



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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2011 Diversity Visa Lottery Begins on October 2, 2009

American Embassy officials today announced the beginning of the 2011 Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery Program application season. Diversity Visa applications will be accepted from October 2 to November 30, 2009. Applicants may access the electronic Diversity Visa entry form (E-DV) at www.dvlottery.state.gov during the registration period. Paper entries will not be accepted. Applicants are strongly en-

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(L-R) U.S. Embassy Spokesman Michael Gonzales, Consular Section Chief Abigail Rupp and Consular Officer Jeffrey Ladenson talking to journalists at the press roundtable held at the U.S. Embassy to announce the 2011 Diversity Visa lottery.

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U.S. Provides Over \$80 Million to Support Quality Education in Ethiopia



Students gathered for photo after receiving school supplies.

The American people, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), on Monday, September 28, 2009 announced support for six new education programs to improve quality education in Ethiopia. The programs, worth over US \$80 million over the next five years, will support on-going efforts

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2011 Diversity Visa Lottery Begins on October 2, 2009 . . .

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couraged not to wait until the last week of the registration period to enter. Heavy demand may result in website delays. No entries will be accepted after noon, EST, on November 30, 2009.

The annual DV program makes visas available to persons meeting the simple, but strict, eligibility requirements. Every DV lottery entrant must have at least a secondary school education or its equivalent or have, within the past five years, two years of work experience in an occupation requiring at least three years' training or experience. Applicants who do not meet the educational or work experience requirement will be disqualified.

A computer-generated, random lottery drawing chooses selectees for Diversity Visas. The visas are distributed among six geographic regions, with a greater number of visas going to regions with lower historical rates of immigration to the United States, and with no visas going to nationals of countries sending more than 50,000 immigrants to the U.S. over the past five years. Within each region, no single country may receive more than seven percent of the total available Diversity Visas in any one year.

In U.S. Fiscal Year 2009, the Department of State received more than nine million applications for the DV lottery program. Of that number some 100,000 entrants were selected worldwide, including

5,200 Ethiopians, to further pursue a Diversity Visa. As in years past, the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia issued more than 3,000 visas to lottery winners from this group.

The congressionally mandated Diversity Immigrant Visa Program is

and determine whether their entries were selected or not selected. Successful entrants for the 2011 DV program may also check the status of their entry online, and will continue to receive notification letters by mail.



Journalists listening to Consular Section Chief Abigail Rupp at the press roundtable held at the U.S. Embassy to announce the 2011 Diversity Visa lottery.

administered on an annual basis by the Department of State and conducted under the terms of Section 203(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Beginning in 2005, the Department of State implemented an electronic registration system in order to make the DV process more efficient and secure. Special technology and other means are used to identify those who commit fraud for the purposes of illegal immigration or those who submit multiple entries. Last year marked the first time that applicants could check the status of entries online

For detailed information about entry requirements, along with frequently asked questions about the DV lottery, please see the instructions for the DV-2011 Diversity Visa lottery on the Department's Consular Affairs Website at www.dvlottery.state.gov. For information about the visa process in Ethiopia, please visit the U.S. Embassy's website at www.ethiopia.usembassy.gov. ♦

USAID Loan Agreement to strengthen the economic development of Ethiopia

A new loan agreement signed on Friday, September 25, 2009 between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Awash International Bank and Oromia Cooperative Bank will help strengthen the economic development of Ethiopia by enabling microfinance institutions and savings and credit cooperatives to offer more loans. The agreement, worth \$16 million USD in potential loans, reduces collateral requirements to beneficiaries by 50 percent. The program will benefit micro and small enterprises, which play a major role in creating jobs and generating income for Ethiopians in food deficit regions.

“The microfinance institutions that will benefit from this agreement not only have the knowledge of local cultures and markets, but also have the presence and capacity to reach some of the most remote communities.” Thomas H. Staal, USAID Mission Director, remarked during the signing ceremony held at the Hilton Hotel.

USAID expects the guarantee scheme to create a sustainable partnership between microfinance institutions and private commercial banks, thus increasing agriculture productivity, expanding staple food supply, and helping expand small scale business related to the trade and cottage industries.

USAID’s Development Credit Authority (DCA) loan guarantee program allows USAID to fund projects that are financially viable through loan guarantees in sectors that meet sustainable development ob-

jectives. By sharing the risk with the financial institutions, DCA is able to demonstrate the soundness of lending activity in sectors that may not otherwise have access to capital. The first DCA Agreement in Ethiopia started in 1999 with Abyssinia Bank, supporting small and medium enterprises engaged in different agricultural activities. In 2004, DCA added Awash and Abyssinia Banks availing \$18 million USD for agro-processing, livestock marketing and commercial



(L-R) Leikun Berhanu, President of Awash Bank, Thomas H. Staal, USAID Mission Director, and Assefa Dibaba, President of Oromia Cooperative Bank, sign an agreement that will allow microfinance institutions and savings and credit cooperatives to offer more loans.

jectives. By sharing the risk with the financial institutions, DCA is able to demonstrate the soundness of lending activity in sectors that may not otherwise have access to capital. The first DCA Agreement in Ethiopia started in 1999 with Abyss-

inia Bank, supporting small and medium enterprises engaged in different agricultural activities. In 2008, a new agreement was made for a \$17.2 million USD guarantee with Abyssinia and NIB Banks for Diaspora and women entrepreneurs. ♦

U.S. Provides Over \$80 Million to Support Quality Education in Ethiopia . . .

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to develop, and improve the quality of, Ethiopia's educational system.

The Ethiopian Minister of Education, His Excellency Demeke Mekonnen, and USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director, Thomas H. Staal, delivered remarks at the event, which was held at Kotebe College of Teacher Education and followed the theme of "Partnership Striving for Quality Education."

"USAID recognizes that education is the key to development. We will continue to partner with the Ministry of Education for the benefit of the Ethiopian people until we can say together that Ethiopia has achieved quality education for all," USAID Mission Director Staal remarked. "All children should be afforded a quality basic education."

The General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP), the Government of Ethiopia's plan for improving the quality of education in the country, includes increasing access to education for all citizens. USAID's new education programs will complement the GEQIP through a holistic approach by training teachers and education officers, improving the quality of education and learning materials, supporting community organizations such as Girl's Advisory Committees, and building alternative basic education centers for children in remote areas.

At the ceremony, USAID announced plans for six major projects, including Improving the Quality of Primary Education Program



USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director, Thomas H. Staal, giving away school supplies for students at the event.

(IQPEP), a US \$33.5 million dollar program which focuses on improving the planning and management of primary education and transforming the teaching-learning process. IQPEP alone will reach 28 teacher education institutions, 2,400 primary schools, and about 40,000 primary school teachers over the next five years, with a particular focus on pastoral and rural areas.

Another major project will support students affected by HIV/AIDS by providing tutoring, psychosocial support, provision of school supplies and life skills training for these especially vulnerable children. Additional USAID-supported projects will build the professional capabilities and empower 1,800 communities and schools to manage their primary schools, enhance access to basic education for over 90,000 children and adults in remote areas,

and increase the supply of textbooks.

USAID has been supporting basic education in Ethiopian communities with over \$180 million in financial and technical resources for the last 14 years, working in close collaboration with the full array of Ethiopian stakeholders to enhance equity and quality of education. ♦

African Leaders Need to Create the Right Climate for Business

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — African leaders “have a duty to create the right climate for business” in Africa, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete said September 2 in Washington. Kikwete described the private sector as the engine for economic growth and development across the continent and he called on his audience to “look forward,” not backward, toward a brighter economic future and a closer U.S.-Africa business and trade relationship.

Speaking at a luncheon held in his honor on the eve of the Corporate Council on Africa’s (CCA’s) Seventh Biennial U.S.-Africa Business Summit, which will be held in Washington, Kikwete said now is the time for business to position itself strategically for future opportunities in Africa. He readily acknowledged, however, that now, as the world begins to emerge from the global financial crisis, “it is not easy to convince skeptics” to invest enthusiastically in Africa.

African leaders need to create the right climate for business, he said. “It is our duty to keep projecting a better image of our continent as a whole and of each individual country. Our commitment to good governance, peace and security, to the rule of law and respect for contracts and the business environment as a whole must never be put into question.”

Kikwete reminded his listeners of the \$698 million, five-year “compact” his country has been awarded by the United States

through the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and said his only regret is that there are not more American companies competing for the business that will be created by the MCC agreement.



Tanzanian President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete addresses the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York September 24.

Kikwete spelled out five key sectors for business investment across Africa: infrastructure, the lack of which is strangling economic development across the region, he said; agriculture and agribusiness; natural resource development; tourism; and financial services, where a broader array of banking tools and programs is needed to help fuel long-term economic growth.

The media have not been very helpful, Kikwete said, as Africa makes its case as a great place for investment opportunities and business. “Sometimes I read what they say

about us and wonder.”

Kikwete told his audience of business executives, entrepreneurs, U.S. government representatives, Africans and Africanists that often-times the media report that China is “gobbling up” Africa.

“We are realizing that it is precisely the subjective and selective stories that [the media] carry about Africa that keep many Western companies out of Africa,” he said. “Believe me, the field is wide open” for everyone, whether they be Chinese or Western businesses, to invest and do business in sub-Saharan Africa.

Cross-border trade is steadily increasing across sub-Saharan Africa, Kikwete said, and there are more and more trade links between Africa and Latin America and between Africa and Asia.

“South Africa, Kenya and India are important sources of investment for Tanzania, and while African investment and trade

with Latin America remains slow, political will and the trend to grow remains undeniable,” he said.

Kikwete noted that the African Diaspora is “slowly shifting from simply making remittances to support their families back home into making their own investments or mobilizing other investments,” demonstrating, in his view, that “things are not as bad as [the media] sometimes portray the continent of Africa to be.”

He called Africa the world’s “last

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Americans, Africans Use Business Summit to Expand Trade

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — American and African entrepreneurs and investors will meet face to face to develop relationships and to establish and expand business, trade and investment ties at the Seventh Biennial U.S.-Africa Business Summit, which convenes in Washington September 29–October 1.

Kevin Boyd, director of the Office of Africa at the U.S. Department of Commerce — who is helping to plan the summit — sat down with America.gov to preview the event, which is being organized by the U.S. Corporate Council on Africa (CCA). Boyd is especially optimistic about more U.S. business in Angola and Rwanda.

“You have heads of state from five to 10, possibly more, African countries coming to the summit, along with trade and finance ministers who, in many circumstances, will be leading a delegation from their private sector, looking for business partners in the United States,” he said.

Boyd cited an example to illustrate the value of such summits:

“I was at the previous summit in Cape Town [two years ago] and, on the first day, I met a U.S. firm looking for African partners to do some housing projects. On the second day, I met an African firm hoping to find a U.S. firm who could partner with it on housing projects. I put the two together. You get so many chances to do that that you are not otherwise going to find. You have U.S. companies looking for business partners and opportunities and firms



from sub-Saharan Africa looking for the same thing. Here is a chance to come together in the same place and find those types of partners.”

What is also appealing, Boyd said, is that there are often key government officials from both the United States and African countries present at the summit who can help — should it be necessary — to facilitate a deal.

“Conversations which could take months to arrange you can arrange in a couple of hours,” he said. Boyd, who spent 10 years working on market access for U.S. firms in Southeast Asia for the Commerce Department before picking up the Africa portfolio, said in both regions face-to-face contact is especially important.

“Business is about relationships and relationships must be developed first,” he said. “How do you do that? You do that by speaking to someone face to face.”

The summit is important for two additional reasons, he said: Businesses new to the region can start exploring a new geographic area of

expansion and already established companies can make new contacts.

“From a cost-benefit analysis, you could spend quite a bit of money on airline tickets and setting things up” to travel to the region to explore opportunities. “Yes, you could do that, but you might want to start doing that first at the summit,” he said.

Boyd says he always advises American businesses hoping to expand into Africa to start out in a country like Canada, where they can learn the fundamental points of international trade closer to home. For Africans, he said, that rule could be useful as well: By working to enhance regional trade relationships with their neighbors, they can prepare for more complicated trade deals with the United States and Europe.

One country that shows great potential for more American business involvement, according to Boyd, is Angola. “Here is a country that prior to the economic and financial crisis ... was growing at 15–20 percent a year. Yes, they have had a

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downturn like many other countries but they are going to bounce back and they still have tremendous growth potential. Yes, you have some U.S. firms in Angola but you could have far more."

Angolans, he said, are eager for more U.S. companies to enter their market. Recently, the U.S. government signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with Angola, which provides a framework in which business can expand. He said there is tremendous potential within the country's transportation infrastructure, housing and commercial construction sectors.

"We think so much of the business climate in Angola, I am sending someone on my team to Angola for six weeks to serve as the acting senior commercial officer," he said. Boyd is also optimistic about Rwanda. He cited the just-released

World Bank report Doing Business 2010, which is published annually, to illustrate his point. "For the first time since they started doing that report, the top reformer is a sub-Saharan African country." The report says Rwanda exemplifies the dividends of peace and good macro-economic policies.

In the 10 areas that the World Bank measured to make that decision, Rwanda has implemented reforms in seven, he said. "One hundred eighty-three economies are part of the study. Last year, [Rwanda] ranked 143. This year it ranks 67," he said.

Boyd praised the government of Rwandan President Paul Kagame for cracking down on corruption. "U.S. companies tell us that they are taking a very hard look at a lot of opportunities there, largely because they feel that they have a level playing field" [fair economic environment], and that is extremely important. Liberia was also credited in

the report with moving fast to reform its economy.

Mauritius is another country that the report singles out, noting it rose into the top 20 places to do business in the world because of the ease of doing business there. "This is the first time you had an African country making it into the top 20 in this World Bank report," Boyd said.

The summit will offer participants the chance to explore the latest in trade and investment opportunities in Africa's most promising sectors, including agribusiness, power, financing, health and infrastructure. The meeting will include more than 50 industry-specific sessions where both American and African entrepreneurs can network or interact, trade industry news and explore deals.

With U.S.-Africa trade constituting only 3 percent of total U.S. trade, Boyd said, there is "tremendous potential" for growth. ♦

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entrepreneurial and investment frontier" and said those who are not afraid to invest strategically can make good profits. He said some funds that invested in Africa's telecommunications sector have enjoyed an annual return on their investment in excess of 35 percent.

Kikwete thanked his audience for what they are doing to promote closer U.S.-Africa business and trade ties, especially those companies that are already operating in Africa.

"It is your success," he told those companies, "that will be a better selling point for the continent than simply listening to politicians like me." He called on all companies "who are succeeding in Africa to spread the good word."

Kikwete reminded his audience that between 2006 and 2008 Tanzania enjoyed an annual economic growth rate of 7.1 percent, and he expressed the hope that with increased trade and investment, Tanzania and the rest of the region can emerge from the financial crisis to enjoy such record economic growth rates again.

At least five African heads of state are expected to attend the CCA summit, which will showcase the latest trade and investment opportunities across Africa through more than 50 industry-specific sessions. More than 1,500 attendees are expected. The previous CCA summit was held in 2007 in Cape Town, South Africa.

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

United States and Angola Are Natural Business Partners

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Investors, entrepreneurs and business executives from the United States and Angola are “finding each other” and finding out that they are “natural partners in business,” U.S. Ambassador to Angola Dan Mozena told America.gov September 29.

Mozena made those comments at the conclusion of an opening session of the Seventh Biennial U.S.-Africa Business Summit, which focused on doing business in Angola.

Surveying the packed room at a downtown Washington hotel, Mozena said, “This conference is overwhelming; look at this room full of people who are trying to develop business relationships with the United States — I have to first say I am absolutely overwhelmed by the turnout.

“This conference is important because I think America and Angola are finding each other. We are natural partners in business. Angolan importers need American products. American exporters are eager to export, and the [U.S.] Export-Import Bank is providing the financing to make it possible,” he said.

To help develop that relationship further, Mozena said, he is working to secure representation from the U.S. Department of Commerce in Luanda “to marry American exports with Angolan importers.” Mozena confidently predicted, “We are going to do business in a big way.”

Asked where Americans should invest, Mozena said agriculture. “I come from a dairy farm in [the U.S. Midwestern state of] Iowa. I love



U.S. Ambassador to Angola Dan Mozena

agriculture, and let me tell you, you have 35 million hectares — that is 65 million acres — of empty, arable land waiting to be cultivated in Angola.” Additionally, he said, “there is great potential in agricultural processing for juices and fruits and things of that nature. It just goes on and on.”

Other areas for investment, Mozena said, include farm equipment, where American farm equipment manufacturers are finding demand; fisheries, where “we should be selling fishing boats and helping the fishing and processing industry”; and lumber, especially tropical woods, because the country has huge resources in tropical woods.

“The market will grow as the economy revives,” he confidently predicted.

Asked about the present state of U.S.-Angolan trade, Mozena said: “Last year the United States spent about \$18 billion, mainly in the importation of oil and some diamonds. We exported to Angola, about \$2

billion. That is a difference of about \$16 billion — that means somebody else is scooping up \$16 billion of our petrodollars, and I am fighting back; I want to bring more of those petrodollars back to America.”

The “Doing Business in Angola” session featured presentations by Connie Hamilton, the deputy assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa, and Tiago Gomes, secretary-general of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Angola. Maria Luisa Abrantes, Angola’s trade representative to the United States, also addressed the group.

In her comments, Hamilton focused on two positive points in the U.S.-Angola trade relationship: the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), for which Angola became eligible in 2003, and the U.S.-Angola Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA).

AGOA has been an important step, she said, in line with the Angolan government’s goal of diversifying the nation’s economy away from just oil and gas. “Last year, Angola was the United States’ second-largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa and our 31st largest trading partner overall,” she told her audience, “with oil and gas contributing to the vast majority of that trade.”

While U.S.-Angolan trade is “on the rise,” she said, Angola has not yet “found its niche” within AGOA, “partly because we are still discovering potential within each other’s markets.”

There are, however, things that Angola can do right now to take better advantage of AGOA, she said, such

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Tanzania, Burkina Faso Thank U.S. for Development Assistance

Washington — Leaders from Tanzania, Burkina Faso and Albania — whose countries are all recipients of assistance from the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) — have publicly expressed thanks on behalf of their citizens to the United States government and the American people for development assistance in their countries.

The three leaders made their comments to the Associated Press September 22 at an interactive forum sponsored by the MCC and InterAction, a coalition of more than 150 humanitarian organizations.

The forum, entitled “Country-Led Development: Proven Partnerships in Fighting Global Poverty,” was held in conjunction with the 64th U.N. General Assembly. The session provided U.S. government representatives the chance to interact face to face with civil society advocates and leaders at the United Nations.

Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete told those in attendance that the citizens of his country are “grateful recipients of generous support from the government and people of the United States.” In line with the founding principles of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, each recipient country creates its own development plan based on its unique needs.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is a U.S. government corporation designed to work with some of the poorest countries in the world. Established in January 2004, MCC is based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, economic freedom and investments in people.

MCC’s mission is to reduce global poverty by promoting sustainable economic growth.

In February 2008, MCC signed a five-year, \$698 million agreement (called a “compact”) with Tanzania to reduce poverty and stimulate



MCC funds support primary education for girls in Burkina Faso, such as these seen with their school-mates in Tangassogo.

economic growth by increasing household incomes through targeted investments in transportation, energy and water. President George W. Bush and President Kikwete signed the MCC compact in Dar es Salaam while Bush was visiting Tanzania as part of an Africa trip that also took him to Benin, Rwanda, Ghana and Liberia.

The investments in three projects contained in the compact will help Tanzanians address the inadequate transportation network by improving roads and thereby increasing commerce and helping to connect communities with markets, schools and health clinics; improve the reliability and quality of electric power and extend electric service to communities not currently served; and increase the availability and reliability of potable water for domestic

and commercial use, which will improve health and increase productivity.

Before a country can become eligible to receive assistance, MCC looks at its performance on independent and transparent policy indicators. MCC selects eligible countries for compact assistance based on that performance. Countries that have demonstrated significant improvement in policy indicators but do not yet qualify for a major compact grant may be eligible for “threshold program” assistance. Threshold programs are smaller grants designed to help improve performance on specific indicators.

Like Tanzania, Burkina Faso signed a five-year, \$480.9 million compact with the MCC in July 2008 to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth through strategic investments in four projects.

The projects seek to increase investment in land and rural productivity through improved land tenure security and land management; expand the productive use of land to increase the volume and value of agricultural production in project zones; enhance access to markets through investments in road networks; and increase primary school completion rates for girls.

Burkina Faso’s president, Blaise Compaoré, who also attended the event, said, “Without development there is no peace, there is no help and there is no knowledge. I’m here to thank President Obama and all the people of America ... and all the

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Tanzania, Burkina Faso Thank U.S. for Development Assistance . . .

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people who are working on the ground.”

Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha was equally grateful, saying a \$15.7 million MCC threshold grant made to his government three years ago “really changed my country” and helped streamline the business climate there.

The program is focused on improving the country’s performance on MCC’s “ruling justly” and “economic freedom” indicators and aims to reduce corruption through reforms in tax administration, public procurement and business registration.

MCC development goals aim to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth by helping the recipi-

ent government establish sound economic policies.

Commenting on the importance of the forum, Aaron H. Sherinian, MCC’s managing director of public affairs, told America.gov that the session offered “a unique opportunity to listen to civil society leaders brainstorm with government leaders and donors. The meeting proved that honest dialogue can improve foreign assistance. We came away with a number of good ideas about leveraging our money with NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and the diasporas so that it can have a greater impact for the world’s poor.”

Sherinian, who attended the meeting, added that the event was an open public forum. “The U.N. is one of a number of great opportunities to get the right people in the room

to talk about global poverty,” he said.

“You could feel the energy in the room [which was standing room only] because people understand the urgency of getting poverty reduction right,” he said.

Also attending the forum were Foreign Minister Jose Brito of Cape Verde, Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio of Senegal, Minister of Mining and Political Affairs Alpha Kanu of Sierra Leone and the president of Africare, Julius E. Coles.

MCC is helping some 38 countries worldwide with poverty-reduction grants in excess of \$7 billion.

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

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as implementing a national AGOA strategy to determine the country’s comparative advantage outside oil and gas. Angola, she said, has some of the most fertile land in the world but is only cultivating 5 percent of that land. “If this situation was addressed, Angola could supply all of its own food needs and much of the subregion as well.” She also suggested that Angola move to produce more “value-added” or finished products — particularly in the agricultural sector.

Other African countries are exporting automobiles, iron and steel products, nuts, insecticides, citrus fruit, wine, fish, cut flowers and

other products to the United States. “Angolans know what best they can produce,” and once those products are identified, she said, Angolans should seek out U.S. business partners who know best how to import such products into the United States.

The U.S. Southern Africa Global Competiveness trade hub in Gabone, Botswana, would be of great assistance in this effort, she said.

In the World Bank’s recently published Doing Business 2010 report, Hamilton said, Angola ranked 169 in 183 countries for ease of doing business. “This is not good,” she told her audience. Improving such ranking will signal investors that the

government of Angola is serious about improving its business climate, she said.

Angola is now competing with reform leaders like Mauritius, Botswana, Ghana and Rwanda, which was deemed the top reformer worldwide by Doing Business 2010. “Angolans can do the same,” she told the group.

Turning to the TIFA, she said the document, which was signed May 19, 2009, provides for a formal process on a range of issues regarding trade relations. She called the TIFA signing “just the beginning.” She reminded everyone that much hard work lies ahead, with the first

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Obama Says Partnerships Are Defining U.S. Foreign Policy

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama paused briefly during the whirl of United Nations events and diplomatic conferences to speak to volunteers who are committed to resolving some of the world's most pressing concerns, including poverty, health, education and the impact of rapid climate change.

"Around the world, even as we pursue a new era of engagement with other nations, we're embracing a broader engagement — new partnerships between societies and citizens, community organizations, business, faith-based groups,"

Obama said September 22 at the fifth annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) in New York.

The initiative, begun in 2005 by former President Bill Clinton, brings together the public sector and private sector to address solutions to four problem areas: climate change, poverty, health and education. It meets at the same time as the opening session of the U.N. General Assembly, and those who attend — world leaders, business executives, activists and celebrities — make commitments to work on these problems. CGI Chief Executive Officer Robert Harrison told reporters that since the first conference, 1,400 commitments have been made, including some worth billions of dollars.

Building partnerships based on mutual interests and mutual respect, Obama said, is driving the current thrust of U.S. relations around the world.



Former President Bill Clinton, left, and President Obama meet at the fifth annual Clinton Global Initiative meeting September 22.

"This spirit of partnership is a defining feature of our foreign policy. We're renewing development as a key element of American foreign policy — not by lecturing and imposing our ideas, but by listening and working together, by seeking more exchanges between students and experts, new collaborations among scientists to promote technological development, partnerships between businesses, entrepreneurs to advance prosperity and opportunity for people everywhere," Obama said.

Obama said that while extremists largely are committed to the destruction of societies, the United States is committed to building a future that invests in people's education, health and welfare. That requires, he said, building new part-

nerships across regions and religions, while religious leaders, non-governmental organizations and ordinary citizens need to work toward good governance, transparent institutions and basic services on which security depends.

"We're making substantial increases in foreign assistance. But we still need civil society to help host nations deliver aid without corruption," Obama said. "The purpose of aid must be to create the conditions where it is no longer needed — where we help build the capacity for transformational change in a society."

Obama said the United States is build-

ing on its successes in thwarting HIV/AIDS and working to end deaths from malaria and tuberculosis and to end polio. "These efforts will only be sustained if we improve the capacity of public health systems to deliver care, especially for mothers and children."

And Obama said the United States is making new investments in global food security, but it cannot be just more handouts. The more pressing need, he said, is to share new farming methods and technologies so that countries and communities can become more self-sufficient.

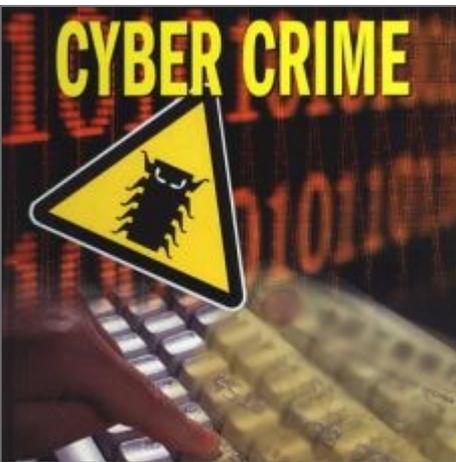
What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (<http://blogs.america.gov/obama/>). ♦

Low-Risk, High-Profit Opportunities Drive Up Cybercrime

By Andrzej Zwanecki
Staff Writer

Washington — It does not cost much to become a cybercriminal.

A \$500 investment buys MPack, software developed by Russian hackers, allowing users to steal credit card data or retail vouchers. Renting software robots known as botnets, which spew out spam



(unsolicited commercial or bulk e-mail), can generate \$7,700 in net weekly profits, according to Peter Guerra of Black Hat, a digital security company.

Cybercriminals can profit from their activities because inadequate national and global legal frameworks make it difficult for law enforcement authorities to catch them. The ever-increasing reliance of businesses, governments and individuals on computer networks creates more opportunities for cybercrime, and its low-risk/high-profit nature attracts an increasing number of cybergangs, according to Karthik Kannan of Purdue University's Krannert School of Management.

Complaints of online crime hit a re-

cord high of more than 27,000 in the United States in 2008, according to the Internet Crime Complaint Center, a public-private research group. The center estimates that Internet fraud reached \$265 million that year.

"If we want to make progress against cybercrime, we need to change the economics of cybersecurity," Kannan said. This means raising the cost and risk for criminals while making defenses cheaper, a task that he said is not easy.

THE PRICE OF CYBER-ATTACKS

Many corporate executives do not truly appreciate the gravity of cyberthreats, according to experts. Laws, regulation and policies have lagged behind increasing crime as the use of the Internet has grown exponentially, several studies say.

In developed countries, companies may strengthen cyberdefenses only when relevant regulations are introduced, according to a 2009 study commissioned by McAfee Inc., a computer software security developer. Fewer than a third of U.S. companies are committed to adopt the best cyberpractices because most companies fail to see the link between cybersecurity and good management, according to the annual industry survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. Half the U.S. executives surveyed did not even know how much money their firms had lost through attacks, the survey said.

Nailing down the scope of financial losses is difficult. Bruce Schneier, founder and chief technology officer of Counterpane, a computer secu-

rity company, said a modest infection by malicious software could cost a small company \$83,000 a year. "The larger a company is, and the deeper an infection goes, the



New Zealand teen Owen Walker's computer hacking skills allowed a crime network to infiltrate more than 1 million computers worldwide.

higher the costs," he wrote in a 2005 report.

On average, cybercrime costs a company more than \$500,000 a year, according to Kevin Coleman, a management consultant. A 2007 Government Accountability Office report estimates the total U.S. business losses due to cyberattacks exceed \$117.5 billion per year. This may be just the tip of the iceberg, many analysts say.

Scott Borg, who established and runs the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit, an independent research

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Low-Risk, High-Profit Opportunities Drive Up Cybercrime . . .

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group, said the economic impact of essential corporate information lost to cyberthieves "is much bigger ... than credit card fraud, which is pretty big." On the other hand, he said, many claims about the costs of cyber-attacks, particularly denial-of-service attacks, are wildly inflated.

Cybercrime also causes intangible losses such as tarnished reputations and lost customer trust. Some cyber-incidents go unnoticed for months and, even when detected, may be covered up by technical staff or executives to avoid liability issues. As attackers become more business savvy, they steal information essential to companies' competitive positions.

The international consulting firm Deloitte & Touche LLP estimates the global private-sector losses in intellectual property due to cybercrime at around \$1 trillion. The McAfee report noted how difficult it is to measure the impact of a weakened company's competitive position because a reduced market

share may only manifest itself after several years.

STRENGTHENING CYBERDEFENSES

Cyberdefenses need not be expensive. The Central Intelligence Agency's chief of information assurance, Robert Bigman, told an October 2008 conference that between 80 percent and 90 percent of attacks could be prevented through "due diligence."

Trying to fashion an effective response to attacks has become more challenging as increasing numbers of government computer systems are infected with malicious software. The Department of Homeland Security logged 5,499 such incidents in 2008 — a 40 percent increase over the previous year. Deputy Defense Secretary William Lynn says his department spent more than \$100 million defending its networks during the first six months of 2008.

Attacks on critical infrastructure are another huge concern. A cyber-attack on the electricity grid, which

could cut the power supply to one-third of the country for three months, would generate losses close to \$800 billion, according to Borg. But the total expenditures necessary to recover from these losses, including the costs of restoring, restarting, and making up lost production, would be much greater — around \$3 trillion, he added.

The global economic crisis could weaken existing defenses. Spending and staff cuts could lead to more porous defenses and increased opportunities for cybercrime that may attract laid off software engineers, Borg said.

The full text of the McAfee Inc. report (<http://resources.mcafee.com/content/NAUnsecuredEconomiesReport>) is available on the company's Web site.

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

United States and Angola Are Natural Business Partners . . .

(Continued from page 10)

TIFA meeting to be held in Luanda in 2010.

Speaking for the Angolans, Tiago Gomes of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Angola said more than 50 Angolan business people have traveled to the summit in search of business deals. The size of such a delegation, he said in Portuguese, stands as a true sign of Angola's commitment to doing

business with the United States.

The Angolan government is seeking to build 1 million new homes in Angola, which could represent a major investment opportunity for U.S. business, he said. The Angolan government is also creating new economic zones to spur development, he added, and wants to increase industrial output by some 40 percent.

Summing up, he told his audience: "This is the moment to visit Angola."

The summit, which runs September 29–October 1, is sponsored by the Corporate Council on Africa.

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

Muslim Americans Mix Old and New Traditions in Eid Celebrations

By Howard Cincotta
Special Correspondent

Washington — Despite its size, Al-Farooq Masjid (mosque) of Atlanta, Georgia — a soaring structure of stone, travertine marble and elaborate brickwork — was filled with worshippers for Eid-al-Fitr prayer services marking the end of Ramadan on September 20.

“We had about 4,500 worshippers. They were packed upstairs, downstairs, even in the stairwell,” said Khalid Saddiq, public relations director for Atlanta Masjid. Eid services were also held at other locations around Atlanta, including three shifts of prayer services at the convention-sized North Atlanta Trade Center.

The crowds at Atlanta Masjid reflect the region’s large and growing Muslim population, now estimated at 75,000. But the fact that Eid fell on a normal Sunday holiday this year increased the numbers, Saddiq points out.

After the service, worshippers gathered in native dress and traditional Islamic attire, highlighting the diversity of Atlanta’s Muslim-American community. Families came from more than 50 countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Malaysia.

FAITH AND TRADITION

In many respects, American Muslims, whatever their backgrounds, celebrate Eid and the completion of a month of Ramadan fasting — one of the five pillars of Islam — much like the rest of the more than 1 billion Muslims around the world.



Al-Farooq Masjid of Atlanta

“Eid is a day of celebrating, a day of harvest, a day of forgiveness, reconciliations and a day of peace,” wrote Mohammed Khaku, past president of the Al-Ahad Islamic Center in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Following special prayer services, which include donations to the poor, Eid festivities revolve around family gatherings, gift giving, and meals with traditional foods that usually include a variety of sweet dishes.

President Obama marked the occasion with a White House statement extending personal greetings from himself and his wife, Michelle. “Eid is a time to celebrate the completion of 30 days and nights of devotion.”

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recalled that her husband,

then-President Bill Clinton, held the White House’s first Eid celebration in 1996.

“This time of self-reflection reminds us that the values of Islam — charity, community, cooperation, compassion — are values that we hold dear as Americans, and which have contributed so much to American culture,” Secretary Clinton said.

COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

Eid traditions can vary by family, mosque and regions of the country. In Atlanta, Saddiq and his family participated in Chand Raat, or night of the moon, which is celebrated throughout South Asia on the night before Eid.

They visited an Atlanta bazaar with stalls offering gifts, holiday clothing and henna hand painting, which is

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Muslim Americans Mix Old and New Traditions in Eid Celebrations . . .

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especially popular with young girls.

Mostafa Tolba, director of the Muslim American Society's Quranic Institute in Detroit, has seen two big changes in Eid celebrations over the past decade. One is much less isolation of individual mosques consisting of members from a single ethnic group, whether Egyptian, Pakistani or Yemeni.

"Today, there is much more mixing of people of every background, a sense that we are one nation, Americans," he said.

The other change is greater knowledge of astronomy, he observed with some relief, which has almost ended old arguments about when the sighting of the new moon marks the end of Ramadan.

His family, which includes seven children and one grandchild, serves traditional Arabian food on Eid, plus an American tradition: pizza.

Living in Los Angeles, Salaam Al-Marayati and his family can take advantage of a somewhat newer activity: celebrating Eid at one of the area's famous amusement parks — Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, Magic Mountain or Universal Studios Hollywood, among others.

"Eid with Mickey Mouse," Marayati

said with a laugh.

On a more serious note, Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, said Ramadan fasting in the United States can be a tougher challenge than in other countries. The whole pace of life changes in Muslim countries, he pointed out, with a slower schedule during the day and more activity at night.

"But in America, there's no real change with work and the rest of society," Marayati said. His 15-year-old son faced a difficult challenge with fasting during football, especially the problem of dehydration.

"I told him to give it a try — that there are more important things than the game," Marayati said. His son made it through Ramadan successfully. The head coach wasn't too thrilled with a fasting player, but an assistant coach simply told his son, "Good for you."

SALES, SHOPPING AND CHILDREN

Eid celebrations hardly approach the scale of traditional American holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas, but that hasn't deterred retailers.

Hallmark, the nation's largest greeting card company, has offered Eid cards since 2003.

Eid gifts are not yet a common sight in U.S. department stores, but a retailer like Online-Islamic-Store.com, based in Columbia, Maryland, sells a wide range of Eid items. They include cards, gift bags, picture books, CDs — and a 24-centimeter-high "Happy Eid Mosque" paper statuette.

Looking for an "After Eid" sale? Try Shukr, an Islamic clothing company with online stores in the United States, Canada and Britain. Shukr has its headquarters and "physical" retail stores in Jordan and Syria, although it hopes to expand to North America in the future.

One sign that Eid in the United States is growing in visibility: complaints that it is becoming overly "commercialized," echoing a traditional complaint about Christmas.

Marayati of the Muslim Public Affairs Council isn't too worried, since Eid is preceded by the discipline of Ramadan. Still, at the beginning of Ramadan, Marayati posted a wry note on his Facebook page: "Only 33 more shopping days until Eid."

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

Women's Issues to Be Major Focus of U.S. Policy

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Women's issues will be the "centerpiece of my term as secretary of state," Hillary Rodham Clinton told a gathering of female heads of state and foreign ministers September 24.

"I have advocated for many years that women are the key to progress and prosperity around the world," Clinton told the luncheon guests, who were in New York City to participate in the opening of the 64th annual United Nations General Assembly.

"There are people who say, well, women's issues is an important issue, but it doesn't rank up there with the Middle East or Iran's nuclear threat or Afghanistan and Pakistan. I could not disagree more. I think women are key to our being able to resolve all of those difficult conflicts, as well as provide for a better future," Clinton said.

"We know that investments in women yield very big dividends, and we want women to be given the tools so that they can make the most out of their own lives," Clinton said. "But what I have concluded over the years is that talent is universal, but opportunity is not. And in many places, opportunity is still out of reach for women. No matter how smart they are, how hard they work, how much encouragement they might be given even by their own families ... it is still a very difficult task."

The Obama White House has aggressively promoted women's is-

ssues both in the United States and abroad. Earlier this year President Obama created a new position at the White House now held by Lynn Rosenthal to advise the president and vice president on domestic violence and sexual assault issues in the United States.

President Obama also created a new position at the U.S. Department of State: ambassador at large for global women's issues. Melanne Verveer, who has a long career working for the advancement of women, was appointed to mobilize concrete support worldwide for women's rights and to combat violence against women and girls in all its forms.

Clinton told the women leaders that at the upcoming session of the U.N. Security Council the United States will take steps to improve the U.N. response to sexual violence committed during armed conflict. The United States is sponsoring a resolution that will not only promote commitment to women's empowerment but will also call for the appointment of a special representative of the U.N. secretary-general "to lead, coordinate and advocate for efforts to end sexual violence in armed conflict," Clinton said.

The United Nations is showing greater commitment to women's issues as a core issue, an improvement Clinton said she particularly appreciates. In August, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a report outlining the responsibility of states and other parties to prevent and respond to sexual violence. He urged the General Assembly to create a U.N. institution to improve

gender equality and women's human rights.

Clinton — the third female secretary of state in U.S. history — long has championed respect for women and their full participation in economic, political and social life. Her famous speech in Beijing in 1995, when she declared that "human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights," inspired women worldwide.

For more on the U.S. effort, see "Clinton's Message on Gender-Based Violence Resonates Worldwide" (<http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2009/August/20090820123635ajesrom0.6619226.html>) and "United States Pledges \$17 Million to Aid Rape Survivors in DRC" (<http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2009/August/20090812125153kjleinad0.3854639.html>).

A transcript of Clinton's comments at the luncheon (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/September/20090925154541xjsnommis0.8576471.html>) is available on America.gov.

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

U.S. Launches Multibillion-Dollar Effort to Fight Global Hunger

By Phil Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is getting back into the work of helping poor, developing countries increase their agricultural output, a policy it abandoned nearly three decades ago, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said.

“We moved away from investments in agricultural productivity, toward emergency food aid [in 1981],” Clinton said in a speech at the Clinton Global Initiative in New York September 25. “Revitalizing global agriculture will not be easy. In fact, this is one of the most ambitious and comprehensive diplomacy and development efforts our country has ever undertaken.”

Former President Bill Clinton, in introductory remarks for his wife, said that the United States and other wealthy nations abandoned agricultural development policies aimed at poor countries with the “naive notion” that the rich countries would just give food to hungry nations in a way that would bring economic benefit to the food-exporting countries.

“It persisted through Democratic and Republican administrations alike, including mine,” said the former president, who left office in 2001. Secretary Clinton said that the Obama administration pledged at the G8 Summit in July to spend a minimum of \$3.5 billion during the next three years to help poor

countries improve food production. That is the U.S. contribution to the total G8 pledge of \$20 billion to overcome hunger in poor countries.

Clinton said the world’s typical small farmer is a woman living in a village in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks at the Clinton Global Initiative in New York, September 25, 2009. REUTERS/Chip East

or Latin America, who farms a piece of land that she does not own. She rises before dawn daily, walks kilometers to collect water and works all day in a field, sometimes with a baby strapped to her back.

“If she’s lucky, drought, blight or pests don’t destroy her crops, and she raises enough to feed her family and maybe has some left over to sell. But there’s no road to the nearest market, and no one to buy from her anyway. Everyone else is as poor as she is,” Clinton said. In contrast to the female farmer, Clinton said, a young man lives in a crowded city 120 kilometers away,

where he has no job or a job that pays pennies. When he goes to a market, he finds food that is rotting or priced beyond his reach. “He is hungry and often angry,” Clinton said. “The daily effort to grow, buy or sell food is the defining struggle of their lives.”

The Obama administration’s policy of agricultural development will be guided by five principles, according to Clinton:

Allow each country to define its agricultural investment needs.

Address the underlying causes of hunger, and put women at the heart of efforts to find solutions. “We have seen again and again, in microfinance and other programs, that women are entrepreneurial, accountable and practical. They invest their earnings in their families and communities. And they pay back loans at a higher rate than is the norm,” she said.

Improve coordination at the country, regional and global levels to avoid duplication of efforts.

Use multilateral development organizations, such as the World Bank.

Stay the course. “It may take years, even decades, before we reach the finish line. But we’re going to give it all we have, in the time that we are able to,” Clinton said.

“This is one of the most ambitious and comprehensive diplomatic and development efforts our country has ever undertaken,” Clinton said. “But it can and will be done.” ♦

U.N. Conference Calls for Sustainable Farming to End Hunger

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Enabling the world's poor to feed themselves through sustainable farming will help alleviate the crises caused by one of the most urgent threats facing the world: chronic hunger and its consequences, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

"This is an issue that affects all of us, because food security is about economic, environmental and national security for our individual homelands and the world," Clinton said September 26 at a food security conference co-hosted by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during the U.N. General Assembly in New York. Representatives from 130 countries, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations attended the brief conference to address the underlying causes of global hunger.

Food shortages swept across the globe in 2008, threatening the security of more than 50 nations and millions of people, toppling governments in some of the poorest areas as people suffering from chronic hunger lashed out at governments. The Group of Eight industrialized economies meeting in Italy in July committed \$20 billion over three years to alleviate chronic food hunger through sustainable farming. At the Group of 20 meeting just held in Pittsburgh, the leaders committed an additional \$2 billion. The United States is contributing \$3.5 billion

for its portion of the effort.

The G20 nations called on the World Bank and relief agencies to establish a multilateral trust fund that would expand investment in agricultural assistance in the poorest nations. A world food summit is planned for November.



US Secretary Clinton (L) greets UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (R) at a meeting on food security at UN Headquarters in New York City. (AFP/Getty Images/Michael Nagle)

"There is more than enough food in the world, yet today, more than 1 billion people are hungry. This is unacceptable," Ban said.

The food riots have largely disappeared as nations rushed food assistance and supported efforts by the World Food Programme to address immediate shortages. But Ban said the shortages and disparities serve to illustrate that the current approaches to food relief are inadequate. "The food crisis is far from over. Ever more people are denied the food they need because prices are stubbornly high, because their purchasing power has fallen due to the economic crisis or because rains

have failed and reserve stocks of grain have been eaten," Ban said.

Efforts should fight the underlying causes of hunger by investing in everything from research to better seeds to insurance programs for small farmers to large-scale infrastructure projects that create sustainable, systemic change, Clinton said, drawing from objectives proposed at the July G8 summit. She also called for improved coordination to avoid duplicating efforts that drain resources.

The food conference called for support for ongoing reform processes aimed at improved efficiency and effectiveness of international organizations, including the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

To help fulfill country plans, Clinton proposed leveraging the benefits of multilateral institutions because they have the reach and resources to help more than one country.

Clinton said developed nations should pledge a long-term commitment that is based on accountability.

"We will continue, of course, to invest in the crises and the emergencies, but we want to begin to try to alleviate the crises and the emergencies by once again enabling people to feed themselves," Clinton said. "Together, these principles represent an approach based on investments in our collective future. And they will help us achieve broad-based results that last." ♦

Successful HIV Vaccine Study Will Lead to Further Research

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Medical researchers in Thailand have developed an approach to prevent HIV the same way it has been treated, by using a combination vaccine to successfully halt the spread of the disease.

Public health officials announced September 24 in Bangkok that they successfully used two previously unsuccessful HIV vaccines in combination in a large, six-year study to prevent people from getting HIV, which causes AIDS. The vaccines used in the study cannot cause HIV infection because they are not made from and do not contain the whole virus, active or dead, the medical researchers said.

The combination vaccine cut the risk in 16,402 Thai volunteers by 31.2 percent, Thai Health Minister Witthaya Kaewparadai reported at a briefing. "The result of the study is a very important step for developing an AIDS vaccine. It's the first time in the world that we have found a vaccine that can prevent HIV infection," Kaewparadai told reporters. Researchers say the results are not enough to go ahead immediately with widespread production of the combo vaccine using the "prime-boost" approach developed in Thailand. Normally, vaccine results have to exceed 50 percent before being accepted for general use, medical researchers say.

STUDY BEGAN IN 2003

The study, which began in October 2003, was conducted by the Thai Ministry of Public Health with funding and support from the U.S. Army's Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which is part of the National Institutes of Health based in Washington. The principal investigator was Dr. Supachai Rerks-Ngarm of the Thai Ministry of Public Health's Department of Disease Control.



Thai Health Minister Witthaya Kaewparadai announces results of a six-year HIV vaccine study.

Thailand was selected for the \$105 million study because U.S. Army medical researchers had conducted initial

research when the HIV/AIDS epidemic first emerged there in the 1990s, identifying and isolating virus strains and providing the virus's genetic information to vaccine makers. The study was conducted with the full support of the Thai government because the country had an emerging problem with AIDS when the study began.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) began support work for this trial 18 years ago, in 1991, when Thailand was recommended as one of the WHO-sponsored countries in preparation for HIV vaccine trials.

A study in 2006 by the HIV Vac-

cine Advisory Committee found that the "trial was being conducted at the highest scientific and ethical standards and with active community participation."

The study, the largest in HIV vaccine history, was conducted in the Rayong and Chonburi provinces with 16,402 men and women ages 18 to 30 who were at various levels of risk for HIV infection, the NIAID said. These provinces were selected because the populations in both are generally stable.

"We thank the trial staff in Thailand and the United States for their years of effort in successfully conducting this study and the study participants and the people of Thailand for their long-standing support of HIV vaccine research," said NIAID Director Dr. Anthony Fauci. "These new findings represent an important step forward in HIV vaccine research."

Thai men and women were given either a placebo or the "prime-boost" combination of the vaccine ALVAC, from Sanofi Pasteur SA, which is the vaccine division of French drug maker Sanofi-Aventis; and the vaccine AIDSVAX, originally developed by VaxGen Inc. and now held by Global Solutions for Infectious Diseases, a nonprofit organization created by former VaxGen employees.

Half of the volunteers received four "priming" doses of ALVAC and two "boost" doses of AIDSVAX over a six-month period. The other half received dummy doses of a placebo. The volunteers were tested for HIV every six months for three years after the vaccinations ended.

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Successful HIV Vaccine Study Will Lead to Further Research . . .

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NIAID said the vaccines are based on the B and E strains of HIV that commonly circulate in Thailand. Researchers readily acknowledge that they do not know why the combination works to prevent HIV infection, and that it is unlikely the combination would work in the United States, where only the B strain is most common, in Africa or elsewhere in the world.

In previous HIV vaccine trials, neither ALVAC nor AIDSVAX proved effective in preventing HIV infection when used alone, researchers said, but when used in a prime-boost approach they tend to work. The first vaccine, ALVAC, primes the body's immune system to attack HIV, and the second vaccine, AIDSVAX, strengthens the body's immune response, researchers said.

The volunteers were given thorough briefings on the potential risks associated with receiving the experimental vaccine before agreeing to participate. All were given condoms, counseling and treatment for any other sexually transmitted diseases. On each clinic visit, each volunteer was counseled on how to avoid becoming infected with HIV. Any volunteer who became infected with HIV was given free treatment with anti-retroviral therapy based on the guidelines of the Thai Ministry of Public Health.

"For the first time, an investigational HIV vaccine has demonstrated some ability to prevent HIV infection among vaccinated individuals. Additional research is

needed to better understand how this vaccine regimen reduced the risk of HIV infection, but certainly this is an encouraging advance for the HIV vaccine field," Fauci said.

NIAID and its partners are working with other scientific experts to determine the next steps, including additional research of the vaccine regimen and the need to consider the impact of these new findings on other HIV vaccine candidates, NIAID said.

ADDITIONAL STUDIES NEEDED

A conference is being held in New York during the week of September 28-October 2 with dozens of re-



A Thai technician works on blood samples of volunteers at a lab at the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences in Bangkok, Thailand Friday, Sept. 25, 2009.

searchers, vaccine makers, major research donors and HIV/AIDS groups to determine where to go next. At the conference will be medical researchers from Thailand, the U.S. Army, NIAID and independent researchers.

U.S. Army Colonel Jerome Kim, an infectious disease expert and the Army HIV vaccine product manager at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research's Division of Retrovirology, said researchers now will try

to understand why the vaccine worked in some people and how the combo vaccine blocks infections.

"Additional studies are clearly needed to better understand how this vaccine regimen reduced the risk of HIV infection," Kim said. Lieutenant General Eric Schoomaker, the Army surgeon general and commander of the U.S. Army Medical Command, said the Thai study results are important, but modest.

"I'm pleased and proud to announce the results of the trial, which for the first time ever have shown that it is possible for a vaccine to reduce the risk of HIV infection in humans," Schoomaker said September 24 in Washington. "Although the level of protection is modest, at 31 percent efficacy, the study represents a major scientific achievement."

"Military medicine is interested in research that improves global health and makes the world safer for everyone," he added.

WHO and UNAIDS said in a joint statement that the study results, representing a significant scientific advance, are the first demonstration that a vaccine can prevent HIV infection in a general adult population, and characterized the results as modestly protective.

"However, these results have instilled new hope in the HIV vaccine research field and promise that a safe and highly effective HIV vaccine may become available for populations throughout the world who are most in need of such a vaccine," the statement said. ♦

Reducing Poverty While Cutting Carbon Emissions

By Harry Surjadi

Harry Surjadi, founder and executive director of the Society of Indonesian Environmental Journalists, has reported on environmental issues for two decades. A graduate of Bogor Agricultural University, he has written for magazines and newspapers, and he now maintains an environment blog on the Internet. He was a Knight International Journalism Fellow, and has given workshops to journalists and nongovernmental organizations in Indonesia.



By Harry Surjadi

In Indonesia, the impacts of climate change will be most keenly felt by the poor, as extreme weather upsets agriculture and drives up food prices. Staving off poverty is a critical component of climate change policies, Surjadi writes.

How many Indonesians have ever read or heard about the issue of global warming and climate change? Studies have shown that climate change awareness is increasing, but this is largely among the educated.

According to an ACNielsen Omnibus survey in six Indonesian cities in February 2007, 70 percent of the 1,700 people surveyed said they had not read or heard anything about the issue of global warming. Only 28 percent said they had. The same study found that 50 percent of people surveyed attributed rapid global warming to human activities like driving cars and other uses of fossil fuels. Only 24 percent said the causes are natural changes in the climate, while 25 percent said

both nature and human activity were factors. About 76 percent considered climate change “fairly serious” or “very serious.”

One year later, in March 2008, people surveyed who were aware of climate change increased 3 per-

cent, and significantly more of them considered climate change very serious. Mass media successfully educated these people that climate change is a serious threat to Indonesia.

But have 43 million farmers, fishers, and local people who depend on forests read or heard about climate change? Have many of the 32.5 million Indonesians under the poverty line ever read or heard about global warming and climate change? Probably not.

If they had, and were asked, “What are the most serious threats climate change presents to Indonesia?” their answers would be scarcity of basic necessities. Their greatest concern is greater poverty and the lack of food and water, whether this comes from climate change or other causes.

Studies have shown global warming will likely increase the frequency and intensity of drought and floods in many areas. Three major El Niños, in 1973, 1983, and 1997,

caused severe drought in Indonesia. Hundreds of rice paddy fields have failed harvests due to drought. Hundreds of thousands of people living in more than 50 villages across Central Java Regency now face a shortage of clean water as an ongoing drought worsens.

Extreme weather affects agriculture and can raise prices for staple foods, such as rice, important to poor households. Indonesians who earn less than \$2 a day will suffer first, and the number of poor people will increase. Poverty is Indonesia’s greatest concern, and climate change will increase the number of poor people and worsen their poverty.

Meanwhile, Indonesia will continue to emit carbon dioxide (CO₂). In 2005 Indonesia was already the world’s third-largest CO₂ emitter, after the United States and China, with emissions around 2.2 gigatons, or billion tons, CO₂ per annum. A study conducted by McKinsey and Company, a consultant company for the Indonesian government’s Climate Change National Council (CCNC), predicted that Indonesia’s greenhouse gas emissions would increase by 2 percent annually.

According to CCNC Secretary General Agus Purnomo, in 2020 emissions were expected to jump to 2.8 gigatons CO₂ and then to 3.6 gigatons by 2030, if Indonesia takes no action. The main sources of emissions — responsible for 80 percent of the total projected 2030 emissions — are deforestation and peat land clearing, transportation, and power plants. The forestry sector contributes about 850 million tons CO₂ equivalent per year. The defor-

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Congressional Complexities Challenge Climate Change Efforts

By Carlyn Reichel
Staff Writer

Washington — While President Obama has pledged a U.S. commitment to lead the campaign against the dangers of climate change through global partnerships, a complicating factor confronting such sweeping international efforts is the need to obtain approval from sometimes reluctant national legislatures.

The United States Constitution authorizes the president to negotiate treaties with foreign governments, but stipulates that the U.S. Senate must ratify them with a two-thirds majority vote before they can become binding on the United States — a requirement that has stymied many presidents' efforts over the years. That means at least 67 of 100 senators must approve any treaty on climate change and emissions reduction that comes out of this December's United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting for it to constitute binding U.S. policy.

Although the United States was a signatory to the 1998 Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, it was never ratified by the Senate.

Acknowledging such past failures to "recognize the magnitude of the climate threat," President Obama described a fundamental shift in the U.S. attitude when he addressed U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Summit on Climate Change September 22. Obama touted the progress his administration has already made on the issue. "I am proud to say that the United States has done more to promote clean



President Obama addresses the U.N. Summit on Climate Change September 22 before the 64th session of the U.N. General Assembly.

energy and reduce carbon pollution in the last eight months that at any other time in our history," he said.

One of the first bills Obama signed into law, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, included more than \$80 billion for clean-energy investment. Earlier this summer, Obama directed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Transportation Department to implement a new policy aimed at reducing greenhouse gas pollution by increasing fuel-economy standards for passenger vehicles.

By 2016, all new cars and trucks will be required to average 35.5 miles per gallon (15 kilometers per

liter), up from the current standard of 27.5 mpg for cars and 22.5 mpg for light trucks, including sport utility vehicles. This change alone is projected to save 6.8 billion liters of oil.

Another piece of legislation, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, passed the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this year and is awaiting action in the Senate. This bill sets out policy to cut U.S. carbon dioxide emissions 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020 and 83 percent by 2050 — targets comparable to those set by European Union nations and other developed countries.

Michael Froman, deputy national security advisor for international economic affairs, called the House bill a "seismic change" in U.S. climate change policy.

The administration has made enacting a climate-change and clean-energy bill a priority in advance of the December Copenhagen meeting to underscore the U.S. commitment to action. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern testified earlier this month before the House Select Committee for Energy Independence and Global Warming that "nothing the United States can do is more important for the international negotiation process than passing robust, comprehensive clean-energy legislation as soon as possible." While the president has expressed confidence that progress is being made to move an energy bill through the Senate, it is ultimately up to Senate leadership, not the president, to determine how quickly a bill moves from its committee to a Senate vote.

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Telling America's story

Congressional Complexities Challenge Climate . . .

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Even if an energy bill passes the Senate in the next few months, it is unlikely to be identical to the bill that passed the House in June. The two versions would go to a congressional conference committee where representatives from both chambers work to reconcile the differences.

The new bill that emerges from the conference committee then must be approved again by both the House and Senate before it can go to the president for his signature into law.

The constitutional process suggests that U.S. negotiators may have to go to Copenhagen without the guidance of a national law limiting emissions. This is not stopping the momentum in other areas of the government, however.

"We want comprehensive energy legislation, but in the meantime we're using the laws on the books to make a very important down payment," said Carol Browner, assistant

to the president for energy and climate change. In addition to the new fuel economy standards, the EPA on September 22 made final the first mandatory reporting requirement for facilities to publicly disclose their greenhouse gas emissions. The requirement takes effect January 1, 2010.

"Taken together," Obama said, "these steps represent a historic recognition on behalf of the American people and their government. We understand the gravity of the climate threat. We are determined to act. And we will meet our responsibility to future generations."

A transcript of Obama's remarks to the climate change summit (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/September/20090922114641eaifas0.2394678.html>) is available on America.gov. ♦

Reducing Poverty While Cutting Carbon Emissions . . .

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estation rate is around 1 million hectares per year, which emitted 562 million tons CO₂e. Degraded forest is responsible for 211 million tons CO₂e per year. And forest fires are responsible for 77 million tons CO₂e.

According to the McKinsey study, Indonesia could potentially reduce emissions 64 percent, or as much as 2.3 gigatons of CO₂, by 2030 through the adoption of 150 different programs focused on forestry, peat land, and agriculture sectors.

It is clear that developed countries can help Indonesia to mitigate climate change. The CCNC, based on the McKinsley study, recommended bilateral cooperation with developed countries on programs

to halt or reduce deforestation and encourage reforestation. The study estimated the cost to reduce emissions from the forestry sector is about 7 euros (approximately \$10 U.S.) for every one ton of CO₂ equivalent. To implement programs to reduce emissions about 1.1 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent per year, Indonesia would need \$10.8 billion of funding.

But the government must take responsibility and move more quickly. "It takes five years [for the government] to change. In five years we need help from outside world. The outside world should show the money. Money is the easiest policy tool to get real and fast results," said Purnomo in a recent interview.

The developed countries should make sure every dollar or euro they invest addresses not only climate change mitigation, but also safeguards Indonesians against poverty. Reducing poverty is a main goal of all emissions reduction programs.

"At the end of the day," says Purnomo, "the government of Indonesia can only create an enabling environment."

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

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