



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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### Ambassador Yamamoto Addresses the 3rd International Muslim Leaders' Consultation on HIV/AIDS

Ambassador Donald Yamamoto addressed nearly 150 participants from over 30 countries on Monday, July 23, during the opening ceremony of the third International Muslim Leaders' Consultation on HIV/AIDS. He urged religious and community leaders to return to their communities to spread the good word and to bring communities together to fight HIV/AIDS.



(L-R) Chair of the International Advisory Committee, Dr. Magid Kagma; U.S. Ambassador Donald Yamamoto; Vice President of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, Elias Redman; Minister of Health, Dr. Tewodros Adhanon; and other guest speakers.

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### Workshop on the Market-Led Livelihoods for Vulnerable Populations Project

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) hosted a two-day federal level workshop in Addis this week to share best practices from its Market-Led Livelihoods for Vulnerable Populations (MLVP) project, which is improving markets to contribute to economic growth and reduce long-term food aid dependency of vulnerable populations.

The workshop, entitled "Using Markets to Alleviate Extreme Poverty: Lessons from Ethiopia MLVP," was held at the Ghion Hotel from July 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>. Speakers shared best practices and practical advice learned from the experience of designing and pilot-testing five investment plans for vulnerable populations in PSNP woredas. Farmers gave testimonies on how their

product quality had improved and their incomes increased. Honey producers, for example, increased their income by an average of 218 birr by the end of the project and are expected to increase that amount up to 300 birr in the future.

State Minister of Agriculture, H.E. Dr. Abera Deressa addressed participants during the closing

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## Ambassador Yamamoto addresses the 3rd International Muslim Leaders' Consultation . . .

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"You can shape social values, promote responsible behavior, increase public knowledge and influence opinion, as well as change attitudes, policies and laws," Ambassador Yamamoto said.

"The United States is grateful to you and for being able to support this conference and your continued commitment to this endeavor through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, and USAID."

The US Government first started supporting Muslim communities to address AIDS in 1992 through a project entitled "*Family AIDS Education and Prevention Through*

*Imams*" implemented by the Islamic Medical Association of Uganda. In 2000, a group of Muslim practitioners decided to articulate an Islamic approach to HIV/AIDS in order to help their religious community respond appropriately. In 2001, the United States Government supported the Islamic Medical Association of Uganda to organize the first International Muslim Leaders' Consultation on HIV/AIDS in Kampala, Uganda. In 2003, the US Government also contributed to organizing the second gathering in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The conference in Ethiopia, which has been highly supported by the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, is following the theme of "*The Islamic Approach to HIV/*

*AIDS: Enhancing the Community Response*". Jason Heffner, PEPFAR Ethiopia Coordinator, was instrumental in bringing the U.S. Government's support to this gathering. His efforts were recognized by the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council during the opening ceremony of the five-day event.

In Ethiopia, PEPFAR partners include the Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency, Ogaden Welfare and Development Association and Rohi Weddu Pastoral Women's Development Organization in Afar region. These groups are educating communities about HIV prevention through local Imams and peer educators, and strengthening anti-AIDS youth clubs. ♦

## Workshop on the Market-Led Livelihoods for Vulnerable Populations . . .

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ceremony on Wednesday. He will also travel to Butajira on Friday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, to inaugurate the Meskan Sericulture Center and view a Silk Fair supported by the USAID project.

The expansion of a market-led working system is crucial to alleviate chronic poverty in rural areas of the country. Lauren Ruth, Acting MLVP Chief of Party, said the project was designed to help Ethiopians address the challenges of chronic poverty.

The expansion of a market-led working system in the rural, poor areas of Ethiopia can increase incomes, expand opportunities and generate additional benefits to nearby populations.

The MLVP project is implemented by Chemonics International Inc. ♦



Workshop participants

## Africa Trade Forum Proves Networking Success

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

Accra, Ghana – The expansion of export trade in Africa is leading to more jobs and prosperity. This is happening, in part, because of the networking program created by U.S. legislation passed seven years ago to replace aid with trade as the engine for economic growth on the continent, a State Department official says.

The Sixth Annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum, held in Accra July 18-19, was "very positive and a success," says Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer, because "it brought together the business sector, the NGO [nongovernmental organization] and the government sector all in one place and it was very much focused on practical steps to realize the total benefits of the AGOA legislation."

Frazer spoke with USINFO while returning to the United States July 20.

Thirty-nine sub-Saharan nations now are eligible for the duty and quota-free entry of 6,400 of their products into the U.S. market under AGOA. Although oil and gas account for more than 80 percent of those exports, the United States is expanding programs meant to build up agricultural capacity to diversity Africa's exports. In 2006, \$394 million was devoted to such capacity-building programs.

In Accra, thousands of participants from NGOs like the Leon Sullivan Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation met with African entrepreneurs and U.S. businesses like the Coca-Cola Company and Caterpillar (a manufacturer of industrial vehicles) while interacting with

139 U.S. officials and trade experts in Accra to obtain tips on how to enter the U.S. market.

The forum also featured a business exhibition where dozens of Ghanaian firms advertised their wares and services to interested U.S. buyers and investors. The business fair was arranged in part by the U.S.

Agency for International Development (USAID), which also operates a regional trade hub in Accra that offers advice and guidance on business opportunities in the United States.

Frazer said that, during her talks at the conference, "One of the things that was most striking was that [Ghanian] President [John] Kufuor indicated an interest in deepening our trade relationship by looking at the possibility of a free-trade agreement and we are certainly interested in this."

### DARFUR

Frazer said she also had a number of meetings in Accra with African officials on the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan.

She noted that Ghana currently is a member of the U.N. Security Council, its president is head of the African Union, and the United States is "negotiating the Security Council resolution to authorize the hybrid [AU-U.N. peacekeeping] force" in Darfur.

Frazer said many of her bilateral meetings in Accra on the Darfur crisis addressed ways to achieve:

Agreement among African countries for a robust mandate for the peacekeeping operation;

Clarity on the unity of command to ensure an effective operation; and

An early transition date -- by October 1 -- by which the hybrid force can take over from the AU-AMIS force with its 7,000 troops on the ground.



Jendayi Frazer,  
U.S. Assistant Secretary

Following the talks, Frazer said she saw progress being made on addressing the

conflict in Darfur.

"It's clear that the Africans support a robust mandate, after all it's their troops on the ground there right now" outnumbered by marauders called the Janjaweed. "So, they have the experience of AMIS not having a sufficient mandate to protect civilian lives."

At the same time, Frazer said, officials with whom she spoke made it clear "they wanted an early transition [to the hybrid force] because it's their [AU] forces on the ground that do not have the financing, logistical support or planning capabilities that this [U.N.-supported] hybrid [force] will bring."

For additional information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>).

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

## African Agricultural Exports Focus of Capacity-Building Program

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

Accra, Ghana – The Sixth Annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum was capped July 19 with the announcement by top U.S. government officials of initiatives to strengthen the export-boosting trade measure first passed by Congress in 2000.

A new faculty exchange program will try to build the capacity of agricultural institutions in Africa, a continent overly dependent on oil and gas exports, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a video link with the more than 1,000 officials, businessmen and civil society representatives meeting July 18-19 in Accra.

Forum members who deliberated on how best to optimize AGOA's trade benefits agreed that a more diverse range of exports is needed and that Africa's agricultural sector should be strengthened. Some 6,400 African products are allowed duty-free, quota-free entry into U.S. markets under AGOA, but oil and gas products now account for more than 80 percent of those exports.

"In recent years, we have expanded our cooperation together" with several initiatives meant to help African businesses compete more successfully in the global economy, Rice said. "Now, we are building on those good efforts with a new initiative" aimed at making African agricultural products more competitive.

To do so, "African agricultural products must meet the sanitary requirements of developed countries," Rice told the AGOA audience. "To help you reach this goal, we are instituting a new faculty exchange pro-

gram to bring some of the best African agricultural specialists to study at American universities," she said.



Farm in South African

Beginning in August, the new U.S.-Africa Sanitary-Phytosanitary Capacity Building Program will partner with African scientists and scholars to promote sound agricultural teaching and research techniques.

During the first year of the program, two U.S. universities, Ohio State and Texas A&M, will host seven faculty members from six AGOA countries: Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda.

The exchange program, along with several expansions of AGOA's favorable trade provisions carried out during the Bush administration, "signifies America's enduring, bipartisan support for Africa's trade and development efforts," Rice said.

"We are here to put agriculture to work for the African economy and people," said Mark Keenum, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

under secretary for the Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service. He also announced four initiatives designed to boost African agricultural exports:

In August, the Namibian Beef Equivalency Training session will help Namibian beef inspectors better understand and implement U.S. meat import standards;

The West African Trade Investment Mission, set for February 2008, will bring 50 businessmen from the United States and 10 African nations to Accra to explore joint investment opportunities;

An educational exchange under USDA's Norman Borlaug Fellowship Program will sponsor seven fellows from six AGOA nations to study cocoa production at several U.S. universities; and

A series of organic certification training workshops will be held throughout sub-Saharan Africa in 2008.

Acting U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Henrietta Fore also announced several infrastructural initiatives including:

Implementation of the \$7.7 million, five-year West Africa Seed Alliance (WASA), whose goals include establishing a commercial seed industry that ensures an affordable seed supply for small-scale farmers and creating \$50 million in farm revenues for local economies seeking export markets. The project will be carried out in conjunction with private-sector firms like Monsanto and nongovernmental organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

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## Sub-Saharan Africa Benefits from Expanded International Trade

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

Accra, Ghana – The United States will continue pursuing a growing economic partnership dedicated to promoting prosperity through expanded trade with some of Africa's poorest countries, according to America's top trade official.

"We will not stop until every sub-Saharan African country and the continent's 700 million citizens are part of and benefiting" from expanded international trade, U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Susan Schwab told the Sixth Annual African Growth and Opportunity (AGOA) Forum in Accra July 18.

Schwab, who led the U.S. delegation of 139 government officials and trade experts from 16 federal agencies to the two-day Accra forum, said trade is "the most effective weapon in the fight against poverty . . . [and] we are committed to continuing access for African products into the United States – a \$13 trillion market – under AGOA."

Passed by Congress in 2000 as a way of alleviating poverty in sub-Saharan Africa by boosting exports, AGOA now offers duty-free, quota-free entry of approximately 6,400 African products into the U.S. market.

The seven-year-old trade law boosted overall African-U.S. trade to a record \$71 billion in 2006. Part of that total includes \$44 billion in African exports to the United States made under AGOA, an increase of 16 percent from 2005.

In 2002, Ghana became eligible for AGOA trade benefits after institut-

ing economic and political reforms to enhance protection of intellectual property rights, combat corruption, alleviate poverty, expand health and education, eliminate child labor exploitation and protect human and worker rights.

Schwab later told journalists that the U.S. commitment has wide bipartisan support and will endure changing administrations in Washington when President Bush's second term ends in January 2009.



A vendor waters fish for sale in a Bissau, Guinea-Bissau market place. Seafood is a major export of the country (AP)

In the period from 2003 to 2005, 37 percent of Ghana's exports to the United States entered duty-free as a result of AGOA.

Ghana's president, John Kufuor, who also attended the AGOA opening, affirmed the support for Africa voiced by Schwab and President Bush, who appeared in a brief digital video recording. "This law [AGOA] is producing results," Kufuor said.

He said AGOA and other U.S. development programs "have assured us of America's goodwill toward Africa and Africa greatly appreciates the gesture."

One of the main themes addressed during the forum was how to diversify products away from the oil and gas sectors, which now account for more than 80 percent of African exports under AGOA.

The trend toward diversification is reflected in 2006 data showing that non-oil exports increased by 7 percent over 2005 levels, to \$3.2 billion.

Schwab said it is vitally important that sub-Saharan African countries become better equipped to export more agricultural products.

At the same time, she said, the United States "recognizes that

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## Africa Trade Act Seen as Important Tool in Poverty Fight

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

Accra, Ghana – The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), with its goal of alleviating poverty through export-led growth, never has been more important to the continent's well-being, says the head of the largest consumer-product company in Africa.

Africa is "better positioned than it has ever been to break the bonds of poverty and take its place as a fit member of the community of nations," Alex Cummings, the Coca-Cola Company's president for Africa, told the Sixth Annual AGOA Forum July 18.

This largely is due to AGOA, Cummings said, the landmark trade legislation that extends duty-free access into U.S. markets for approximately 6,400 products from the 39 sub-Saharan nations that have carried out the economic and political reforms that qualify them for the benefits of the trade act.

"I think we can all be proud of the progress Africa has made since the passage of AGOA," he told the more than 1,000 officials, businessmen and nongovernmental organization (NGOs) representatives meeting to discuss how best to optimize the trade act's benefits.

"As Africa moves away from reliance on raw commodity exports to vertical integration [value-added production], AGOA remains a vital bridge to trade, investment and opportunity," Cummings, who heads the work force of 60,000 that make Coca-Cola the largest private employer in Africa, said July 18.

By boosting African exports through its favorable trade provisions, Cum-

mings said, AGOA is "creating a level playing field" in global markets, providing Africa an opportunity to build its manufacturing sector and thereby "increasing the value of its commodities that has for so long been ceded to non-African manufacturers."

The Africans are also doing their part to support AGOA, Cummings said, adding, "real progress can be seen across the board."

African governments are making it easier for business enterprise to succeed, he said, as "vital supply links are being forged and infrastructure developed and the workforce is learning new skills while a larger entrepreneurial class is being fostered and encouraged."

U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, who led a U.S. delegation of 139 officials and trade experts to the forum, said AGOA was helping to bring Africa into the global web of trading nations. Although oil and gas currently account for more than 80 percent of AGOA exports, she said that product diversification is increasing.

In 2006 African nonenergy exports under AGOA increased markedly in many sectors, including:

Minerals and metals, up 21 percent;

Cut flowers, 22 percent;

Footwear, 30 percent;

Cashews, 73 percent; and

Transportation equipment, 81 percent.

Ghana's president, John Kufuor, also touched on the need for prod-

uct diversification in his remarks to the forum. He appealed to U.S. investors to increase their investments in Africa and embrace industries beyond the typical extractive ones such as oil and precious metals.

"Venturing into agriculture, processing, manufacturing and tourism," Kufuor said, "are some of the ways in which technology transfer and Africa's capacity building must be given a boost. Relocation of factories [from outside the continent] and outsourcing ICT (information communications technology) contracts to Africa also could add to capacity building to make sub-Saharan Africans effective partners in trade."

The Coca-Cola Company, founded in Atlanta in the 1890s, entered African markets in 1957 when it established a bottling plant in Sierra Leone. The company now offers a comprehensive HIV/AIDS health care program for all its employees in Africa and has partnered with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in AIDS education outreach as well as clean water and sanitation projects.

In addition to providing thousands of scholarships to students worldwide, the Coca-Cola Foundation has funded the construction of schools throughout Africa, including Ghana.

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

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

## ”USAID, Other Donors Coordinate Humanitarian Efforts in Sudan

As the sun beats down on the desert in Nyala, in the state of South Darfur, a truck convoy carrying relief supplies pulls into town. Hundreds of miles southeast, in the town of Torit in the state of Eastern Equatoria, a small propeller plane carrying several humanitarian workers touches down on a dirt airstrip. Later in the day, dozens of representatives from U.N. agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) gather in a meeting room in Khartoum to share the latest news affecting the humanitarian situation.

Throughout Sudan, logistics and information coordination programs funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) support cargo shipments, humanitarian worker transportation and information-sharing. Vital for service delivery, coordinated efforts ensure that people and goods reach those in need as quickly as possible.

Sudan is confronted by concurrent challenges, including an ongoing conflict in parts of the country and a large internally displaced population.

The complex assistance program provides extensive humanitarian and food aid to vulnerable people in southern and eastern Sudan and Darfur in western Sudan, as well as extensive reconstruction aid in the war-affected south and areas of Abyei, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan.

One of the biggest challenges of

working in Sudan is transporting humanitarian staff to remote areas. The country includes some of the most inaccessible areas in the world, with few paved roads, harsh



A child fetches water at an improved water source in Southern Sudan.

terrain that includes deserts, mountains and swampland, and land mines in the southern and central areas. Air travel is the only reliable way to reach many locations and people in need.

USAID supports activities that keep the overall Sudan humanitarian operation running. When newly displaced families arrive at camps in Darfur, aid groups, including U.N. aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations, provide blankets, plastic sheeting, sleeping mats, water containers, clothing and other basic items to offer critical support and to help people facing uncertainty and insecurity.

With funding and support from USAID, U.N. agencies developed a common procedure for humanitarian groups serving the area to procure in bulk, transport, store and distribute relief goods. This system saves the aid groups money and ensures that there is no duplication of goods ordered for distribution to the same target populations.

To tackle the challenge of moving thousands of tons of additional supplies to Darfur, USAID provided the nonprofit group CARE with funding to operate a common cargo transport service. The service allows humanitarian organizations to send cargo on a schedule. By using the combined service, humanitarian groups save money on shipping costs compared to the costs of individual organizations sending supplies separately.

The United States is the largest international donor in Sudan, consistently providing 80 percent of all humanitarian assistance -- more than \$1 billion since 2005.

For more information on how U.S. development aid changes lives, see Partnership for a Better Life ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/partners/> ).

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## Food Aid Helps Burundi Recover From Flooding, Move Forward

Exceptionally heavy rains in Burundi in late 2006 halted the country's winter harvest and severely limited the availability of seeds for the 2007 planting season. Compounding the situation, a disease attacking the food staple cassava decimated the crop in many areas affected by the heavy rains and floods.

To help get food to the 2.5 million victims of food shortages, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) contributed \$5 million in food aid to the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) for distribution in the spring and early summer of 2007.

In recent years, Burundi has been affected by a series of events that have limited agricultural production and weakened food security in the country. This follows several years of internal conflict.

But following elections in 2005, Burundi is moving forward. During the transition, humanitarian assistance has been filling the gap in social services, allowing for the development of peaceful society.

In cooperation with the WFP, USAID's Food for Peace program has been providing food assistance to people displaced by the conflict and returning refugees. In addition, food has been provided to nutritional feeding centers that serve severely and moderately malnourished children.

Food for Peace also is helping to rebuild Burundi's infrastructure. Projects aim to provide war-affected communities with a social and economic safety net and to improve the environment.

Community-based projects include swamp rehabilitation, erosion control, nursery tree planting, fishpond

building, establishing beekeeping facilities, constructing shelters and developing improved methods of growing cassava.

Other projects include constructing and maintaining roads and bridges, constructing grain storage facilities and rehabilitating schools and sanitation infrastructures.

USAID will continue to provide assistance to the country until Burundians are able to develop a reliable local food supply.

For more information on how U.S. development aid changes lives, see Partnership for a Better Life ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/partners/> ).

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## African Agricultural Exports Focus of Capacity-Building Program . . .

*(Continued from page 4)*

The Kalangala Infrastructure Services Project in Uganda that will upgrade roads, water supplies, electricity and ferry transport for the residents of Bugala Island in Lake Victoria. The goal is to create 5,000 new jobs while supplying clean water and energy to 50,000 residents, improving their living conditions and making it possible to raise and transport products for export.

A new intellectual property rights assistance agreement signed with the U.S. Department of Commerce to help Africans enforce their intellectual property rights.

"Today's Africa is on the move," the USAID chief said. "Economies are growing and governments are embracing democratic governance and the rule of law. Such changes fuel a free and fair market economy where private-sector businesses are

born, expand and thrive."

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

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## Secretary Rice on Democratic Development in the Americas

*The following article, originally published in the July 15 edition of the Miami Herald, is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.*

(begin byliner)

We need these trade deals  
By Condoleezza Rice

Washington -- On Monday, several hundred citizens of the Americas -- members of civil society, faith groups and nongovernmental organizations from nations across our hemisphere -- joined President Bush here for the White House Conference on the Americas. The goal was to strengthen and expand the consensus behind democracy and free markets that defines nearly our entire hemisphere today.

A dream long denied

That this event was even possible speaks to how close the men and women of the Americas are to realizing the founding promise of the New World: that all people, not just elites, deserve the opportunity to make a break with the past and begin life anew -- to replace poverty with prosperity, injustice with dignity, oppression with freedom.

To be sure, the pursuit of this vision in our hemisphere has been long and imperfect. For indigenous people and minorities, the dream of a better life was long denied and is still too often deferred. But over many centuries, the people of the Americas have overcome slavery and colonialism, military caudillos and communist revolution, and we have built a common commitment to political and economic freedom.

As Monday's conference made clear, the ties that bind our hemisphere touch every sphere of human interaction. More than any region in the world, the nations of the

Americas are an alliance of peoples -- united through enduring connections of travel, trade, tourism, and family.

A better life

The main challenge now and the focus of Monday's conference was to strengthen the link between democracy and development. People in the Americas have worked hard to build democratic institutions and free market economies,

and now they want their governments to help them achieve opportunity, prosperity and a better life.

We must not confuse this impatience with democratic capitalism for a rejection of it. The citizens of the Americas do not want to choose between democracy and development. They want both. Witness the 11 elections in our hemisphere last year, in which voters overwhelmingly chose leaders who are committed to governing democratically, to expanding free markets and free trade, and to delivering on their people's high hopes for social justice.

Under President Bush's leadership, the United States is doing its part to help, and there is no partisan price tag attached to our partnership.

Ideologically blind

Our vision of social justice is ideologically blind. Where governments in our hemisphere are committed to

democracy and working to meet the basic needs of their people, they are finding a friend in the United

States. They are finding an ally in their quest to expand access to housing and healthcare, to educate their people and to create jobs.

None of this is possible without economic growth, and the citizens of the Americas know this. That is why they are electing leaders who will fight for free trade. Here it is we, not they, who face a critical test.

Some of our strongest democratic allies -- Panama, Peru and Colombia -- have made strategic commitments to us through their trade agreements. These are commitments made by democratic leaders, reflecting the deepest aspirations of their people.

The agreements we have negotiated are good and fair. Walking away from them now means walking away from the millions of people in these countries who believe that trade and investment are the key to their prosperity and well-being. It means walking away from our commitment to fight poverty and promote opportunity, and the consequences would be felt in the region for years to come.

Not giving up

This debate is about much more than domestic economics; it is about our foreign policy. Put simply: Does the United States support our democratic allies in the Americas, or not? Do we believe in our own principles, or not? The citizens of

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Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

## Secretary Rice on Democratic Development in the Americas . . .

(Continued from page 9)

our hemisphere are not giving up on democratic capitalism, and we cannot afford to give up on them.

We should be absolutely clear of the consequences for doing so. There are some in the Americas today who believe that authoritarian rule is the only path to sustainable development and social justice. If the United States does not stand with the true democrats of the Americas, who want to better their people's lives not dominate them, then we will demonstrate exactly what the new American autocrats are arguing -- that freedom cannot deliver real benefits and that de-

mocracy is a road leading only to false hopes and empty promises.

It is this kind of archaic prejudice that, for centuries, the people of the Americas have sacrificed so much to disprove and overcome. That is why democratic modernizers across the world have always looked to this hemisphere for inspiration in their own struggles. It was true in past centuries, and it is true in this century.

By making democratic development work in the Americas, we show the world that it is possible anywhere. We give hope to impatient patriots in places like Zimbabwe and Burma, Iraq and Afghanistan, and sadly still

in Cuba, who long to begin their own journey toward liberty, prosperity and social justice. The promise of the New World may have begun in this hemisphere, but it is a universal vision spanning the globe and it is why the Americas will always matter.

Condoleezza Rice is the U.S. secretary of state.

(end byliner)

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## Sub-Saharan Africa Benefits from Expanded International Trade . . .

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opening our markets is not enough" to spur African exports. More needs to be done to train Africans to make themselves and their products more competitive in the global marketplace, according to Schwab.

### REGIONAL SUCCESSES

In the past few years, Schwab said, the United States invested \$1 billion in capacity-building programs in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2006 alone, the United States devoted \$394 million to such programs on the continent, she added.

The programs have been designed and implemented in the agriculture sector to boost African farming and food processing sectors.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Ghana is administering the Trade and Investment Program for a Competitive

Export Economy (TIPCEE), an innovative program that provides \$30 million for agriculture and business promotion.

The program works with small-scale farmers, food processors and marketing agents to handle more profitably a range of 11 fruits and vegetables. In 2007, some 100,000 farmers were trained, and they subsequently generated sales of \$75 million. The program became so successful that four international importers now have deals pending with the Ghanaians.

There are also programs like the regional trade information centers, called Global Competitive Hubs, operated by USAID on the continent. They are geared toward helping Africans gain more knowledge about doing business in the United States. A West African Hub is located in Accra.

The hubs have helped spur invest-

ments in areas such as the textile industry. Successes included:

Lesotho's opening of 12 textile factories, its expansion of eight existing plants and the creation of 25,000 new jobs;

Malawi's creation of more than 4,000 jobs in the textile sector; and

South Africa's generation of 19,000 jobs in textile operations.

In South Africa, USAID funded a training effort for small and medium-sized businesses in conjunction with the Washington-based Corporate Council on Africa (CCA).

The South African International Business Linkages (SAIBL) program created more than 5,700 jobs from 2003 to 2006, with nearly half of those positions filled by women. During that period, competitive businesses transacted trade sales of \$650 million. ♦

## New U.S. Citizens Dream of Business Success, Raising Families

By Elizabeth Kelleher  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Imran Aftab grew up in a poor area of Karachi, Pakistan, and came to the United States on a scholarship to Bard College in New York in 1991. Since then, he has earned a graduate degree, married, had two children (is expecting a third), and started a successful Internet development company that employs 30 people in Pakistan.

But even with all of those milestones, Aftab said, he had accomplished something especially important July 24, when he was sworn in as a U.S. citizen in a ceremony at the Department of Veteran Affairs. "Tonight I will go get my passport," he said. As a businessman, it will be easier for him to travel with an American passport to places he does business, like Argentina, Canada, the Philippines and South Africa.

Aftab said that some of his goals as a new American are more idealistic. He hopes to show his Pakistani employees how, as an American business-owner and a Muslim, he works well with businesspeople of other faiths, some of whom have become his clients.

Aftab joined 24 other new citizens at the swearing-in ceremony at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The U.S. government naturalizes 700,000 people a year.

Some of the new citizens came to the United States to practice their religion freely or speak openly. Some came for economic opportunities. Some came simply because they married an American.

In a video presentation, President Bush congratulated the new citi-

zens, saying, "Your home is now your country," and reminded them that the United States is a nation of immigrants.

Victor Aldana-Morales did not expect he would become an American when he and his wife left Colombia

he thinks his citizenship will give him the chance to fulfill that dream. He sends his two sons to public schools in Virginia and praised the state and local tax system that gives them good schools, good roads and other infrastructure.



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Emilio Gonzalez swears in 25 new citizens. (Department of Veteran Affairs)

in 1995 so he could take a job in Japan. But in 1998, the company he worked for transferred him to an office in Herndon, Virginia, and he decided to begin the process of becoming a U.S. citizen. His wife, Maria Rodriguez, also from Colombia, soon will become a U.S. citizen herself.

The couple said they love Colombia, but they believe that they can raise their two sons more easily in the United States. "The concept of 100 percent freedom is uniquely American," said Aldana-Morales. He said that he often hoped to some day own a business and that

Emilio Gonzales, director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, swore in the group and also made "American by Choice" awards. The awards, given to immigrants who demonstrate commitment to the United States and its values, were awarded to Retired Major General Antonio Taguba and Katja Bullock.

Taguba immigrated from the Philippines and has had a distinguished military career. In 2004, Taguba conducted an investigation of detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq. Since his retirement in

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## Bahraini-American Program Concentrates on Helping the Disabled

By Steve Holgate  
*USINFO Special Correspondent*

Portland, Oregon -- The small meeting hall on the chilly Oregon coast lies thousands of miles from the sun-drenched beaches of Bahrain. Yet on this drizzly Sunday morning in July the building fairly glows with warmth from 18 representatives of the Bahrain Disabled Sports Federation, most of whom are disabled, and a smaller group of American counterparts.

The tent-shaped wooden hall fills with laughter and enthusiastic chatter as the Bahrainis and Americans undertake a workshop on leadership and education for the disabled. In the front of the hall, a line of interpreters translates the discussion into Arabic and English and two sign-language systems, looking a bit like the chorus from a Greek play.

The Bahrainis -- two staff members and two interpreters and 14 young participants -- have split into smaller groups with the Americans to facilitate their discussions. The Bahrainis and the Americans alike understand that many others see them through the prism of what they cannot do, but they are celebrating what they can do. The posters each group makes to characterize its discussions carry a strong message: "Nothing Is Impossible." "Look at My Ability." "We Are Together Forever."

The three-week program, organized by Mobility International USA, based in Eugene, Oregon, and funded by the U.S. Department of State, shows the truth behind these slogans. The group has held numerous workshops, participated in park maintenance projects, ridden specially made bicycles that allow them increased mobility, participated in

athletic events, gone river rafting and visited some of the most spectacular sights of this picturesque state. They also have held discussions with local civic leaders on ba-



Ameera, who is deaf, participates in a community service project near Eugene, Oregon. (Mobility International USA)

sic issues of human rights, education and access for the disabled.

As Sunday's workshop winds down, group members talk about the highlights of their program. When asked their most memorable experience, several laugh and say, "Snow!" They were surprised to find it in the nearby Cascade Mountains even in summer. A few enjoyed scraping a handful of the white stuff off the mountainside and eating it. Others talk about the enormous expanse of the Pacific Ocean, its breakers booming only a few hundred meters from the meeting hall.

In a more serious mood, Zainab, a student from Manama, Bahrain, reflects on differences between the two countries and says that in Bahrain she and her colleagues too of-

ten are seen only as disabled. In the United States, she has seen that the disabled have rights and are seen differently. "People are kind here," she says. "They make you feel comfortable."

Jalal, speaking in sign language through an interpreter, says: "Camping [on the coast] has shown me how important teamwork is. We can work together and help each other to achieve a common goal."

Salman, a young man whose quiet thoughtfulness belies his 16 years, lounges on the wooden floor, his head propped on his hand. "We have learned through this program how to adapt to new cultures and about cross-cultural understanding," he says.

The cross-cultural understanding Salman speaks of is one of the group's most important goals. And it will be put to good use: in 2008, the Bahrainis will serve as hosts to a similar group of disabled young Americans. Many of the activities they undertake in Oregon this summer are designed to give them the skills they need to organize next year's program.

They look forward to the challenge. In addition to workshops and discussion groups, the young men and women from Bahrain speak of showing the Americans the beaches in their country as well as its mountains, gardens and old forts. "We will strive to give them the best possible view of Bahrain because we have received such hospitality and generosity from them," says Wasna, one of the Bahraini delegation.

Alyssa, an American who hopes to be among the participants in Bah-

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## American Dance Festival Welcomes International Talent

By Louise Fenner  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Artists of different generations and nationalities come together at the American Dance Festival (ADF) for six weeks every year to learn, perform and share their love of modern dance and dance theater.

For established professionals and choreographers such as Walid Aouni, director of the renowned Egyptian Modern Dance Theatre Company in Cairo, participating in the festival is an artistic honor, while for young students like Manizha Mahmudzoda, a 16-year-old gymnast and aspiring dancer from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, it is the opportunity of a lifetime.

The young students are among the nearly 500 participants from 23 countries and 41 U.S. states at this year's festival, which has made its home on the campus of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, for the past 30 years. The festival originated 74 years ago in Burlington, Vermont.

The American Dance Festival is one of the most important modern dance events in America. It introduces new and emerging talents and has commissioned more than 300 works, but it also recognizes established artists and revisits seminal works from the past. In 2007 there were more than 60 performances, ranging from a reconstruction of the 1984 *Garden of Earthly Delights* by its originator, Martha Clarke, to world premieres of ADF-commissioned works by Japanese-born artists Eiko & Koma and the Paul Taylor Dance Company. There were also two "minifestivals" featuring Russian and Argentine companies. The ADF wraps up July 21

with performances by the Mark Morris Dance Group.

Since the early 1980s, ADF "has gone international," said associate director Jodee Nimerichter. "It is very important to us because we want to help and develop modern dance based on the traditions and

Mahmudzoda is the first participant from Tajikistan and one of the youngest at the festival. She has trained in rhythmic gymnastics since the age of 10. She was recommended to the ADF by the U.S. Embassy and is sponsored partially by the State Department's English



The American Dance Festival commissioned the reconstruction of Laura Dean's *Sky Light* in 2007. (File photo by Herbert Migdoll)

cultures in each country, and we also want to be able to present the best modern dance from around the world," she told USINFO.

"We don't really care where an incredibly talented choreographer is from -- we just want to see them and their work," she said.

Both Mahmudzoda and Aouni are part of ADF's International Choreographers Residency Program (ICRP). Twenty choreographers and dancers participated in 2007, including seven other members of the Egyptian Modern Dance Theatre Company. Russia, Indonesia, France and Germany also were represented.

Access Microscholarship Program. ADF provided a tuition scholarship that includes room and board.

During the festival, Mahmudzoda took ballet and modern dance classes for six hours a day, four days a week. On July 18 she performed a work she choreographed featuring gymnastics and modern dance set to classical music.

Mahmudzoda, who will be entering the 11th grade in Dushanbe, said she would like to have a dance career but realizes that little modern dance is performed in Tajikistan. "Maybe I can help people study and

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## American Dance Festival Welcomes International Talent . . .

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learn more about modern dance because I got a lot of experience here," she said.

"I like this festival. We can exchange our experiences, we can study other cultures," she said. Americans are friendly and polite, she added: "I like it that they always say 'Excuse me' and 'Hello,' 'Good morning,' 'Good afternoon.'"

Aouni is only the second Egyptian choreographer to participate in the residency program since its inception in 1984. He echoed Mahmud-zova's observations about the friendliness of Americans, including a policeman who took him back to the American Dance Festival when he lost his way in Durham. "It is really the opposite from all the movies we saw about America," Aouni said. The Egyptian Modern Dance



Members of the Egyptian Modern Dance Theatre Company. (American Dance Festival)

Theatre Company, which Aouni founded in 1993, was the first dance theater company in the Arab world, he said, adding, "We are an example for all Arabic countries." He wants to expand the audience for modern dance, which he sees as

"a message of liberty."

The American Dance Festival, Aouni said, "was more than I expected." Everyone in the company is "connecting artistically with people from all over the world." Although he has been a choreographer for 28 years, he said, "I can always learn something."

His company has toured throughout the Middle East, Europe and Asia. The Egyptian Ministry of Culture is supporting its participation in the ADF. Despite his renown, Aouni discovered that many participants at the American Dance Festival "didn't know about the existence of modern dance in Egypt. They were surprised."

"Now we have connections here," he said. "This is the beginning of a relationship between Egypt and the United States about dance." ♦

## Bahraini-American Program Concentrates on Helping the Disabled . . .

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rain next year, says, "I'm looking forward to seeing that side of the world for the first time." She laughs and adds, "And to learning a little Arabic."

In addition to providing young Bahrainis and Americans with disabilities a chance to hone leadership skills and become better informed on how those with disabilities are treated in another culture, the current program is also something of a dream come true.

Essam Kamal, the managing director of the Bahrain Disabled Sports Federation, first came to Oregon in 1983 as a member of the first international group programmed by Mo-

bility International USA. Even then, almost 25 years ago, he discussed with Mobility International's chief executive officer, Susan Sygall, the possibility of organizing a bilateral program.

Cerise Roth-Vinson, a 10-year veteran with Mobility International USA, who has been program leader for the group, says, "There is a real opportunity here ... to bring together the next generation of disabled leaders and to establish friendships that go on [after] this program." She points out that the grants to Mobility International USA are not the only U.S. government resources available to students with disabilities. In many countries with substantial Muslim populations, stu-

dents with disabilities can apply through their local American Embassy for the YES program, which awards scholarships to study at a high school in the United States for an entire academic year.

Thinking of next year's trip to Bahrain, Roth-Vinson says, "I hope we'll have an opportunity to see the way that young people are leading in their country, and setting forth their message of what's important."

Essam Kamal echoes her comment as he nods and says, "I think we have some messengers here. They have learned a lot, and the way they are thinking is different from what they were thinking before." ♦

## American Indian Dresses Blend Tradition and Innovation

By Lauren Monsen  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The prominent roles of women in American Indian societies are mirrored in the evolving designs of the ceremonial dresses and accessories they have created over the past 200 years, says Emil Her Many Horses, an expert on Northern and Southern Plains cultures at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI).

Her Many Horses, a member of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux) nation of South Dakota, is co-curator of the NMAI exhibit "Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women's Dresses." The exhibit traces the history of native dressmaking from the 19th century to the present, with examples of richly ornamented deerhide and cloth dresses representing a variety of North American tribal and regional styles.

The dresses, shown with moccasins, leggings and other handmade items, illuminate the vibrant artistic traditions of American Indian communities. "In our cultures, artistic ability is considered a spiritual gift," Her Many Horses told USINFO. "Women who excelled at dressmaking always were held in high regard" for contributing to their families' well-being, and their creations enhanced the status of their families within the tribal framework.

Designs "sometimes originated from dreams and visions," he said, but societal changes also played a part in design trends. As North America's indigenous societies came into contact with white settlers in the 19th century, new materials such as glass beads, wool, cotton, ribbons and silver buttons were ac-



Cheyenne three-hide dress made by Rebecca Hamilton Brady and Jon Brady of Pawnee, Oklahoma (Ernest Amoroso/Smithsonian)

quired through trading and quickly found their way into native dressmaking designs. Traditional methods of embellishment -- such as stitching elk teeth onto a deerhide surface, adorning a war bonnet with eagle feathers or painting symbolic motifs -- remained popular, but were combined with intricate beadwork patterns.

American Indian women had to learn how to circumvent heavy-handed restrictions on their customs and ceremonies. In the late 19th century, U.S. government authorities pressured tribes to assimilate into white culture and tried to

eradicate tribal languages by enrolling American Indian children in English-only schools. Paiute tribal elders responded by establishing the Ghost Dance, a ceremony that called for a revival of the traditional Indian way of life. It soon took hold among tribes throughout the American West. The federal government -- fearing tribal insurrections -- banned the Ghost Dance in 1890 and insisted that traditional ceremonies be replaced by patriotic displays on official holidays such as Independence Day, celebrated annually on July 4th.

Indigenous societies outwardly complied with this demand by staging July 4th celebrations with elaborately costumed dancers. But those dancers -- wearing fringed and beaded outfits designed by resourceful native dressmakers -- were sending coded messages to their communities, signaling tribal solidarity in the face of government repression. They performed traditional dance steps, and their costumes -- adorned with beaded representations of the U.S. flag -- used conventional patriotic imagery to honor their own warrior ancestors.

Today's American Indian dressmakers still bead their costumes with red, white and blue flag motifs to pay tribute to U.S. war veterans within tribal families. In fact, the Kiowa tribe now dedicates its age-old War Dance ceremony to its soldiers serving in Iraq and elsewhere. The finely crafted buckskin dresses worn by Kiowa dancers are an integral part of this custom, said Her Many Horses.

He also pointed to the Fancy Dance and Shawl Dance practitioners, who take part in dance competitions at contemporary social gatherings. The

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## American Indian Dresses Blend Tradition and Innovation . . .

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dancers wear extravagantly decorated costumes with long fringe that sways with every movement or dance step. Thus, the dressmaking skills of native women continue to perpetuate their tribal heritage.

Although the traditional elements of costume design are passed down through generations, today's innovators ensure that dressmaking techniques also look to the future. The "Identity by Design" exhibit opens with a video of dancers in modern-day ceremonial garb, followed by a panoramic display of dresses, leggings, moccasins and cradleboards from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The exhibit also includes heirloom-quality garments from award-winning American Indian dressmakers of the 21st century.

At the exhibit's conclusion, dressmakers and dancers appear in a film montage, offering commentary on the larger meaning of ceremonial American Indian clothing. Georgianna Old Elk, an Assiniboiné, explains that the dress she wears in dance competitions was a gift from her extended family. "When I dance, I am never alone," she says. "Even though they are gone now, they are still with me, and I feel them with me."

In the film, dancer/designer Keri Jhane Myers, a Comanche, says she ventures into New York City's fashion district to hunt for unusual dressmaking materials whenever



Sioux two-hide pattern dress with fully beaded yoke (Ernest Amoroso/Smithsonian)

she travels to East Coast dance competitions. "You look at the things available, and how you could incorporate them while keeping to a type of tradition," she says.

The NMAI exhibit has generated "a very positive response" from viewers who are "dazzled by the phenomenal artistry" of indigenous craftswomen, said Her Many Horses, but its main purpose is "to highlight the traditions and roles of Native women dressmakers in their societies, then and now. In Native societies, women are really the keepers of tradition and knowledge. They keep the culture alive."

The exhibit has been on display at NMAI since March and will remain open until September 2008. The exhibit ( [http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/identity\\_by\\_design/](http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/identity_by_design/) ) also may be viewed on the Smithsonian's Web site.

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

## Democracy Advancing Worldwide Despite Recent “Pushback”

By Eric Green  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- People living under tyranny around the world should know the United States remains committed to helping them secure their basic human rights, says Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte.



John Negroponte  
Deputy Secretary of State

In July 18 remarks, Negroponte said the U.S. role is not to try to “impose a formula for democracy” worldwide, but to support “indigenous reformers and their vision for freedom.”

Speaking at a conference for State Department human rights and labor officers, Negroponte lamented the “disastrous consequences” when “fragile states become failed states.” In an era marked by the global terrorism threat, the United States must do its best to support the rule of law, good governance and democratic development, said Negroponte.

Referring to comments made by President Bush June 5 in Prague, the Czech Republic, the deputy secretary said only about 45 democracies existed worldwide at the start of the 1980s, compared with more than 120 democracies now, which is “very good news indeed for freedom.” Negroponte singled out Latin America for its “almost spectacular transformation” in a generation, from being dominated by military dictatorships to a region now predominantly democratic.

Negroponte said the United States must tailor its support for human rights and democracy to the challenges particular to individual countries and regions. Free societies and democracies, he said, evolve at “different speeds in different places shaped by history and traditions and by the impetus for reform within each region,” Negroponte said.

According to Negroponte, these factors mean that, for some countries, U.S. diplomacy is “deliberately quiet and low-profile because a public profile could be counterproductive.” For other countries, however, “public diplomacy on our part may help protect defenders of human rights,” he said.

Negroponte said the State Department’s annual country reports on human rights have become much more “candid” about individual countries’ human rights situations since the U.S. Congress first mandated the reports in the early 1970s.

“I really see the advantage of calling things the way we see them” as opposed to 20-30 years ago, when the reports were “bland,” short and “not particularly revealing” on how countries were performing in the human rights arena, Negroponte said.

“I think we’re doing both ourselves and our policy interests, and the countries concerned a service by this kind of [frank] reporting,” Negroponte said.

### HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION INTERNATIONAL CONCERN, LOWENKRON SAYS

Barry Lowenkron, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, said human rights defenders in both the public and private sectors currently face the challenge of operating in a “backlash against democracy,” such as in Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

Lowenkron, whose bureau is hosting the July 18-20 conference at the State Department, said 2006 was referred to as the “Year of the Pushback,” in which a number of countries used laws to restrict the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in human rights work.

“Unfortunately, the year of the pushback continues well into 2007,” said Lowenkron.

Lowenkron said that despite “all the debates and acrimony” and media reports that the Bush administration has lost its way in democracy promotion, a “curious development” [is] going on around the world that “regions, states, and organizations” have taken up the “mantle” of human rights promotion. Lowenkron said human rights promotion does not have to have a “made-in-America” label to be effective.



Barry Lowenkron, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights & Labor

For example, he pointed to the July 11-12

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## Forced Labor a Growing Problem Worldwide, U.S. Officials Say

By Jane Morse  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Trafficking in persons for labor may not attract as much publicity as trafficking in persons for sex, but it is a huge problem nonetheless, officials close to the topic say.

“There is a growing movement of trafficking for labor,” according to Mark Taylor, the senior coordinator for the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The global value of trafficked labor is estimated at \$9.5 billion, he said.

Taylor spoke July 19 at the State Department during a three-day conference called “Defending the Defenders,” designed for government and non-governmental organization personnel dealing with issues on democracy, human rights and labor.

“Foreign governments in the last seven years,” Taylor said, “have improved their efforts to combat sex trafficking. But too often, labor trafficking is an administrative offense not subject to criminal investigations.”

Moreover, what constitutes forced labor is not defined very well in many countries, he said, and there are often few, if any, protections for the victims.

“Sponsorship laws give employers inordinate power over employees,” Taylor said. Employers often seize the passports and other identification, as well as plane tickets, of trafficked employees. And it is dif-

ficult to define involuntary confinement, even when employees are given few or no days off from work, he said.

Bonded labor, too, is increasing, Taylor said. He cited cases where migrants pledged as much as \$20,000 for jobs, an amount they could not possibly pay off during their two-year contracts.



Forced labor on a road. One reason why the Karen must run

“Destination countries have much to do in giving migrant workers rights,” Taylor said. “Source countries also must take basic responsibility for their citizens.”

### GLOBALIZATION’S DARK SIDE

The growing global economy is feeding the migrant labor problem, according to Neha Misra, the global coordinator for counter trafficking programs at the Solidarity Center for the AFL-CIO, the largest federation of labor unions in the United States.

“Globalization is creating a widening wealth gap,” she said at the State Department conference. According to Misra, globalization has not provided enough jobs in many coun-

tries and is forcing workers to migrate for work. At the same time, some countries, such as Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, rely almost exclusively on migrant workers, she said.

There are an estimated 120 million migrant workers worldwide, Misra said, and most typically are employed at dirty and dangerous jobs.

Tighter border controls and stricter immigration policies force many illegally to enter countries in search of paid work, where they become part of “an informal economy” in which they are not allowed to organize, are not advised of their rights and too often are abused and exploited, she said.

Nishra Varia, senior researcher at the Women’s Rights Division for Human Rights Watch, told conference participants that

while there are positive aspects to migration, migrant workers too frequently have neither human rights’ guarantees nor social safety nets. This is especially true of domestic workers -- the migrant workers employed as housekeepers and home cooks who almost always are women.

In many countries, Varia said, “women’s work” is not accorded the same kinds of protections under local labor laws as are other types of work. And while most migrant domestic workers enter a country legally, most abuses are committed against this class of workers, she said.

Varia called for stronger multilateral cooperation in establishing consis-

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## Democracy Advancing Worldwide Despite Recent “Pushback” . . .

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“democracy bridge” forum between the Organization of American States and the African Union. At the forum, officials exchanged ideas on how best to advance democracy and protect human rights through the two organizations’ respective democracy charters.

The forum, Lowenkron said, represented part of the “international agenda” on human rights promotion. A debate is continuing worldwide on how best to advance “democratic practices” and protect human rights, he said.

The State Department, in response to the pushback against human rights, announced in December 2006 its list of “10 Core NGO Prin-

ciples,” which Lowenkron said were “hammered out” in consultations with several other countries and many NGOs. The principles include provisions stating that NGOs must be permitted to carry out their peaceful work without facing harassment, must have access to domestic and foreign media, should be free to seek financial support and should face criminal or civil legal actions that are based only on due process and equality before the law.

Lowenkron said the State Department also established the Human Rights Defenders Fund. That fund will enable the U.S. government to respond quickly to human rights defenders’ emergency needs by providing grants to activists who are facing financial, legal or medical

problems as a result of government repression.

Lowenkron said the department is in the process of getting final approval from the U.S. Congress to begin the fund, which will operate initially with a budget of \$1.5 million and be replenished as needed.

The full text ( <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006> ) of the State Department’s 2006 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices is on the department’s Web site.

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

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tent protection for all types of workers. “MOUs [memorandums of understanding] are weak and don’t protect worker rights,” she said. “And there are not too many good bilateral agreements that protect workers’ rights, either.”

### MONITORING GLOBAL TRAFFICKING

In its 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report, the State Department acknowledged that “governments of destination countries for migrant workers have a special obligation to ensure that those workers are not subjected to servitude.”

But it also said “research is showing that source countries permit or encourage some exploitative practices that either place migrant workers in involuntary servitude before they leave for work abroad, or place them in unfair debts that are precursors to involuntary servitude in the destination country.” The report called for source countries to provide a “safety net” of consular officers, legal aid and access to shelters for workers that find themselves in involuntary servitude.

In fiscal year 2006, the United States contributed more than \$74 million abroad to fund 154 interna-

tional anti-trafficking projects in 70 countries.

For more on human trafficking, see 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/human\\_trafficking/traffick\\_report.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/human_trafficking/traffick_report.html) )

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## Conventional Weapons Being Destroyed Globally with U.S. Aid

*This op-ed by Stephen D. Mull, U.S. acting assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, was released July 20 and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.*

(begin byliner)

More Than 1 Million Conventional Weapons Destroyed Globally with U.S. Aid

By Stephen D. Mull  
U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs



Stephen D. Mull

Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo reside on different continents and have disparate histories, but they share one common experience: the murderous effects of terrorists, criminals, or insurgents using illicit small arms and light weapons against government forces and civilians in bloody conflicts.

On July 9, each of these countries, as well as Albania, Honduras, Ukraine, and Angola, joined the United States in observing International Small Arms Destruction Day with the symbolic elimination of a small arm or light weapon. The events were sponsored by the Department of State and commemorated the United States' global efforts to secure or destroy surplus, illicit, and poorly secured small arms and light weapons. Recently the Department's program surpassed the 1,000,000th weapon destroyed with its assistance since 2001, making it by far the largest effort of its kind in the world.

To understand the problem, consider for a moment the weapons themselves and their origin. As popularized in recent films such as *Blood Diamond* and *Lord of War*, countless small arms and light

weapons flooded world markets after the Cold War. One example is the ubiquitous AK-47 assault rifle and its variants, easily distinguished by its curved ammunition clip, of which an estimated 100 million have been manufactured. During the Cold War these weapons were distributed to allies of the Soviet Union and production facilities were built in more than 25 countries. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, unscrupulous brokers transferred weaponry to conflict zones such as Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Zaire, Rwanda and Angola.

Such weapons in the hands of terrorists and criminals exacerbate existing conditions of insecurity. The developing world is also replete with poorly secured government stockpiles that are vulnerable to theft. Moreover, such

weapons are often stored with obsolete and deteriorating explosive materials that can spontaneously combust, particularly in tropical heat, causing widespread loss of life and property. Earlier this year, for instance, a weapons and ammunition depot in Mozambique blew up, resulting in 104 dead, over 500 wounded, and approximately 4,500 homes damaged or destroyed.

To ensure its own weapons are not part of the problem, the United States employs transparent and ro-

bust arms export controls on defense articles and services. The U.S. also requires registration and licensing of manufacturers, exporters, and brokers, and applies rigorous weapons marking and tracing standards. These regulations are regarded internationally as among the most effective in the world.

The United States has made a concentrated effort to assist other countries by providing financial and technical support in destroying excess weapons that are otherwise in danger of pilferage. Since 2001 the United States has provided over \$58 million to 25 countries to destroy over 1 million small arms and light weapons, over 90 million pieces of ammunition, and over

21,000 man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). The U.S. also has provided many countries with assistance in upgrading the security of their national armories.

One success story is Ukraine. The U.S. has contributed more than \$3.6 million to a

NATO project which will destroy 133,000 tons of munitions and 1.5 million small arms and light weapons, including more than 1,000 MANPADS, that are excess to Ukraine's needs. Other countries among the 25 similarly assisted include Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, El Salvador, Serbia, and Suriname.

The United States envisions a world where illicit, unsecured, and indiscriminately used weapons of war

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Honduran soldiers cut a weapon into pieces during the Millionth Weapon Destruction event in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

## Libya's Release of Bulgarian Medics Applauded

By Stephen Kaufman  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice applauded the Libyan government's transfer of five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor to Bulgaria, describing it as "an important step in Libya's continuing positive reengagement with the international community."

In a July 24 statement, Rice said the decision followed the Libyan Higher Judicial Council's July 17 commutation of the medics' death sentences. The six had been convicted of deliberately infecting more than 400 children in Benghazi with HIV, despite international criticism of the charges and trial process.



Bulgarian nurse Valentina Siropulo (C) hugs her relatives shortly after arriving at Sofia airport. (AFP/Dimitar Dilkoff)

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said July 24 that although nothing could take away from the suffering of the Libyan families whose children died after exposure to HIV or restore the years the medics lost while in custody, "a painful chapter in the history of Bulgaria and the history of Libya has finally been closed."

"[N]ow we can finally get to the point where everybody involved in the situation can move on and move forward. And we're ... quite pleased for that," he said.

Rice spoke earlier in the day with Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivaylo Kalfin, who expressed his appreciation for U.S. efforts to resolve the issue.

"He thanked Secretary Rice for her personal involvement on this issue. It was something she raised every single time she met with a Libyan official," McCormack said.

To help the Libyan families affected by the tragedy, the spokesman said, the United States has contributed \$300,000 to the Baylor College of Medicine's Pediatric AIDS Initiative to establish a treatment program for the victims in Benghazi.

The program is designed not only to help the families and treat the more than 400 children who still may be suffering from AIDS, but also to address ways of "preventing any further such occurrences," McCormack said.

In addition, the Bush administration, along with Libyan and international partners, helped to develop the Benghazi International Fund.

"The fund was established in January 2006 as an international [nongovernmental organization] to help develop local medical infrastructure, improve treatment of patients and help the affected Libyan families," he said.

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### Conventional Weapons Being Destroyed . . .

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are not available to bad actors. Securing those weapons takes constructive engagement with our international partners and actions of proven worth such as enforcing tough regulations, securing at-risk stockpiles, and destroying excess and obsolete weapons. Our meaningful actions today will prevent adverse consequences tomorrow.

(end byliner)

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

## Pandemic Preparation Boosts Readiness for Other Disasters

By Cheryl Pellerin  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The United States is better prepared to detect a pandemic flu outbreak, support international work to contain a pandemic in its early stages, limit a pandemic's spread and save lives after a year of coordinated effort across federal agencies, according to a White House report.

Efforts to strengthen disease surveillance, expand hospital capacity and help the World Health Organization (WHO) improve global access to vaccines remain to be accomplished, the Homeland Security Council found in its one-year review of the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza implementation plan.

The review, released July 17, comes as WHO reports that the latest human toll from the highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza, H5N1, has reached 318 cases, with 192 deaths. In birds, the outbreak around the world shows no signs of abating.

"Infectious diseases know no borders," said John Lange, the State Department's special representative on avian and pandemic influenza, at a July 17 briefing, "and a key aspect of our campaign to contain the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza and to prepare for the possibility of a human pandemic is large-scale global engagement, specifically ongoing efforts by governments, international organizations and the private sector."

Lange joined colleagues from the Homeland Security Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department

of Homeland Security to discuss the report.

President Bush announced the U.S. National Strategy in 2005. The implementation plan, released in May 2006, listed more than 300 actions for federal departments and agencies to complete over 12 months. To date, 86 percent is complete and 14 percent is expected to be completed within six months. The actions include domestic and international efforts.

### INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

To confront the threat of a flu pandemic at its source, the United States has made critical contributions to controlling the international spread of H5N1, working with WHO, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health and many other international agencies.

Through the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, U.S. experts work with affected countries and international partners to detect, contain and prevent animal outbreaks; reduce human exposure; and enhance planning and preparedness for future outbreaks.

In more than 100 countries, the United States is working on avian flu issues. Over the past year, for example, the U.S. government supported training for more than 129,000 animal health workers and 17,000 human health workers in H5N1 surveillance and outbreak response, and sent 300,000 personal protective equipment kits to 70 countries for surveillance workers and outbreak-response teams.

U.S. experts provided vital technical expertise to national investigations

of H5N1 outbreaks in countries on three continents and provided technical assistance, commodities and logistic or financial support to 39 of 60 H5N1-affected countries.

The United States also is working to improve laboratory diagnosis and early-warning networks in 75 countries.

"On the human health front," said Dr. Rajeev Venkayya, special assistant to the president for biodefense, "we've embarked on a moon-shot approach to re-establishing vaccine production capacity and new technologies such as adjuvants [substances added to drugs to increase their effects], to stretch the effectiveness or the number of individuals we could vaccinate with a single dose of vaccine."

### BIRDS AND BORDERS

Along with partners in other U.S. agencies, USDA scientists are continuing a comprehensive surveillance of wild birds in every North America fly zone and monitoring wild birds in Russia, Greenland and Mexico as an early-warning strategy.

USDA staff members are assigned to rapid assessment and response teams that work in 30 countries, and 130 volunteers are available for international deployments through the FAO or bilaterally between an affected country and the United States.

"We've worked in more than 50 countries to help deliver and disseminate educational materials to prevent the spread of high-path H5N1," said USDA Chief Veterinary Officer John Clifford. "We have helped train more than 100,000

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## Next Space Station Crew To Have First Woman Commander

By Cheryl Pellerin  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The next visitors to the International Space Station, scheduled to arrive in October, include the first woman to lead a long-duration spaceflight and spaceflight participant Dr. Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor, the first Malaysian angkasawan (astronaut) to visit the orbital outpost.

The Expedition 16 crew – Commander Peggy Whitson, 47, flight engineer Yuri Malenchenko, 46, and Shukor, 35 – will launch October 6 on a Soyuz spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

“It is going to be a very complicated and aggressive mission,” Whitson said during a July 23 briefing at NASA’s Johnson Space Center in Houston, “but I think I’ve got a great team.”

The first member of Expedition 16 already is aboard the space station – astronaut Clayton Anderson, 48, is now part of Expedition 15.

As now scheduled, Whitson, Malenchenko and Shukor will arrive at the station October 8, and Shukor will return to Earth with Expedition 15 crew members Fyodor Yurchikhin and Oleg Kotov after nine days aboard the station.

### MOMENT OF GROWTH

From now until 2010, when NASA retires the space shuttle fleet, each shuttle mission and space station crew will be busy assembling and expanding the orbital laboratory, and preparing for the first six-member station crew in 2009.

“It’s going to be an extremely exciting time, sort of a moment of

growth for the space station,” Tani said during the briefing. “All of that [new] capability gives us more space, more power and more capability to do the science that we really have designed this vehicle to do.”



Expedition 16 crew Commander Peggy Whitson

In December or January, European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut Leopold Eyharts, 50, will arrive at the space station on Atlantis (STS-122), to replace Tani. Atlantis will deliver the ESA’s Columbus Laboratory to the space station, and the shuttle crew will include ESA astronaut Hans Schlegel. “This is the first time there is such cooperation in a space flight project. I see that as very important for the future,” Eyharts said. “For Europe, it’s particularly important because this will be the first time that we will have European [space equipment] permanently in space. This is a key point for Europe and the basis for future projects and the future exploration of space.”

The final member of Expedition 16, Garrett Reisman, 39, is scheduled to launch on shuttle Endeavour February 14, 2008. Reisman will replace ESA astronaut Eyharts and stay aboard the station as part of the next crew, Expedition 17, and

return to Earth on Atlantis (STS-119) in the summer of 2008.

“What we’re doing is taking small steps toward the future that was promised to us by the great science fiction of the 1950s,” Reisman said, “where we have colonies on other planets and we’re traveling throughout the solar system and beyond. That is kind of the peaceful international cooperative future that I like to envision as where we, as humanity, are heading.”

### INSPIRING MALAYSIA

Shukor, chosen from among 11,000 candidates, is flying under an agreement with the Russian Federal Space Agency, Roscosmos. He is an orthopedic physician who plans to perform experiments with cancer cells, proteins and microbes during his nine-day mission, he said during the NASA briefing.

After completing initial training at Star City in Russia, Shukor and 26-year-old Malaysian army physician Captain Faiz Khaleed were selected to undergo an 18-month training course in Russia. When Shukor was chosen to go to the space station, Khaleed was named his backup. The Malaysian government initiated the angkasawan program to send a Malaysian to the space station. The program has scientific, technological and inspirational objectives.

Peggy Whitson, to be the first woman space station commander, also hopes to be an inspiration.

“I would hope that we attract more young women into science and math and engineering fields,” she said, “because it’s important for young women to see where we’re headed in the future and to be a key part of exploration as well. I hope I can serve as a role model.” ♦

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## New U.S. Citizens Dream of Business Success . . .

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2006, he has headed a mentoring program to train American officers and enlisted men of Asian-Pacific descent to succeed in their careers.

Bullock immigrated from Germany and has worked as a personnel specialist for three U.S. presidents.

James Nicholson, secretary of the Department of Veteran Affairs, spoke to the new citizens about his ancestors' immigration from Scotland and Ireland. "We [Americans] are all descended from immigrants," he said. He listed immigrants who today contribute to American business, sports and entertainment, including baseball player Sammy Sosa, from the Dominican Republic, and Cuban-American singer Gloria Estefan.

Lance Corporal Sona Babani, 20, who immigrated to the United States with her parents from Iraq 10 years

ago, led a pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag. She is a Marine who works as an administrative clerk at a base in Quantico, Virginia, and was herself sworn in as a citizen. "We came here for the freedom, like everyone," she said of her family. She said she values her freedom to practice her religion as she sees fit and her freedom of speech.

In terms of what practical effect citizenship will have for Babani, she said, "I'll get to vote for the first time" in the 2008 presidential elections. She admitted being "a little on the conservative side," but would not reveal how she might vote.

Gonzales noted in his remarks that becoming a citizen does not mean that you join a political party or support a particular politician, just that you defend the principles of the U.S. Constitution. ♦

## Pandemic Preparation Boosts Readiness for Other Disasters . . .

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people in other countries, ranging from animal health workers and wildlife biologists to government policymakers."

At Homeland Security, Customs Border Protection (CBP) is coordinating with Canada and Mexico to develop, through a series of conferences, guidelines and best practices for law enforcement, emergency medical services, public works and emergency management.

The Transportation Security Administration is leading officials from the CBP, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the State Department, the Defense

Department and the Federal Aviation Administration to develop a plan for managing the U.S. commercial aviation system in the event of a pandemic.

Although these steps are designed to address a human flu pandemic, said Dr. Jeff Runge, Department of Homeland Security chief medical officer on pandemic preparedness, "these activities will provide the structure to deal with any other biological threat, whether natural or an instrument of terrorism."

"If H5N1 were to disappear tomorrow," said Dr. John Agwunobi, Health and Human Services assistant secretary for health, "the need to be prepared for a pandemic will still exist, and this need to be pre-

pared is something we own as a community, as a society, for the long run."

The full text ( <http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/pandemic-influenza-oneyear.html> ) of the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan one-year summary is available on the White House Web site.

For additional information, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/bird\\_flu.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html) ).

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