



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

United States Supports Training for Parliamentarians

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – On Monday, December 12, the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, joined Speaker of the House of People’s Representatives Teshome Toga, Ambassador Timothy Clarke, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, and Elizabeth Lwanga, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Program, at the opening of a U.S.-funded training program for Members of the House of People’s Repre-

sentatives. The program aims at increasing the effectiveness of both new and returning Members as elected leaders and legislators by improving the knowledge of their roles and responsibilities; improving communications and negotiation skills and fostering a better understanding of the functions of a multi-party parliament.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Ambassador Huddleston noted that the workshop is “the first

activity in a five-year program of support to the House.” She said that she believes “Democracy is not just Parliament, nor it is just one election, Democracy is a process based on the following: The rule of the majority, and respect for the minority; leadership that has vision, flexibility, and is unafraid of compromise; equality of all men and women before the law; checks and balances among the legislative,

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State's Frazer Heralds Spread of Democracy in Africa



Jendayi Frazer
U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

Democracy in Africa is growing, with more than 50 democratic elections in the past four years, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer told foreign journalists in a news briefing in Washington December 5.

"Liberia's legislative and presidential elections on October 11 were the most free and fair elections in its history, with a high voter turnout and

no significant reports of fraud, violence or intimidation," she told reporters.

Additionally, she said elections have taken place widely over the past 15 years in Africa. "Power has changed hands in a number of key nations from Senegal to Ghana and from Mozambique to Namibia. We have seen term limits for the presidency in-

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Ambassador Huddleston Visits Jijiga



The U.S. Chargé D' Affaires, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, applauds as General Timothy F. Ghormley, Commander of the Combined Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) receives a present from the headmaster of a high school library built by the Task Force in Jijiga, in Somali region. Somali National Regional President Ali Hassan congratulates General Ghormley.

UNITED STATES SUPPORTS TRAINING FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

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judicial, and executive branches of government; periodic elections that ensure that the voice of minorities as well as majorities are heard; observance and respect for the law, and respect for the will of the people; reconciliation of differing points of view and interests." Addressing the assembled, she congratulated the MPs saying that "With your good will and the critical support of your development partners, especially the UNDP, I know that the legislative branch of Ethiopian democracy will grow strong and straight."

The program was designed and implemented by Women's Campaign International (WCI) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the umbrella of the Development Assistance Working Group on Governance. It will work with Members of Parliament from across the political spectrum. The primary areas of focus include the Constitution of Ethiopia, with a specific focus on the roles of the three branches of government as outlined by the Constitution, and more specifically on the role of Parliament as defined by the Constitution, which will also be compared with Parliaments in other

countries. Members of Parliament will learn about their role with regards to passing legislation, participating in committees, and reaching out to constituents as is practiced in Ethiopia and in other countries. In addition, participants will learn the political skills of negotiation, communication, consensus-building, and gender analysis.?

U.N. Must Face Ethiopia-Eritrea Border Issue, U.S. Envoy Says

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- Resolution of the long-simmering Ethiopia-Eritrea border dispute should be the U.N. Security Council's priority, not simply dealing with Eritrea's rejection of Western peacekeepers, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said December 14.

Eritrea's demand that U.N. troops and civilians from Western countries who are part of the U.N. Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) leave the country is "unacceptable," Bolton said, but it also brings to the forefront the underlying, unresolved border issue, as well as Security Council effectiveness. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2005/Dec/08-421994.html>).

"One of the reasons we are in this dilemma is that the government of Ethiopia has never complied with its obligations under the 2000 agreement and the 2002 border demarcation ... [and also because of] the council's unwillingness or inability to confront Ethiopia's three-year-long refusal to adhere to the very agreement it made in 2000," the ambassador told journalists before attending a closed-door council session on the issue.

It is "an example of what happens when the Security Council is not able to bring an international solution with a U.N. peacekeeping force to a prompt conclusion consistent with the wishes of the parties," he said.

"It is incumbent on the council to use the contemporary dilemma over the Eritrean actions with regard to the peacekeepers to try to bring the underlying political dispute to a conclusion and to get the border dispute resolved rather than to drift as it has for the last three years," Bolton said.

Bolton said that he has asked the council to set a seven-day deadline for deciding how to proceed in resolving the impasse over the border and decide "whether the U.N. is a net contributor to solving the problem or whether it's become part of the problem itself."

Ethiopia and Eritrea, for different reasons, "are simply not facing up to obligations they undertook themselves," the ambassador continued. "If they're not willing to do that, you have to ask what, if any, role the U.N. can play.

"It may well be that it's not playing a constructive role, and we have to look at that," Bolton said.

"We're going to have to consider the extent to which UNMEE remains a viable peacekeeping force," he said.

The American, European and Russian military observers whom Eritrea demanded be removed have been redeployed to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for their safety, the ambassador also said.

"There's some concern about their security, and while they're military observers, they are not a fighting force, and it would be irresponsible not to take their safety into account," Bolton said.

In a formal presidential statement read in open session, the Security Council strongly condemned Eritrea's restrictions on UNMEE, which it said have "drastically reduced any meaningful operational capacity for the mission and will have, if they are sustained, implications for UNMEE's future."

The council said that it agreed to the temporary relocation of UNMEE staff but intends to maintain a military presence in Eritrea while it is reviewing all options for its deployments and functions.

The council approved the move "solely in the interests of the safety and security of UNMEE staff," the presidential statement said. "The lack of cooperation with UNMEE by the Eritrean authorities has produced conditions on the ground which prevent UNMEE implementing its mandate satisfactorily."

The Security Council also emphasized "the urgent need for progress" in implementing the decision of the border demarcation commission.

For additional information on U.S. policy, see Africa (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/>).

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

U.N. Demands Eritrea Rescind Ban on Western Nation Peacekeepers

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- The Security Council December 7 condemned the Eritrean government's request that certain U.N. peacekeepers leave the country within 10 days. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan also demanded that Eritrea "immediately and unequivocally reverse its decision without preconditions."

The council acted with unusual speed to respond to Eritrea's December 6 order that U.N. troops and civilians from Western countries -- the United States, Canada and Europe, including Russia -- who are part of the U.N. Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) leave the country.



U.S. Ambassador John Bolton

Diplomats said the order would affect about 90 of the 230 military observers, plus administrative and

logistical staff based in Asmara, Eritrea.

U.S. Ambassador John Bolton called Eritrea's demand "obviously unacceptable."

Annan also condemned the request, saying that it "contravenes Eritrea's obligation under the U.N. Charter to respect the exclusively international character of United Nations staff."

"The United Nations cannot accede to Eritrea's request and demands that the government immediately and unequivocally rescind its decision without preconditions," the secretary-general said.

Under Secretary-General Jean Marie Guehenno said the United

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State's Frazer Heralds Spread of Democracy . . .

(Continued from page 1)

introduced in several countries as more open societies begin to turn away from the 'big man' model of government. Military regimes are increasingly anachronistic.

"It is true that this progress is by fits and starts, and Uganda, which had limited the number of terms a president can serve, has now reconsidered and Mauritania is ruled by a military junta. But this question of giving the people a real chance to select and to change their leaders is now being freely debated across the length and breadth of Africa," she said.

Frazer spoke to reporters after returning from several trips to Africa,

including stops in Liberia and Sudan, and also from consultations in China on African issues.

Asked about the situation in Ethiopia, where the news media have been restrained and opposition party supporters have been jailed, Frazer said the United States is on record as "putting pressure on [Ethiopia] Prime Minister Meles to allow for greater freedom of assembly and certainly freedom of expression."

"We've called on the government to free the many who are jailed and we've called on them to free the leaders of the opposition who are in jail right now, who are detained," she said.

Frazer said Deputy Assistant Sec-

retary of State Don Yamamoto carried the same message in person to the prime minister and the foreign minister in Ethiopia, "so we're continuing to hold the government accountable for allowing greater democratic space and respect for human rights."

She added that the opposition -- composed of "democrats and non-democrats" -- must abide by the same rules by respecting the rule of law in their demonstrations, although the government is being held "more accountable for not allowing free demonstrations ... because they are supposed to be the upholders of the rule of law."?

United States Praises Signing of Southern Sudan Constitution

In a statement issued December 7, the United States congratulated Salva Kiir and the people of Southern Sudan on the signing of the Southern Sudan Constitution December 5.

State Department deputy spokesman Adam Erel said the signing "is a step forward in Sudan's political process and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement," which he said "remains the key to Sudan's future."

The agreement, signed on January 9, provides the framework for power sharing, wealth sharing and regional security applicable to every citizen of Sudan, he said, adding that marked progress toward peace and reconciliation has been shown since that signing. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2005/Jan/10-699244.html>).

However, the United States "remains concerned by the continued violence in Darfur," the statement said, and is providing strong support for the African Union-mediated talks in Abuja, Nigeria, in order to achieve a settlement expeditiously.

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

Following is the text of the statement:

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
December 7, 2005**

STATEMENT BY ADAM ERELI,
DEPUTY SPOKESMAN



Sudanese First Vice President Salva Kiir

SIGNING OF SOUTHERN SUDAN CONSTITUTION

The United States congratulates Salva Kiir and the people of Southern Sudan on the signing of the Southern Sudan constitution on December 5, 2005. This is a step forward in Sudan's political process and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains the key to Sudan's future. It provides the framework and basis for power sharing, wealth sharing, and regional security, all of which are applicable to every area and every citizen of Sudan.

There has been marked progress towards peace and reconciliation in Sudan since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

on January 9, 2005, including the establishment of the Government of National Unity, the Interim National Constitution and the Government of Southern Sudan. In addition, the Assessment and Evaluation Commission has been established,

which will oversee implementation of the peace accords. The National Democratic Alliance, an umbrella organization of northern opposition parties also has joined the Government of National Unity.

The United States continues to seek a peaceful and democratic Sudan. We remain concerned by the continued violence in Darfur and have stressed to Sudanese leaders that this violence must end. We will continue to press

for a political solution in Darfur. We believe that such a solution will hold all parties accountable for their actions, ensure that people can return home in a safe and secure environment, and build a lasting and just peace for all Sudanese. We are providing strong support for the African Union-mediated talks in Abuja, Nigeria, in order to achieve a settlement expeditiously.

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Former Nigerian President Says Islam Compatible with Democracy

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- There are "no grounds for incompatibility between democracy and Islam," says former Nigerian head of state Major General Muhammadu Buhari, speaking at the December 7 launch in Washington of a book on Muslim civic culture in his homeland.

According to the general, "The goal of Islam has always been to promote individual liberty, but without endangering the equality between individuals in society. Indeed, properly understood, democracy is a partner, not a threat to Islam," as some extremists have avowed.

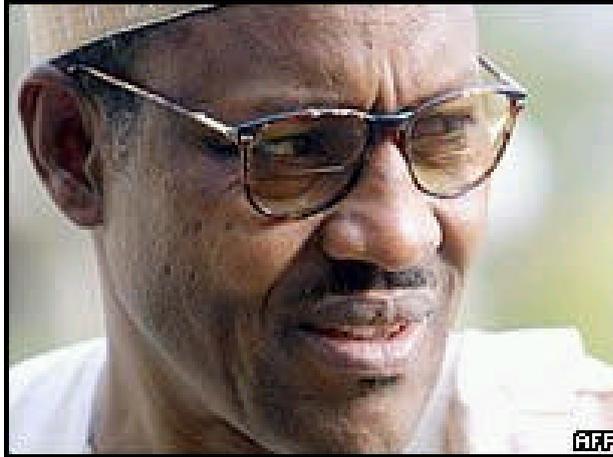
Buhari was military ruler of Nigeria from December 1983 to August 1985, when his regime was overthrown by General Ibrahim Babangida, who succeeded him as head of state. Buhari later ran as an unsuccessful candidate in the May 2003 presidential elections.

The Nigerian soldier turned politician made his comments at the Brookings Institution launch of John Paden's book, *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenges of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria*. Paden is a professor of international studies and public and international affairs at George Mason University in Virginia.

According to Buhari, "As a system of governance, democracy provides for constitutionalism and consultation. It calls for respect for the popular will, separation of powers and the application of effective checks and balances on the exer-

cise of that power. There is nothing in all of this that is objectionable to any known principle of the religion of Islam."

Therefore, the "despotism that has come to characterize almost the



Former Nigerian Head of State Major General Muhammadu Buhari

entire Muslim world today is not something that is inherent in Islam," he told his audience. "It merely represents a very long period of the abuse of power by Muslim rulers that has today crystallized and become such an unfortunate reality."

The book launch was sponsored by the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy. Martin Indyk, a former State Department official and ambassador to Israel who heads the Saban Center's Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, chaired a discussion on democratization in Nigeria.

The audience included Nigerian Ambassador to the United States George Obiozor, several Nigerian state governors and former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria Howard Jeter.

Indyk said Paden's book is valuable because "as the world's seventh-largest oil producer and home to one of the world's largest Muslim communities, Nigeria's governance and stability are matters of international concern. It [also] provides broader lessons that can improve our engagement with the Muslim world."

Buhari said he agreed with Paden's main contention that federalism in Nigeria, with its built-in tolerance of religious and ethnic diversity, has been the glue that continues to hold the republic together. "Democratic federalism" is also a means of "addressing the threats of terrorism with great effectiveness," the general added.

Concluding on an optimistic note, Buhari said: "Without doubt, Nigeria's problems are many, and may be deep-seated, but they are not insurmountable. With the right leadership, the support of the people and the understanding of the international community, troublemakers on both sides of the ethno-religious divide who profit from the planned chaos can be easily taken care of, and the Nigerian state be led to realize its destiny."

For additional information, see Democracy (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy.html>).

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African Benefit of Trade with Developed Nations "Overemphasized"

By **Tanya Salseth Feau**
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Struggling sub-Saharan nations will benefit more if they eliminate internal trade barriers in Africa than if developed countries remove external trade barriers abroad, says a new study unveiled December 6 by the CATO Institute, a nonprofit public policy research foundation based in Washington.

As a cure for world poverty, trade liberalization in developed countries is "overemphasized," said CATO Assistant Director for the Project on Global Economic Liberty Marian Tupy, author of the study *Africa Is Not Poor from Lack of Access to Markets*, as he presented the study.

The CATO study cites July World Bank projections, which estimate that by 2015, sub-Saharan Africa would benefit from an additional \$4.8 billion that would not have been possible without global trade liberalization. Internal trade among African countries would account for 36.4 percent – or \$1.746 billion – of these gains.

Important as these overall gains may be, however, they are small in contrast to those of other developing countries. Latin America and the Caribbean stand to benefit by \$29 billion from global trade liberalization policies, and East Asia by \$24 billion.

Tupy argues that this gap in benefits for sub-Saharan Africa is caused by "internal" factors such as political instability and a lack of strong institutions, which are particularly crippling to the development of African economies.

He called African leaders "hypocritical" for urging an end to protectionist policies in the developed world, while refusing to open their own markets to foreign competition.



Marian Tupy
CATO Assistant Director for the
Project on Global Economic Liberty

The CATO study argument in favor of free trade stands in opposition to those of many anti-globalization activists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) like Oxfam, which favor protectionism for fledgling African industries. The Oxfam Web site decries the "free trade myth," likening free trade between poor and rich countries to "putting a rabbit in a cage with a tiger. There can only be one winner."

Julius Coles, president of the aid organization Africare, who also spoke at the CATO Institute on December 6, supported the idea of some protectionism for the world's least-developed countries. He pointed out that industries in Europe and the United States benefited from some 200 years of

protectionism before trade policies were liberalized. African countries, however, have had only about 40 years to develop their economies after independence from colonial rule and need further protection to grow, he argued.

"Why are we saying Africa should make more sacrifices than industrial countries?" asked Coles, who spent 28 years working for the U. S. Agency for International Development before becoming president of Africare.

Coles also criticized the CATO study for not including additional environmental factors such as inadequate rainfall, poor soils, water availability and pest infestations in its findings.

"A more comprehensive approach to trade reform is a better way of looking at the need," he said, adding, "We will have to give more aid and more trade concessions to have an impact on Africa's development."

The CATO study findings insist that domestic reform is needed before sub-Saharan countries can realize fully the benefits of trade liberalization.

"In order to escape poverty, sub-Saharan African countries must begin by liberalizing their trade with one another and with the rest of the world," Tupy writes. "Research shows that countries with the greatest freedom to trade tend to grow faster than countries that restrict trading."

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

Rice Announces Effort To Bring International Journalists to U.S.

By Michael Jay Friedman
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A new public-private partnership will enable up to 100 foreign journalists to study and examine U.S. journalistic practices, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced December 13.

The Edward R. Murrow Journalism Program will engage overseas media professionals with their American peers through seminars at six leading U.S. journalism schools, visits to state capitals and an International Symposium for Journalists, hosted by the Colorado-based, nonprofit Aspen Institute.

Rice said the program will emphasize the journalistic values -- "integrity and ethics and courage and social responsibility" -- practiced by Murrow, a leading broadcast journalist from 1935 to 1960, and head of the United States Information Agency from 1961 to 1963.

"We all know," Rice added, "that the bedrock pillar of a free society is a free press and that it is crucial for the foundation of any democracy."

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes praised the Murrow Program for addressing the new challenges facing U.S. public diplomacy.

During the Cold War, Hughes said, the nation's public diplomats

worked to inject information into closed societies. Today, with information more readily available, there is a greater need to help foreign journalists hone their skills, and to afford them the opportunity to travel in the United States and meet individual Americans, she said.

the reconstruction of Europe after World War II.

The State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), which administers the program, anticipates the arrival of the first Murrow Program participants in April 2006.



Dr. Condoleezza Rice
U.S. Secretary of State

Geoffrey Cowen, dean of the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication, a Murrow partner institution, echoed Hughes' remarks, stressing the need for well-trained journalists in an era where, more than ever, people and nations need better understanding of other cultures.

Aspen Institute President Walter Isaacson suggested that the Murrow Program successfully would weave together American interests and ideals in the fashion of the 1948-1951 U.S. Marshall Plan for

The Edward R. Murrow Journalism Program was developed by ECA as part of its International Visitor Leadership Program.

Partner institutions include the journalism schools at the universities of Oklahoma; Texas (Austin); Minnesota; North Carolina (Chapel Hill); Kentucky and Southern California. The Aspen Institute was founded in 1950 to foster enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue through seminars, policy programs, conferences and leadership development initiatives.

Additional information (<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/ivp/>) on the ECA International Visitor Leadership Program is available on the State Department Web site.

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

Revised U.S. Naturalization Test to Focus on Civic Values, History

By Lauren Monsen
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A redesigned naturalization test for immigrants who wish to become U.S. citizens will be in use by the end of January 2007, says Alfonso Aguilar, chief of the Office of Citizenship at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

At a December 6 press briefing, Aguilar told reporters that USCIS -- which is part of the Department of Homeland Security -- regards the redesign effort as "an important part of our overall objective to promote the civic integration of immigrants." By eliminating test elements that were criticized as trivial, and inserting "more meaningful, substantive, concept-oriented" elements, the redesigned naturalization test will help promote the Americanization of immigrants, he explained.

"We see the redesigned test as a fundamental tool in the naturalization process, as an instrument to promote civic learning and patriotism," he said.

Although the new test will be "very different from other tests most people are familiar with," immigrants need not worry that it will present a steep barrier to citizenship, said Aguilar, explaining the intent of the test is not to compare the knowledge of one applicant to another, but rather to require that applicants learn the fundamentals of U.S. history and government.

His agency will do all it can to help immigrants successfully prepare for the test, Aguilar said. "To assist those studying for the test, our office is ... committed to creating a

variety of materials for self-study, classroom materials, and teacher-training programs to ensure that



Alfonso Aguilar
Chief of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services' Office of Citizenship

every opportunity is provided to those lawful permanent residents wanting to become U.S. citizens," he said.

At the same time, it should be clearly understood that "we're not going to give away citizenship," said Aguilar. "We're not going to naturalize people" without attempting to determine whether they meet certain basic requirements for that privilege. But "the overriding policy goal of this effort is to ensure the integration of new citizens into our civic culture," he reiterated.

In addition to promoting an attachment to the United States, its Constitution, and its system of government, the redesigned citizenship

test will "encourage a sense of civic responsibility and participation," Aguilar said. "There will be an emphasis on citizens' rights and responsibilities."

The new test will probably be more standardized than previous versions, as well. In developing the new exam, the agency is attempting to establish "some general guidelines to level the playing field, so that it's not more difficult to take the test" in one location rather than another, said Aguilar.

For this reason, "we're going to make sure that applicants know what the test format is ahead of time" -- whether it's a question-and-answer test, an essay test, or a multiple-choice exam, said Aguilar. "Currently, test formats vary from locale to locale."

It is important to recognize that "the level of difficulty is not the issue" in developing a new test, he said. "The redesigned test should encourage civic learning, patriotism, and attachment" to the United States.

Aguilar noted a growing worldwide interest in the idea of promoting common civic values to help immigrants assimilate into their new societies. "Other countries are looking at what we do," and some are adopting similar measures that help reinforce their own civic culture, he pointed out. The United Kingdom "began holding naturalization ceremonies two years ago, as we have always done," he said.

"We do this for a reason," because the successful absorption of new citizens helps ensure the vitality of U.S. democracy.

U.S. Official at WTO Cites Leadership on Both Trade and Aid

By Bruce Odessey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States contributes more money to developing countries for trade capacity building than any other country but views opening markets as even more crucial for promoting development, U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman says.

In December 13 remarks in Hong Kong on the first day of the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting, Portman pressed for reducing barriers to trade in the core areas of agricultural goods, industrial goods and services.

Almost since the WTO negotiations, formally called the Doha Development Agenda, were launched in 2001 they have languished with little progress in all three core areas, held up especially over politically sensitive agricultural trade issues.

"Aid for trade is a supplement to an ambitious result in the round, not a substitute for an ambitious result in the round," Portman said.

He cited evidence from the International Monetary Fund/World Bank's Global Monitoring Report

showing that the U.S. economy is the most open to imports from least-developed countries.

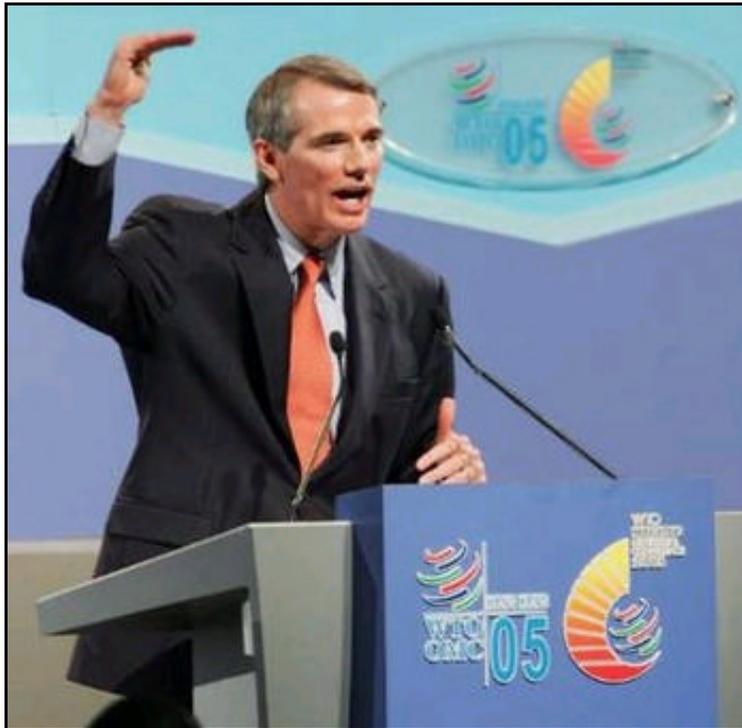
"Market access is not something that the developed world wants or

ity for trade -- to have passable roads, working ports, credible legal and financial systems.

"Otherwise, all the market openings in the world cannot help a least-developed country," he said.

The United States is spending \$1.34 billion for trade capacity building in 2005, more than any other country and 46 percent more than the previous year, he said, announcing release of a 20-page document about such U.S. assistance, "Participation, Empowerment, Partnership: Seeking Sustainable Results through U.S. Trade Capacity Building."

Portman said the developed countries and the international financial institutions have to get smarter about delivering trade capacity building assistance, especially sharing best practices learned from experience.



U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman makes a statement during a conference of the sixth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conferences at Hong Kong's Convention and Exhibition Centre December 14, 2005.
REUTERS/Paul Yeung

that the developing world wants; it is something we should both want," Portman said. "When developing world farmers can sell their products in our markets, and when we can easily export goods and services to developing countries, we both benefit."

Portman said he understands some aid to developing countries is necessary for them to build the capac-

Ministers from the 149 WTO member economies at the Hong Kong meeting December 13-18 have turned more attention to development issues as the stalemate over trade issues continues. One likely outcome is an agreement on giving duty-free, quota-free market access to most imports from the least-developed countries.

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United Nations' Annan Calls for Release of Hostages in Iraq

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

United Nations – Secretary-General Kofi Annan December 8 called for the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all Iraqi and foreign civilians abducted in Iraq.

In a statement issued by his spokesman, the secretary-general said that he is "dismayed by the recent wave of kidnappings in Iraq."

Annan "is extremely concerned about the fate of all Iraqi and foreign civilians who have been abducted, including the group of four foreign hostages whose lives are being threatened," the spokesman said. "The secretary-general calls for their immediate, safe and unconditional release, and strongly reiterates his appeal to all sides to respect at all times the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law."

The United Nations is helping Iraq prepare for December 15 elections to choose a new government. The U.N. special envoy to Iraq, Ashraf Qazi, has been meeting with leaders across the country. On December 8, he met with a promi-

nent cleric, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, and the two agreed on the need to focus on confidence-building measures that can pave the way to national reconciliation among all Iraqis, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.



Kofi Annan
United Nations Secretary-General

The United Nations has 25 staff members from the Electoral Assistance Division assisting the Iraqi election commission.

In a related development, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton signed an agreement between the United States and the United Nations on security arrangements in Iraq. The agreement, signed in New York December 8, formalizes existing security arrangements under which the multinational force is providing se-

curity for U.N. staff as they travel in Iraq.

The United Nations has about 90 staff members in Iraq. They are protected by about 160 security personnel, Dujarric said.

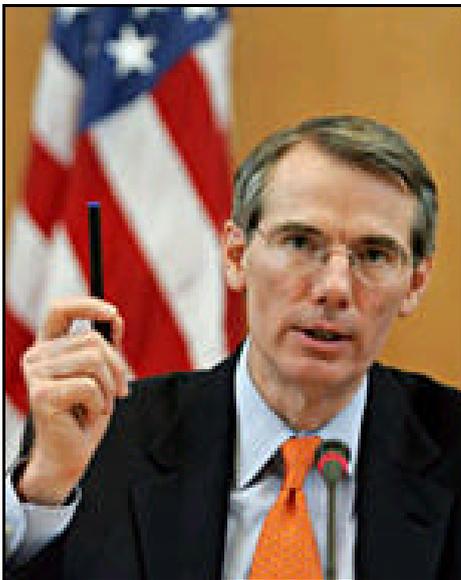
For additional information, see Iraq's Political Process (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/political_process.html).

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U.S. Backs Duty-Free, Quota-Free Treatment for Poorest Countries

By Bruce Odessey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States supports a proposal for duty-free, quota-free market access for most products from the poorest developing countries, U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman says.



Rob Portman
U.S. Trade Representative

At a December 12 press conference in Hong Kong the day before a World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting begins, Portman said he was working with U.S. trading partners to implement the proposal.

The United States would implement such a proposal through its existing trade preference programs, such as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said at the same press conference that the flexibility of those existing programs is essential to U.S. participation.

In order to provide duty-free, quota-free access for textiles from sub-Saharan African countries, for example, Johanns said, the United States might not provide such access to a country that is already globally competitive. He did not identify any country by name.

"We want to instead focus our efforts on those countries that need help in order to be competitive," Johanns said.

Portman reiterated the U.S. position that improving market access for developing countries is the best way to promote development. He cited evidence from international financial institutions showing that the U.S. economy is already the most open to products from the least-developed countries. He added that the United States is the world's biggest spender on trade-related assistance.

The biggest challenge at the December 13-18 Hong Kong meeting remains advancing the core areas of the long-stalled WTO negotiations, formally called the Doha Development Agenda, Portman said.

In services, he said, that means members must offer better access in key sectors such as financial services, telecommunications, computer services, express delivery and energy services.

For industrial goods, he said, that means cutting tariffs sharply and cutting the highest tariffs the most.

Above all, he said, members have to agree on deep tariff cuts for agricultural products with minimal exemptions for politically sensitive products.

"I mentioned the sensitive products area because it seems one area where the European Union [EU] has told us and said publicly that they have some flexibility" by adjusting tariff-rate quotas, Portman said. "So wherever they have flexibility, we would like to probe that and to see what progress we can make."

He chided EU members that have opposed agricultural tariff reductions because they might erode existing EU trade preferences for former European colonies.

In his view, the huge gains from



Mike Johanns
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

lowering tariffs generally vastly would exceed any harm done to countries having existing preferential treatment. Moreover, he said, an existing International Monetary Fund program provides assistance to just such countries.

"We feel strongly ... that you can-

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EU Must Cut Farm Tariffs in Trade Talks, United States Insists

By Bruce Odessey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The European Union (EU) must find a way to lower agricultural tariffs sharply if long-stalled World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations ever are to succeed, U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman says.

Agriculture remains the key to unlocking progress in the parallel negotiations for opening markets in manufactured goods and services, Portman said December 9 at a press conference days ahead of a WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong.

The negotiations, formally called the Doha Development Agenda, have languished almost since they were launched in 2001 over politically difficult agricultural trade issues. In October, the United States submitted a new proposal for sharply cutting agricultural tariffs and domestic support payments to farmers. Analysis of the subsequent EU proposal determined that it offered little, if any, real new market access. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2005/Oct/31-888557.html>).

The EU negotiating mandate on agriculture is "rather ambiguous," Portman said.

"We would hope that the EU would meet its responsibilities," he said, "and if that requires stretching the existing mandate, that's fine. If it requires a new mandate, that's fine. But the point is they need to step up, they need to do what's required in order for the

Doha round to be successful." The latest comments from EU trade negotiators offered little comfort. EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson is reported as saying that Europe could make no further concessions on tariff reductions, although it might be able to move on broadening the number of sensitive products that would be exempt from trade liberalization.

Portman said the Hong Kong meeting on December 13-19 would produce none of the breakthroughs in negotiations the United States once hoped it would. Portman said he still hoped the meetings would produce incremental progress, at least, on agriculture, manufactured goods and services.

"We need to see movement in those areas [manufactured goods and services] as well, by all of us, including the advanced developing countries," Portman said.

If the developed countries can open their markets more to agricultural goods and developing countries can open their markets to manufactured goods and services, he said, "that is ultimately where the agreement is to be found."

Providing real market access to developing countries, he said, "would do more for development than all of the checks that our governments can write for trade capacity building ... or even for aid."

The United States has pressed for conclusion of the Doha round by the end of 2006, to give the U.S. Congress enough time to consider any negotiated agreement before the president's negotiating author-

ity, called trade promotion authority or fast track, expires in July 2007.

Portman said that if negotiating breakthroughs are reached early in 2006, then conclusion of the Doha round still was possible a year from now.

The Bush administration would favor Congress extending trade promotion authority, but the risk of that not happening is real, he said.

Meanwhile, he said, the Hong Kong meeting is likely to produce a package of "trade capacity building measures" aimed at helping the 49 poorest, least-developed countries integrate into the global trading system.

An audio file and a transcript (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?contentid-only=true&contentid=2005/12/0543.xml) of Portman's joint press conference with Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns are available on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web site.

For more information, see WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/wto/wto_hong_kong.html).

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

IMF Formally Approves Debt Forgiveness Plan for Poor Nations

Washington -- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a plan to forgive \$4.8 billion in debts of the world's poorest countries early in 2006 as part of a debt-cancellation initiative launched by the Group of Eight (G8) countries.

The G8 comprises Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The G8 vowed in July to cancel about \$40 billion owed by the poorest countries to three multilateral institutions. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2005/Sep/27-620259.html>).

The IMF is the first of the three institutions to move on the initiative. Other institutions involved are the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

The IMF said December 8 its executive board had completed details of the implementation of IMF's portion of the initiative that involves canceling debt owed to the fund by certain qualifying poor countries.

The first 20 countries identified by the fund as eligible to participate in the plan are: Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Tajikistan, Uganda and Zambia.

Another group of 20 countries could be eligible for IMF debt cancellation if they demonstrate satis-

factory macroeconomic performance and meet other conditions or qualify through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, a debt-reduction program run jointly by the IMF and World Bank.

The costs of the IMF debt forgiveness plan will be covered by profits from a 1999 off-market gold sale and donations from 43 countries to the HIPC initiative.

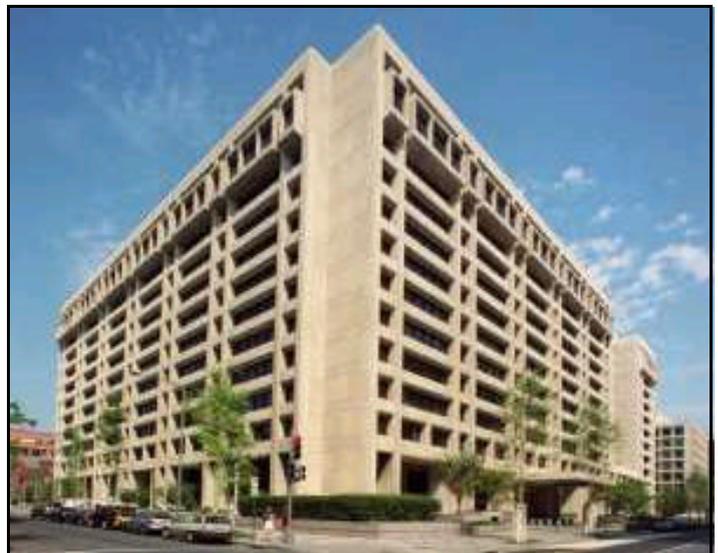
IMF official Mark Allen told reporters during a December 8 teleconference that the fund expects to receive approval from all potential donors in the coming days. If that happens, he said, the IMF will be able to proceed with the plan early in 2006.

Once the program starts, the IMF will conduct a "spot check" of recipient countries' economic policies to see how they spend the money they retain as a result of debt-cancellation, Allen said.

World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz on December 7 said his institution expects to begin executing its much bigger portion of the G8 initiative that involves more than \$30 billion by the middle of 2006 if the bank's board approves details formally the week of December 18. (See related article

(<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2005&m=December&x=20051207153337AKllen-noCcMO.2037317&t=ei/ei-latest.html>).

A fact sheet (<http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/mdri.htm>) on the IMF portion of the G8 debt relief plan and text (<http://www.imf.org>)



IMF Headquarters Washington DC

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2005/pn05164.htm>) of the December 8 announcement are available on the IMF Web site.

The transcript (<http://www.imf.org/external/np/tr/2005/tr051208.htm>) of the Allen teleconference also is available on the IMF Web site.

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

U.S. Promotes Forceful International Anti-corruption Efforts

The United States aggressively is addressing corruption issues at international fora and through domestic initiatives, a State Department official says.

David Luna, director for anti-corruption and governance initiatives in the department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, said that core areas of U.S. diplomatic efforts include promoting cooperation on anti-corruption and encouraging strong enforcement actions by other countries to prosecute corrupt dictators and officials.

Luna spoke December 9 at an American Bar Association seminar in Washington that was organized to coincide with International Anti-corruption Day.

Luna said that the U.N. Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which he called the "most comprehensive" anti-corruption instrument, is quickly becoming a focal

point for international anti-corruption action.

UNCAC promotes prevention of corruption, changes in domestic laws to make corruption a criminal offense, international cooperation on extradition, mutual legal assistance and the recovery and return of stolen assets. The pact has been signed by 137 countries and ratified by 37 since the U.N. signing ceremony in 2003 in Merida, Mexico. President Bush has submitted the convention to the U.S. Senate for formal ratification.

Now, countries need to turn the political will into "demonstrable" action, Luna said, calling the implementation challenge a "hard task."

He said that the United States will continue intensifying international cooperation on identifying and preventing access by corrupt officials to financial systems, denying safe haven to such officials and working on related issues because it wants

fighting corruption to become second nature for most governments in the foreseeable future.

Luna highlighted the U.S. denial of safe haven for corrupt public officials, those who corrupt them and the assets they steal as a policy that sends a strong message about the U.S. commitment to crack down on corrupt officials.

"Implementation of [this measure] has sent shock waves that have reverberated across the world," he said.

Luna also addressed the issue of civil society participation in anti-corruption efforts.

For additional information, see Bribery and Corruption Archive (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/bribery/bribery_archive.html)?

U.S. Backs Duty-Free, Quota-Free Treatment for . . .

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not hide behind preference erosion as a way to protect your own farmers," Portman said. "It's cynical, and it doesn't hold up in terms of the economic analysis."

The Doha negotiations have languished almost since they were launched in 2001 over differences about opening agricultural trade. In October, the United States proposed sharp reductions in both agricultural tariffs and domestic support payments to farmers. Analysis of a subsequent EU

agriculture proposal shows that it would offer little or no real additional market access. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2005/Oct/31-888557.html>).

A transcript (http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2005/December/Remarks_by_US_Trade_Representative_Rob_Portman_US_Secretary_of_Agriculture_Mike_Johanns,_Joint_Press_Conference,_Hong_Ko.html) of the press con-

ference can be accessed at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Web site.

For additional information, see WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/wto/wto_hong_kong.html).

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U.S. Official at WTO Cites Leadership on . . .

(Continued from page 10)

Accessible from the Office of the U. S. Trade Representative (USTR) Web site are the transcript (http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2005/December/Remarks_by_US_Trade_Representative_Rob_Portman_-_Helping_Countries_Trade_The_Aid_for_Trade_Agenda,_World_Bank_Development_Pane.html) of Portman's remarks, the new pamphlet (http://www.ustr.gov/assets/Document_Library/Fact_Sheets/2005/asset_upload_file913_8588.pdf) (PDF, 20 pages) and fact sheets on capacity building (http://www.ustr.gov/assets/Document_Library/Fact_Sheets/2005/asset_upload_file553_8587.pdf) and other forms of U.S. assistance (<http://www.ustr.gov/assets/>

[Document_Library/Fact_Sheets/2005/asset_upload_file423_8586.pdf](#)).

For information on the WTO talks in Hong Kong, see WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/wto/wto_hong_kong.html).

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

U.N. Demands Eritrea Rescind Ban on Western . . .

(Continued from page 4)

Nations informed Eritrea "very clearly" that the demands are unacceptable and the United Nations does not intend to pull out any of the personnel who have been mentioned.

"The key issue is of a political nature," Guehenno said. The U.N. mission is "the international community as a whole standing together. That principle has wide-ranging implications beyond the specific Ethiopian/Eritrea mission.

"We have no intention of jeopardizing a fundamental principal of the universality of a peacekeeping operation representing the whole of the international community," he said.

The mission already has been hampered by Eritrea's ban on helicopter flights in the border zone since October.

"We all know the very difficult situation that is there between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Guehenno said. "This situation needs to be addressed, but the actions that have just been announced by the government of Eritrea are unacceptable and we do expect the government should reconsider them shortly."

In November, the Security Council demanded that Eritrea reverse the flight ban. It threatened actions that could include sanctions if Eritrea did not comply, and if it did not reverse its military buildup.

Under a 2000 peace agreement, both countries agreed to accept an international commission's decision on the location of the disputed border as final and binding. Nevertheless, Ethiopia rejected the decision that the town of Badme be awarded to Eritrea and the peace process has been stalled since. In recent weeks, military maneuvers on both sides of the border have given rise to tensions and fear of renewed fighting.

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