace Corps director.

U.S. agencies working in the country include Peace Corps, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The U.N. agencies involved in food relief are the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

In a December 3 Web posting to USINFO, Vasquez said the country's progress after many years of conflict is "an African success story." In November, WFP and the Peace Corps signed an agreement

to extend their reach to communities in Mozambique and elsewhere in the developing world to respond to food emergencies.

The agreement "will further strengthen Peace Corps' role in improving food security and the conditions of rural people," according to a November Peace Corps press release.



Mozambican farmers working in a field of beans, an important crop. Jon Spaul/Panos Pictures

Peace Corps also has renewed a 2004 agreement with FAO to collaborate in agricultural development, Vasquez said.

Vasquez said one of the projects he visited in Mozambique was an FAO-sponsored "junior farmer field school" outside Chimoio, where, on a few hectares, students are learning how to grow and market a variety of crops. Older students are teaching younger students.

In addition to improving food security, the project has helped boost school enrollment and helps students build self-esteem, Vasquez said.

"The parents are involved, the teachers are involved and the community is involved," he said. "It

was very impressive to see students learning ... and how the older generation is helping the younger generation."

Helping people learn better techniques for food production and about nutrition are "key to eradicating hunger in the long term," the ambassador said.

Vasquez also visited a WFP Food for Asset project in Zifuva that provides food to residents reconstructing a deteriorated reservoir. The completed reservoir will provide irrigation and drought management permitting people "to sustain their crops during flooding or droughts," he said.

The food-for-work program is "quite successful," with the community becoming able to grow crops to meet local demand and eventually able to sell its farm products in neighboring areas, he said.

With support from PEPFAR, Peace Corps volunteers are working in Mozambique as community health promoters, focusing on those considered most at risk -- the young, especially young women and orphans. Mozambique is one of the 15 countries initially targeted to receive funding from PEPFAR.

Vasquez said he is working with the Rome-based U.N. food agencies to review service delivery processes and suggest adjustments "so we can move closer to the goal of cutting in half hunger by 2015."

The United States is the major donor to the WFP, providing 44 percent of the agency's budget. The United States contributes 22 percent of FAO's budget, he said. ♦

Religious Leaders Condemn Terrorist Acts

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders in the United States have joined together in an interfaith peace-building effort to condemn terrorism and the violence it causes. In supporting this initiative, the Fiqh Council of North America issued a fatwa, or religious edict, saying "there is no justification in Islam for extremism or terrorism."

Christian and Jewish leaders also issued a companion prayer that supports the message of the Fiqh Council fatwa, by asking for the security and safety of all people from the violence caused by terrorists.

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the former Roman Catholic archbishop of Washington, joining other religious leaders at the National Press Club recently, said an important means for

eradicating extremism and terrorism is condemnation of the destruction and violence committed against innocent men and women. "Our friends in the Fiqh Council have seen that and have accepted it very beautifully and very courageously," he said.

The Fiqh Council, the highest judicial body in the Muslim community in the United States, advises North American Muslims on matters of Islamic law. It had issued a similar edict two years ago, and renewed it November 30.

"It's a courageous statement, and it's something which will touch all

"there is no justification in Islam for extremism or terrorism."

A Fatwa issued by Fiqh Council of North America

of us in the United States and beyond," McCarrick said at the Press Club.

McCarrick joined Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders in launching the "Uniting to Protect" national movement to bring Americans of all religious faiths together in the struggle against terrorism. Movement leaders are concerned that religion has become subverted to justify terrorist acts and the murder of innocent people. Terrorism experts generally believe that religion is used in contemporary terrorism as a means of communication.



Cardinal Theodore McCarrick

"It really shows how religion is being twisted.

[Osama] bin Laden [of the terrorist group al-Qaida], himself does not have any theological credentials, yet he issues fatwas because he knows people will listen to them, that it is an enormously helpful means to enhance his message to attract new support," says Georgetown University professor Bruce Hoffman, who has written of the relationship of religion to modern terrorism.

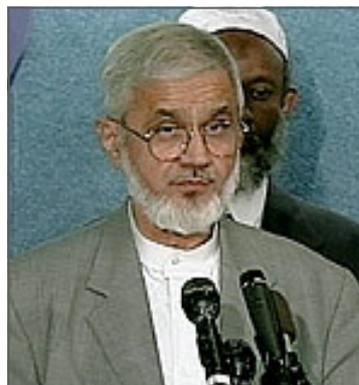
The direct linkage of religion and terrorist groups began to emerge in

the 1980s following the 1979 revolution in Iran, he says, as terrorist groups increasingly sought to emulate the success of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini.

McCarrick said there is no question that in the past religion has been misused. He cited a previous statement on religion and violence, saying that "the greatest crime against religion is to use religion to hurt other people."

Fiqh Council Chairman Muzammil Siddiqi, a former president of the Islamic Society of North America, presented the fatwa, saying that "since peace is the rule, not the exception, in our faith, it follows that any act of violence in humanity and injustice by any party against any party must be condemned as contrary to God's teachings."

Islam emphasizes a peaceful and just coexistence between Muslims and all other people, he said. "This position has been stated and reiterated in an earlier fatwa of the Fiqh Council of North America and by many Islamic scholars in various parts of the world."



*Muzammil Siddiqi
Fiqh Council Chairman*

The fatwa calls for the defeat of extremism and terrorism and the safety and security of the United States and its people and all of the people of the world.

Siddiqi said the fatwa has been endorsed by

500 Muslim leaders in the United States and major Islamic organizations across the country. ♦

Democrats Prepare for 2008 Presidential Campaign

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Barely a month before important state party caucuses begin in the new year, Democrats from around the country converged near Washington for the Democratic National Committee (DNC) fall general session. This was the last such meeting of Democrats before early caucuses signal who the likely Democratic and Republican 2008 presidential nominees will be.

Candidates courted a diverse set of voters at the Vienna, Virginia, session, giving speeches and meeting privately with delegates. State party officers mingled with staunch supporters of the candidates and with those who still are undecided.

"I think this is a wonderful event. It gives all of the DNC members one last chance to hear the candidates when we are all together as a committee," Kansas Democratic Party Vice-Chair Teresa Krusor said. "It's very important for those who are not committed" like herself, she said, adding that "a lot of things can come up in the remaining months that may change a person's mind."

Krusor, a party worker for 18 years, said her service is a way to contribute: "My choice is politics ... to get the right message out in our state and all across the country."

Matt Munsey, a 29-year-old open source software developer who worked for candidates in the 2007 Virginia election, where Democrats



Barack Obama meets an overflow crowd after speaking at the Democratic National Committee session in Vienna, Virginia. (© AP Images)

Munsey said he leans toward supporting Barack Obama.

Obama's vocal group of supporters gave enthusiastic whoops during his speech and afterwards, when he met them in a room overflowing with backers. "He relates to the common person," attendee Renee Drayton said, and works "so we all can have equality together, because, like he said, it takes one person to stand up and then you get more to come along."



Candidate John Edwards greets supporters before his speech at the Democratic National Committee meeting. (© AP Images)

Supporter Pamela Edwards said of Obama: "He's enthusiastic. He's sincere."

Sincerity is why labor union officer Richard Hampton backs John Edwards. Hampton said Edwards is the most labor-friendly candidate. Political involvement is second nature to a union man: "You can't have the attitude somebody else will do it," Hampton said. The 1,800 members of Communications Workers of America Local 2222 rely

regained control of in the state legislature, also is uncommitted.

"Today, I had a chance to see a number of presidential candidates speak," he said. "I wanted to be able to experience that."

"The people we elect are the people who represent us," he said, "and if we don't get involved, then we can't expect to have people who will actually represent us well. We need people that will set good policies that work for us, that really get things done. The fewer people who are involved, the more skewed representation we're going to get."

on him. When bosses give his people trouble, he said, "it's my job to make sure the right thing happens." He said he wants a president who can get America out of its "major problems."

Students are essential in any political campaign. They volunteer to canvass neighborhoods, work the telephones and fill personnel gaps. Tara Malik, a government major at Cornell University in New York state, was assisting delegates at the meeting room door. She is doing a semester internship with the DNC. "I've been listening to the

(Continued on page 14)

Young Americans Paying Close Attention to Presidential Race

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Young Americans are paying attention to the 2008 presidential race, and many are ready to help their preferred candidate achieve victory, a poll by Harvard University's Institute of Politics (IOP) shows.

Like the national average, voter turnout among young Americans has been on the rise. From 2000 to 2004, turnout among 18- to 29-year-olds increased 9 percent, more than double the overall turnout increase. In the 2006 midterm elections, turnout in this age group was 3 percent higher than in 2002, nearly double the national turnout increase. The 2006 election was the first increase in young voter turnout in a nonpresidential election in 24 years.

Today polls indicate that youth turnout in 2008 could once again increase. Polls show that young Americans are paying close attention to both American politics and national and international affairs. A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in March showed that 85 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds say they are interested in keeping up with national affairs.

Young Americans share many of the concerns of those in other generations. In a poll conducted by IOP, the war in Iraq and health care are their top concerns -- mirroring most national polls.

Those who worked on the IOP poll presented their findings at the Brookings Institution in Washington December 5. Conducted online between October 28 and November 9, the poll asked some 2,500 18- to 24-year-olds about the issues that concern them and which candidates they prefer. About half of those polled were college students.



College students in West Burlington, Iowa, show their support for Democrat Barack Obama. (© AP Images)

IOP found that 18- to 24-year-olds do not share their parents' and grandparents' views on all issues. For example, youth are more supportive of U.S. leaders unconditionally meeting with heads of rogue nations. They also more strongly believe that international organizations such as the United Nations should take the lead in solving international problems.

Many young people, about 40 percent, consider themselves to be independent, while 35 percent say they are Democrats and 25 percent are Republicans, IOP found. Those who do identify with a party are

quite loyal to it -- more than 40 percent of young Republicans and Democrats say they are "strong" members of their party.

Young people are more willing to support a third-party candidate, said John Della Volpe, IOP's polling director. Unsatisfied with the current political parties, about 37 percent of young people from both parties said that a third party is needed, according to IOP.

Young Americans are ready to help out in campaigns -- more than a third said that if asked, they would volunteer for a campaign. Even more are willing to if encouraged by a friend. Sixty percent said they would spread the word about a candidate they like by talking with friends and family.

More than half said they would join a candidate's online group, such as a Facebook group. Candi-

dates have been focusing much of their efforts online, but as Harvard University junior Marina Fisher said, students also like the more traditional methods of promoting a candidate with lawn signs, bumper stickers and rallies. "These seem like the oldest ways of engagement we can think of," Fisher said.

"It is clear that while new media are emerging, the old ones are here to stay," she said.

While much of the media has focused on young Democrats' support of Illinois Senator Barack Obama,

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Young Americans Paying Close Attention to Presidential Race . . .

(Continued from page 13)

the IOP poll shows that young Democrats support many candidates. While Obama is still the preferred Democratic candidate in this poll, it is far from guaranteed that the majority of youth will support him. He is especially popular on college campuses, but those youth not in college favor New York Senator Hillary Clinton.

On the Republican side, the IOP found that young voters favor former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, followed by Arizona Senator John McCain. However, a large

number, 30 percent, say they are unsure who they will vote for, which is slightly higher than when IOP polled in March. A rise in undecided voters as the election nears is very unusual, noted Della Volpe.

Della Volpe discussed the difficulty of polling young people. Traditionally, most polls are conducted via landline phone, but nearly half of young voters do not have a landline. Pollsters are not allowed to call cell phones.

With young Democrats, those who do have landline phones tend to have more conservative views and

different feelings about the war in Iraq that tend to align them more with Clinton, Della Volpe said, so polls conducted by phone tend to show more Clinton supporters. This may be one reason why the IOP poll, conducted on the Internet, shows Obama leading young Democrats, but a poll by the Sacred Heart Polling Institute conducted by phone two weeks earlier showed Clinton with a large lead.

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Democrats Prepare for 2008 Presidential Campaign . . .

(Continued from page 12)

candidates," she said. "I'm definitely a Democrat." Malik said she still is deciding whom to support, and wants someone who will restore America's good image abroad. She wants to return to Washington and work in politics after graduation.

Kyong Lee, a Korean studying at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, was in the midst of Hillary Clinton supporters. She said she was there to find out how campaigns work -- and because she likes Clinton. Lee, who will return to South Korea after she graduates, said, "American politics has a great

impact in Korean politics as well, so I would like to see what happens."

Anita Sochi-Torres, a Clinton backer, said, "It's an incredibly important time and there's a new wave, and it's great to have the opportunity to participate." She thinks Clinton "promotes change and has the experience." She added that she came because "it's my obligation to be as informed as possible."

Ohio State legislator and state Democratic Party Chairman Chris Redfern's political career began as a student, when he "got mad" at Ronald Reagan. "It doesn't help standing outside yelling; you might

as well try and get in the fray," he said. "[Politics] is not a spectator sport."

"Here we are in a suburb of Washington, and a man or a woman who just worked the day shift can come in and listen to, perhaps, the next president of the United States. ... Everyone in America can get involved, whether Republican or Democrat." Redfern adds, "As Americans, I think it's our duty."

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

Laptop Orchestra Turns Electronic Sounds into Music

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- One way people often use laptop computers is to download and play music files. Recently, some musicians have gone a step further, harnessing the ability of laptops to generate all kinds of sounds electronically to use the machines themselves as musical instruments.

Using laptops this way is not that different from the way hip-hop artists of the 1970s used turntables to "scratch" old, worn records to talk over music, creating an entirely new musical genre, composer and sound artist Scott Smallwood tells USINFO.

Smallwood is a co-director of PLOrk, the Princeton Laptop Orchestra, at Princeton University in New Jersey. The orchestra was founded in 2005 by faculty members

Dan Trueman and Perry Cook with graduate students Smallwood and Ge Wang, and is a collection of musicians who perform together using computers as their instruments. The computer-generated music is based on new kinds of sounds -- made up of noise and texture -- rather than the traditional sounds of instruments in an orchestra.

Performances by the Princeton Laptop Orchestra differ from those by most laptop musicians because the orchestra members are working together from a musical score, or instructions to the whole group that

govern what sounds are made by which musicians at what time, rather than individual musicians performing works with "their own voice."

That the notion of a "laptop orchestra" seems contradictory is a prime motivation for creating one, Trueman wrote in a published paper.



PLOrk : The Princeton Laptop Orchestra

For such musicians and innovators, the paradox is the source of much of the fun.

When people hear the term "laptop orchestra" they think of a symphony orchestra and assume it is a group of people sitting around with computers mimicking such instruments as the violin or clarinet, according to Smallwood.

"It is not about this," he said. Instead, the laptop symphony makes new and unique sounds work in the same acoustical context as a tradi-

tional symphony.

SPECIAL SPEAKERS ENABLE LAPTOP MUSICIANS TO PLAY ACOUSTICALLY

Computers have had the ability to replicate individual instruments in a band or orchestra for years -- in fact, many pit orchestras in live-performance theaters have been replaced by a single computer that is programmed to play an entire musical score. What distinguishes the laptop orchestra from electronic music is the role each musician plays in the group and the unique speakers designed by Trueman and connected to each laptop to enable electronic sound to become acoustic.

The idea for using speakers with electronic music originally was intended to project sound in a single direction, Smallwood said, but the resonances became blurred, which posed a challenge to electronic musicians. "You've got speakers mounted above the stage

blasting sound out into space," he said. "Sometimes that is a good thing, but sometimes you want to play like an acoustic musician maintaining the locality of sound."

When jazz musicians are improvising, they are playing off each other and part of the information they are using is where the sound is coming from, Smallwood explained.

The idea for the special speaker design was to make the computer work like an acoustic instrument, where the sound comes from the

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Rice at 2007 International Human Rights Day Awards Ceremony

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
December 10, 2007**

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Thank you very much, Jonathan. It's a pleasure to be here. And I am especially to be joined by Senator Lugar, who is a tireless defender of human rights and I might say also a tireless defender of diplomacy. Thank you so much for being here, Senator.

This week, we join in solidarity with nongovernmental groups and other human rights defenders across the globe in making the 59th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As President Bush has said, "Respect for the inherent right of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

Today, on every continent, men and women are working, often against great odds and at great risk, to secure their fundamental rights. Regrettably, some governments have responded to growing demands for personal and political freedom not by accepting their obligations to their people, but by oppressing those seeking to exercise fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. If the great promise of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to be fulfilled, the United States and other democratic nations must align ourselves with those who defend human rights and advocate for peaceful democratic change.

To that end, last year, in commemoration of International Human

Rights Day, I announced the creation of a set of annual human rights awards. The Freedom Defenders Award goes to a foreign individual or nongovernmental organization that has shown exceptional courage and leadership. The Diplomacy for Freedom Award goes to a U.S. Chief of Mission who has shown exceptional ability in promoting democracy and working to end tyranny.



*Human rights lawyer
Arnold Tsunga*

I now have the privilege of presenting the awards to our first recipients. The honorees were chosen out of an impressive group of nominees across the globe. The recipient of the 2007 Freedom Defenders Award is the NGO Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. In Zimbabwe, civil society remains under siege amid political and economic crises caused by the irresponsible policies of the regime. Over the past several months, the authorities have engaged in an intensified campaign of repression, characterized by harassment and intimidation, arrests and violent assaults against peaceful opposition activists, professionals, independent labor leaders, and other members of civil society.

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights has worked tirelessly and fearlessly to advance democratic principles, and in particular, it has taken on the dangerous task of pro-

viding legal representation to persecuted human rights and democracy defenders. Mr. Arnold Tsunga, the current President of this organization, has traveled from Harare to accept the award on behalf of his fellow members. Mr. Tsunga, we thank you and your colleagues for your courage, your commitment to securing the rights of your fellow citizens.

(The Award is presented.)

(Applause.)

SECRETARY RICE: The recipient of the 2007 Diplomacy for Freedom Award is Karen Stewart, our Ambassador to Belarus. Ambassador Stewart inspired her entire embassy to provide encouragement to embattled defenders of freedom. The Belarus regime has stepped up persecution of the opposition and ordinary citizens pressing peacefully for change. Karen has ensured that U.S. assistance is targeted to democracy initiatives, and she has found innovative ways to bring the message of U.S. support for freedom directly to the people of Belarus. Ambassador Stewart, you and your dedicated embassy team exemplify what transformational diplomacy is meant to be.

Last week, I had the honor to receive several Belarusian human rights and democracy advocates, who were greatly heartened by the efforts of the United States, represented by our Ambassador there, Karen Stewart. Thank you for your outstanding leadership in this important cause.

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Presidential Proclamation on Human Rights Day

U.S. continues to stand with countries to build democracy, free societies

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

December 6, 2007

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY, BILL OF RIGHTS DAY,
AND HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK, 2007

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Americans value deeply our ability to speak, assemble, and worship freely. As a Nation, we can help freedom-loving people everywhere build a world in which these rights are honored and respected. During Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we celebrate the freedoms guaranteed to all Americans and protected in our Constitution's Bill of Rights.

Many of these fundamental freedoms are still denied to people in countries around the world. The United States continues to stand with those who work to build democracy and secure the blessings of liberty. Individuals are struggling to create free societies in Cuba, Belarus, and Syria. And the day will come when they, and the citizens of other lands such as North Korea, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Sudan, will no longer be restricted from practicing their faith, voicing their opinions, and enjoying the many blessings of freedom.

Freedom and dignity are God's gifts, and during Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we look forward with confidence to the eventual triumph of human rights for all mankind.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United

States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 2007, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 2007, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 2007, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to mark these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(end text)

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Rice at 2007 International Human Rights Day Awards Ceremony . . .

(Continued from page 16)

(The Award is presented.)

(Applause.)

SECRETARY RICE: Ladies and Gentlemen: I have no doubt that the brave men and women around the globe who are working for the cause of freedom will prevail, as the

Havels and the Mandelas did before them -- for the great mover of history is the power of the human spirit. So as we join men and women throughout the international community in marking the anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we resolve to work with other free nations worldwide to defend the defenders of human dignity and democracy.

Thank you for joining us. (Applause.)

(end transcript)

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As Democracy Develops, It Diversifies

Washington -- Alexis de Tocqueville, France's 19th-century observer of the United States, the modern world's first democratic experiment, warned that democracy ultimately could lead to the tyranny of the majority. However, nearly two centuries later, democracy and the concept of majority rule have become powerful notions for which every nation on earth strives -- at least in word if not deed.



John Locke

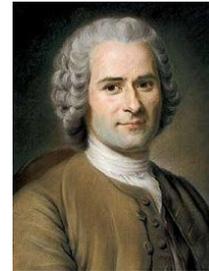
Ancient Greeks living in Athens were the first to implement a democratic form of government in the sixth century B.C. They saw popular rule as far superior to its polar opposite -- dictatorship. The Athens city-state, never having more than 10,000 citizens, was able to practice direct democracy whereby each male citizen would meet in a central location, deliberate legislation and vote on all government issues.

The direct democracy begun in Athens later would evolve into representative democracy as practiced in other civilizations such as the first Roman Republic (sixth century B.C. to first century B.C.), whose growing empire made the Athenian style impractical to implement. Now employed by most governments around the world, representative

democracy allows eligible citizens to choose representatives to make laws on their behalf and advocate for their welfare in both local and central governments.

Modern democracy owes much to political philosophers during the Age of Enlightenment such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Both philosophers heavily influenced the leaders of the American Revolution who, after independence from Great Britain in 1783, began what is now the world's oldest democracy, the United States. The American Revolution, in turn, helped to inspire the French to overthrow their monarchy

proves an executive Cabinet from among its own membership, typically bestowing the top post of prime minister to the leader of the majority party. Many of today's parliamentary systems were developed in Britain during the 18th and early 19th centuries and subsequently were spread to colonies throughout the British Empire, including India, which is now the world's largest democracy.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

By contrast, in a presidential system, an executive branch exists wholly separate from the legislature. Also, the head of the executive branch, the president, is directly elected by the people. Many of the concepts stipulating the separation of power among different government branches were discussed and developed under the United States Constitution. The ideas particularly spread throughout the Western Hemisphere, and currently most of the Americas are governed by presidential systems.

In order to set rules and principles and to provide a set system for governance, most democracies have written constitutions that regulate, define and structure their governments. Some constitutions

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Pro-democracy rally in South Africa- 1994

and eventually create the first French Republic.

Two styles of representative democracy have come to predominate in modern times: the parliamentary and presidential systems. Under the parliamentary system, an elected legislature forms and ap-

State Department Links Violence Against Women, Human Rights

By Jane Morse
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. embassies around the world organized 16 days of activities focused on the problem of violence against women to draw a symbolic link between the International Day Against Violence Against Women -- November 25 -- and International Human Rights Day -- December 10.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in her directive to all U.S. embassies, called for engagement with host country governments, civil society and media.

Preventing violence against women worldwide is part of President Bush's Freedom Agenda. Regarded as having reached "epidemic proportions," violence against women includes rape, sex trafficking, domestic abuse and honor-related crimes.

A DEPLORABLE PART OF MANY CULTURES

Unfortunately, violence against women is accepted in many cultures that regard such behavior as

"a private family matter," says Andrea Bottner, the senior coordinator for the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Women's Issues.



"Culturally, there are attitudes that women are 'less' than men, women 'deserve' to be treated this way, abused this way, because they are 'less' than men or because they don't deserve the same respect or social standing that men would get in a culture. I think you will find levels of those feelings in every culture," she said in a recent interview

in Budapest, Hungary, with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Bottner was in Budapest to attend an international conference on the changing role of women.

"Everybody in the community needs to be part of the solution," Bottner said, calling for broad education and awareness programs to change cultural attitudes about women. Especially crucial in combating violence against women, she said, is the involvement of law enforcement officials, prosecutors, judges, nongovernmental organizations, community activists and health and mental health professionals.

Bottner said the U.S. Congress is working on legislation dealing with international violence against women, which will be modeled on the Violence Against Women Act that was passed in the United States in 1994.

"Eliminating violence against women has long been a goal of the United States in our foreign policy," Bottner said. "We continue to make the case that violence against women is a human rights abuse, a criminal issue." ♦

As Democracy Develops, It Diversifies . . .

(Continued from page 18)

also include a guarantee of rights to the country's citizens. In most cases, the constitution is codified, meaning it exists in a single written document. However, the governments of Israel, New Zealand and the United Kingdom base their operations on several different sources, some of which are unwrit-

ten because they are based partly on precedents and traditions.

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously described democracy as "the worst form of government, except all the others that have been tried," and as a testament to its popularity, almost every country today identifies itself as a democracy, regardless of its true amount of political freedom or

its willingness to hold free and fair elections.

In democracy's modern era, the most significant development has been the gradual expansion of suffrage or voting rights to include women and minority groups, reflecting the continued twin ideals of democracy: having the majority rule while upholding minority rights. ♦

Support for Mideast Peace Goes Beyond Annapolis Conference

By David McKeeby
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Expect continued intensive diplomacy from Washington as Palestinian and Israeli leaders build on the success of the U.S.-sponsored Annapolis Conference, says a top U.S. diplomat.

"There are a lot of historical reasons to be skeptical, but we see this as an unprecedented moment of hope and opportunity for Israelis and Palestinians," Thomas Goldberger, director of the State Department's Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs, said in a December 6 USINFO webchat.

At the November 27 conference held at the U.S. Naval Academy, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced they would restart talks on December 12, with the goal of a peace treaty by the end of 2008 that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state, living together with Israel in peace and security. "Those are nice words," said Goldberger, whose office supports U.S. efforts to help the peace process, "but more interesting is where we go from here to get to the creation of a Palestinian state."

The first component of the way forward is the political process, he said, where Israeli and Palestinian negotiators will confront the thorniest issues at the heart of a half-century of conflict: the borders of a new Palestinian state, the right of

return for millions of Palestinian refugees, security guarantees to safeguard people on both sides of the border, equitable distribution of scarce water resources, the status



Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, President Bush, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Annapolis, Maryland
(© AP Images)

of Israeli outposts and settlements and the status of Jerusalem.

"It may not be the best way of thinking to talk about concessions," Goldberger replied when a participant in Malaysia asked him to speculate on how both sides will bridge these issues. "Instead, they need to be thinking together about how they can build a better future for Israeli and Palestinian people in which both are better off, safer, and happier than they are today." Senior U.S. officials will be traveling to the region to help the leaders as

the talks progress, Goldberger said, and the Quartet for Middle East Peace (the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations) will continue to meet frequently to provide political support.

On December 4, the White House announced that President Bush would travel to the region in January 2008.

Next, Goldberger said, is the confidence-building process enshrined in the Quartet's "road map" -- a comprehensive plan to resolve political, economic, security and humanitarian issues to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Annapolis, both sides agreed to continue implementing the plan, and asked the United States to take on a new role as "monitor and judge" of their progress.

Finally, Goldberger said, is the need for a continued international support for the creation of a Palestinian

state.

Goldberger said 90 countries are expected to take part in an international donors' conference in Paris December 17.

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

Broad U.S.-China Dialogue Advances Toward Long-Term Goals

Washington -- A comprehensive economic dialogue has helped the United States and China broaden their perspectives on bilateral relations and deepen their understanding of each other's concerns, according to U.S. experts.

The U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) was launched in 2006 by President Bush and China's President Hu Jintao to deal with the complexity of the U.S.-China economic relationship. The SED is conducted through twice-a-year, Cabinet-level meetings and follow-up engagement.

"There is no question the dialogue has provided a mechanism for much more serious, high-level consideration of big issues than ever before," Nicholas Lardy, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, told USINFO.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said the SED has made "substantial" progress in building trust between the two sides and creating work plans to achieve shared objectives. Paulson will head the U.S. delegation to the SED's third session, which will take place in Beijing December 12-13. The meeting will focus on trade and product safety, balanced economic development, energy efficiency and security, environmental sustainability and bilateral investment.

In December 5 remarks to the Asia Society, Paulson said the two countries have strengthened economic ties and established channels of communication that did not exist previously. "These innovations have helped keep the U.S.-China economic relationship on an even keel and helped us manage difficult is-

sues, even in times of tension," he said.

One such issue that has received much attention in the U.S. media is the safety of food and toy imports from China.

U.S. Treasury Special Envoy for China and the SED Alan Holmer said that U.S. agencies used the



A boy looks at a display of Chinese yuan. China's currency value has been a topic of talks with the United States. (© AP Images)

momentum created by the dialogue to reach bilateral agreements on import safety, civil aviation, financial services and other issues.

But Albert Keidel, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said the SED is not the best platform for "headline" issues. The dialogue should remain focused on long-term objectives, he told USINFO. More immediate issues could be handled through direct "technical" contacts between specialized ministries or the World Trade Organization dispute-settlement process, he said.

U.S. officials say the underlying purpose of the dialogue is to broaden often narrow views of spe-

cialized government departments by bringing their chiefs together.

The SED "breaks down classic bureaucratic stovepipes [obstacles] that hinder effective communication and impede results," Holmer said.

Lardy shares this view. He said the dialogue has been a mechanism that has forced officials on both sides to take into account the "bigger picture."

As such, it can accomplish "quite a bit" in the long run, Lardy said.

Keeping the dialogue's focus on strategic objectives will be challenging because the administration has had a hard time controlling Congress' and U.S. manufacturers' expectations of more immediate results, he said.

Both experts say the next year can be crucial in this respect because of the 2008 elections in the United States and changes in the Chinese leadership.

On the Chinese side, Vice Premier Wu Yi, who has headed the Chinese delegation to the SED, announced she would retire in the spring of 2008.

Paulson said that he will work well with whomever her replacement may be. He said that the progress made through the SED points the way to further benefits for the American and Chinese people.

"To turn back on, or away from, this road would jeopardize our long-term strategic interests for short-term political expediency," Paulson said. ♦

Morocco's Mohamed Benaissa Awarded U.S. Honorary Doctorate

By Louise Fenner
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The weather was freezing in Minnesota, but Mohamed Benaissa was happy to be back in that snowy northern state for a visit that he called "very emotional, very moving." A former foreign minister of Morocco and former Moroccan ambassador to the United States, Benaissa is also a graduate of the University of Minnesota, and he returned on December 4 to receive the highest honor the university can bestow: an honorary doctor of laws degree for public service.

The honorary degree "is a crown on what I have tried to achieve in my lifetime," Benaissa said during the ceremony. The university has awarded 235 honorary doctorates, and only 91 of these have been a doctor of laws degree, which recognizes achievement in public service "that has added materially to knowledge and to the betterment of society."

C. Eugene Allen, a university official who chaired the nominating committee for Benaissa's award, hailed his record of service "to his hometown, nation, and the world." Many of Benaissa's accomplishments, Allen said, "are related to his deep-seated interest in the preservation and promotion of his country's cultural heritage and wealth, and of expanded cross-cultural understanding. His is the kind of cultural sensitivity that is increasingly necessary for global leaders to be

most effective."

This was only Benaissa's second visit to the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis since attending as a Fulbright Scholar and graduating in 1963 with a bachelor's degree in journalism. He returned in 1998 as his country's ambassador to the United States to offer Morocco's perspective on the global economy, but he began his speech by explain-

sharing values rather than imposing them." Knowledge and mutual respect are critical, he said, quoting Morocco's King Mohammed VI: "The world suffers not from a clash of civilization; the world suffers from ignorance of civilizations."

The United States and Morocco, Benaissa added, are a good example of "mutual respect between diverse cultures."



Mohamed Benaissa receives honorary degree from University of Minnesota. (Jennifer Schulz/University of Minnesota)

The two countries have "a beautiful history," he told USINFO in a telephone interview from Minneapolis December 5. Morocco was the first country to seek diplomatic relations with the new government of the United States of America in 1777, it hosted a World War II conference between President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and it stood by the United States during the Cold War, Benaissa pointed out.

ing how his experiences at the university influenced his diplomatic career.

Benaissa returned to that theme during his lecture at the doctoral ceremony, describing how in the early 1960s he "found fellow students who like me came from different backgrounds, cultures and value systems. And yet, the beauty of it all was that there was no drive to impose one's values on another."

In an increasingly globalized world, Benaissa continued, "there needs to be recognition of the importance of

"I say it from the bottom of my heart, America and Morocco have come through this period of time, over 200 years, not only hand in hand but heart in heart," he said.

More information (<http://www1.umn.edu/twincities/index.php>) on the University of Minnesota is available on its Web site.

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

Delegates Pledge \$605 Million in New Delhi for Avian Flu Fight

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

New Delhi -- Eight nations and the European Commission pledged \$605 million December 6 in the continuing fight against the spread of H5N1 avian influenza in birds and people for efforts focusing on halting the virus at its avian source, bolstering disease surveillance and integrating animal and human health services and capabilities.

The pledges came on the final day of the December 4-6 New Delhi Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, hosted by the government of India in collaboration with the

International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, launched by President Bush in 2005. "On behalf of the United States government," Ambassador John Lange, head of the U.S. delegation and special representative for avian and pandemic influenza at the State Department, told the delegates, "I'm pleased to announce our new pledge of international assistance for avian and pandemic influenza, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture in the amount of \$195 million."

The funds, which bring the cumulative U.S. pledge since 2005 to \$629 million, will support the efforts of international organizations, nongovernmental groups and others to strengthen global preparedness and response to avian flu and a potential human flu pandemic. Some



U.S. Ambassador John Lange, on screen, pledges \$195 million in aid for avian and pandemic flu December 6. (Cheryl Pellerin/State Dept.)

of the resources will support India's surveillance program for animal and human disease.

MORE THAN MONEY

In addition to the United States, delegates from the following nations announced pledges: European Commission, \$116 million; Japan, \$69 million; United Kingdom, \$10 million; France, \$7.5 million; Germany, \$4.3 million; India, \$2 million; Norway, \$1.75 million; and Greece \$441,000.

The New Delhi ministerial is the sixth international avian and pandemic flu gathering, some of which were donor meetings that together generated more than \$2.3 billion in pledges.

"We were still looking for about another \$1.2 [billion at the Delhi meeting] and we have raised some-

thing of \$400 million today," said Peter Harrold, director of Operations Policy and Country Services at the World Bank. "There, of course, still remain -- there will always remain -- financing gaps. But the mobilization of resources remains incredibly impressive."

To those who questioned the decrease in pledges since the 2006 Bamako (Mali) International Conference on Avian Influenza -- from about \$474 million there to \$405 million in New Delhi -- Harrold said, "We did not enter this meeting with a target for additional financing. We entered the

meeting to gather together something which is at least as valuable as money -- that is the knowledge and experience that has been accumulated in the many countries that are fighting this disease."

"The pledges are valuable additional infusions to sustain the energy of what is proving to be an epic process of building our capacity globally," said Dr. David Nabarro, U.N. system coordinator for avian and pandemic influenza, "but we are also looking for longer-term commitments to improved animal health and human health security beyond the kind of pledgings done at this conference, and to longer-term development assistance in these areas."

MOVING TARGET

Despite the funding gaps, real pro-

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Turning Point Reached in Developing Alternative Fuels Plan

By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer

Miami -- A plan by the United States, Brazil and other countries to develop alternative fuels from organic matter and build a market for them is said to be at a "turning point" that will help the participating nations lower their dependence on foreign oil.

The State Department's Dan Sullivan told USINFO during the December 3-5 Miami Conference on the Caribbean Basin that part of the plan involves the United States, Brazil and "third countries" working on ways to stimulate private sector development of domestic biofuels industries.

The Miami meeting, said Sullivan, provided an opportunity to bring together with the United States and Brazil all the other "players" involved in developing the plan: El Salvador, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, the Dominican Republic, U.S. and Brazilian consultants, and international organizations -- the Inter-American Development Bank, the U.N. Foundation and the Organization of American States.

Sullivan, assistant secretary of state for economics, energy and business affairs, said "major diplomacy" at the Miami conference helped push forward the broader U.S.-Brazil biofuels partnership with these other countries and organizations. A second element of the plan, he said, involves the United States, Brazil, the European Union, China and India developing industrywide standards and codes that could lay the groundwork for a global biofuels market.

Sullivan also cited bilateral coopera-



Daniel S. Sullivan, Assistant Secretary

tion between the United States and Brazil in such areas as research and development.

The Miami meeting allowed the different parties to "deepen their cooperation and get a common understanding" on how to make the initiative work, Sullivan said.

Sullivan said much progress already has been made on the plan, which the United States and Brazil agreed to in March. The accord provided for closer U.S.-Brazilian cooperation on researching production of energy from biofuels, which are renewable energy products produced from organic matter. They include ethanol and methanol.

The plan for biofuels development, Sullivan said, now will move beyond the study and analysis phase to "being much more action-oriented in terms of policies" for alternative fuel development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Sullivan said diversifying energy supplies is "critical" to the region's

energy security. Oil imports, he said, now constitute a "significant element" of the gross domestic product in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Developing biofuels will help in the growth of domestic industries and in agricultural employment in an "environmentally friendly way," said Sullivan.

"We see the biofuels initiative in the [Western] Hemisphere as really hitting on a number of important areas and interests to the countries of the region," Sullivan said.

CONSULTANTS' EVALUATION OF BIOFUELS PLAN

Consulting for the U.S. government in the biofuels agreement with Brazil is Arkansas-based Winrock International.

Winrock's Jordan Shackelford told USINFO that his firm has worked in Haiti, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic to assess biofuels opportunities for public and private sector initiatives in those countries.

Shackelford said Winrock, along with its Brazilian counterpart, Fundação Getulio Vargas, which consults for Brazil's government, is looking principally at ethanol as an energy source, along with African palm oil, and a plant native to Central America called jatropha that he said grows in wastelands and does not compete with food crops. Shackelford said jatropha is "a hot topic right now that is garnering a lot of attention" as a new feed stock. The plant has been introduced in India, Central Africa and Madagascar and is becoming "global" in its utility, said Shackelford. ♦

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Laptop Orchestra Turns Electronic Sounds . . .

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individual laptop rather than a loudspeaker, he said. The PLOrk speakers, the large SenSA (Bubba) and the original Bowed-Sensor-Speaker-Array (BoSSA), radiate sound in all directions.

Trueman has disseminated information widely on how to make the speakers, according to Smallwood, and there are companies that will custom-make them. This step is expensive for an entire laptop orchestra, though, because each person requires an individual sound source.

SMALLWOOD'S INTEREST IN MUSIC STARTED AT YOUNG AGE

Smallwood's interest in music began at an early age when he learned to play the piano and several other instruments in his school band. At the age of 10, his father gave him a tape recorder. Smallwood was capti-

vated by the device and used it to record sounds. Soon, he made recordings of sound effects and used them to accompany his puppet shows in the family's living room.

Smallwood eventually became interested in electronic music. Currently, he is completing his doctoral dissertation in the music department at Princeton University, where he is working on sonic photography, or making sonic snapshots of places.

Additional information (<http://plork.cs.princeton.edu/>) on the Princeton Laptop Orchestra is available on the university's web site.

For more stories about musicians, see The Arts (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/the_arts.html).

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

Delegates Pledge \$605 Million in New Delhi for Avian Flu Fight . . .

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gress has been made over the last few years, delegates reported throughout the meeting. More than 90 percent of countries report they have developed pandemic preparedness plans, there is circumstantial evidence that the spread of H5N1 is slowing and global human flu virus diagnostic and surveillance capacity has improved.

On the other hand, H5N1 is considered enzootic (prevalent in an area) in locations in at least six countries, veterinary capacity in many countries is insufficient and there is not enough coordination between animal and human health surveillance and response networks in most regions.

"Countries are much better pre-

pared now than they were a year ago for a pandemic, however the preparedness is not as broad or deep as we would like it to be," Nabarro said. "Although some countries have tested their preparedness with exercises -- including India -- there is still more testing to be done. Because when the pandemic does come, it will be too late to prepare."

The three-day meeting drew an unprecedented 750 delegates and 40 government ministers from 111 nations and 29 international organizations. For the first time at an avian influenza meeting, the directors-general of three top U.N. agencies -- the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organisation for Animal Health -- were in attendance.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addressed delegates December 5, warning against disconnections between animal and human health.

"Investments in public health will be unproductive without ensuring the health of our livestock," he said. "Our budgetary policies must match the effort, with adequate funding of animal health programs, along with funding for human health. The government of India supports the concept of One Health, [which is] based on an integrated approach to animal and human health." ♦