



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

Statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Meeting with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi

Today, I met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and representatives of the Ethiopian government to discuss issues of bilateral importance to both of our nations, with a focus on Ethiopia's relations with Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea. Other areas of discussion included regional security and fighting terrorism; democracy and human rights; economic development and food security; and public health concerns such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice shakes hand with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi during their meeting at the National Palace

During today's meeting, we emphasized the need for a comprehensive ceasefire agreement to be forged between Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and non-extremist opposition groups, which would help prevent further violence and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Mogadishu. We also discussed the need for the TFG to urgently resume the transitional political process outlined by the Transitional Federal Charter leading towards national elections in 2009. On Sudan, I encouraged Prime Minister Meles to send Ethiopian troops pledged to the United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) as soon as possible, and to work with Khartoum to allow UNAMID deployments, including non-African troops, to move forward unhindered. I also urged the Prime Minister to avoid any acts that might heighten friction between Eritrea and Ethiopia and to take concrete steps to lessen tensions on the border. There must not be a resumption of hostilities initiated by either side. We also discussed the importance of strengthening democratic institutions in Ethiopia and the issue of food security, with a specific focus on ensuring unrestricted commercial food delivery throughout the country, including the Ogaden. ♦

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Statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Somalia Consultations

Today, I met with key regional leaders, representatives of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), as well as representatives from the African Union and United Nations to discuss the regional strategy to help restore lasting peace and stability in Somalia, including efforts to support the full and timely deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and progress towards national elections in 2009.



Secretary Rice (center) at the Somalia Consultations meeting with the Somali and Ethiopian Delegations

During today's meeting, I encouraged the TFG, following the appointment of Prime Minister Nur "Adde" Hassan

Hussein, to renew and revitalize efforts towards a lasting political solution based on the Transitional Federal Charter. I hope Prime Minister Hussein will draw on his humanitarian background to help facilitate delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid. A ceasefire agreement with key stakeholders, such as clan and business leaders, would be an important step in helping to facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance, and would reduce the level of violence and create the conditions for longer-term security sector reform. I also encouraged Prime Minister Hussein to develop a timeline for the remainder of the transitional process by early January, including the drafting of a new constitution and electoral law, as the first step in this process. ♦

Statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Sudan Ministerial



Secretary Rice at the Sudan Ministerial meeting

This meeting underscores the international community's commitment to working with the Sudanese to see the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) implemented quickly. The CPA – an historic accord that ended 21 years of a brutal civil war – provides the best framework for a peaceful, democratic Sudan. The parties to this agreement are obligated to make every effort to guarantee its success.

This meeting also demonstrates broad commitment from states in the region and partners around the world to support the North and the South as they work to solve disputes like the Abyei boundary, conduct a census, and move to deploy their troops in accordance with the CPA. Free, fair and transparent elections in 2009, as stipulated by the CPA, are the best hope of building and sustaining a unified Sudan.

We also urge all players in Sudan to end the violence in Darfur and to support everyone in the country who wants peace, security, and prosperity for themselves and their children. ♦

Statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Progress Toward Great Lakes Stability

We welcome this opportunity to support our Great Lakes partners as they work together to forge a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future for their people. I am here to underscore the commitment of the United States to your success. Our shared goals are the promotion of dialogue among governments, the dissolution of negative forces, and the establishment of regional security mechanisms. These goals must be achieved to ensure the protection of civilians and to eliminate the scourge of gender-based violence as a weapon of war.

We are proud that the United States is a major provider of humanitarian assistance to the conflict areas of eastern Congo and the Great Lakes region as a whole. The United States remains committed to providing humanitarian assistance to address the current emergency in eastern Congo. We look forward to the full and rapid implementation of provisions of the November 9 Nairobi communique as a major step toward eliminating the threat of violence and enabling development as we press for peace, safety, respect for human rights and justice for all of the people of the Great Lakes region. ♦



Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Summary of Conclusions Tripartite Plus Joint Commission Member States Meeting

Statement by Sean McCormack, Spokesman

The following is a Summary of Conclusions of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission issued in Addis Ababa today.

Begin Text:

1. Senior officials of member states of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, facilitated by the United States of America, met in Addis Ababa on December 4, 2007, to discuss a range of mutual concerns in continuing efforts to achieve lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Representatives of the Republic of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Rwanda and the Republic of Uganda reaffirmed their common objective to eliminate the threat to regional peace and security posed by the negative forces and agreed to strengthen regional security mechanisms, including the resumption of full diplomatic relations among the four member states.

Ending the Threat from Armed Groups

2. *Nairobi Communiqué*

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Tripartite Plus member states welcomed and committed to support the November 9 Communiqué signed in Nairobi between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda. They called for full implementation of this communiqué that lays out a common approach to ending the threat posed to both Rwanda and the DRC by the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe and recognizes the additional threat posed by other armed groups in the Eastern Congo.

3. Ex-FAR/Interahamwe

Member state delegations welcomed

deposition of the general plan of action by the Government of the DRC, according to the deadline established by the Nairobi Communiqué. They took note of the Congolese Government's intention and determination to end the threat posed by the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe through implementation of the plan, including political/ diplomatic means and accompanying public information and sensitization campaigns, and through military operations

planned to begin in mid-March and to be completed with urgency. The member states supported continued collaboration between the governments of the DRC and Rwanda to end this threat. Following the

4. Irregular Congolese Armed Groups

Tripartite Plus member states expressed their support to the Government of the DRC in its efforts to



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (Center) flanked by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and President Nkurunziza of Burundi on her right, and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Minister of State for Interior, Denis Kalume of DRC on her left at a press conference following the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission meeting in Addis Ababa, December 5, 2007

planned operations against the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe and evaluation of their results, the Heads of State are prepared to convene again to consider next steps. Member state delegations urged the United Nations Security Council to pass a specific resolution establishing sanctions against the Ex-Far/Interahamwe as called for by the Nairobi Communiqué.

end the threat posed by irregular Congolese Armed Groups, in particular the forces of General Laurent Nkunda, as noted in the Nairobi Communiqué. Among the irregular armed groups in Congo are the Mai-Mai, PARECO, and others. Building on the communiqué between the governments of the DRC and Rwanda, the four delegations agreed to strengthen border controls to prevent illicit cross-border

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(Continued from page 4)

movement of combatants or recruits and to refrain from aiding and abetting any armed group. Member delegations condemned the resumption of hostilities in North Kivu and called on all troops of dissident General Nkunda to, without delay, either join the process of DDR or to integrate within the Congolese armed forces according to modalities determined by the Government of the DRC.

5. Joint Verification Commission

Delegations of the Tripartite Plus member states welcomed the commitment of the DRC and Rwanda to reestablish and make operational quickly the Joint Verification Commission (JVC) established by the two governments to investigate reported security transgressions. The United States of America accepted the invitation of the two parties to participate in the JVC.

6. Ngurdoto-Tanzania Agreement

Delegations welcomed the Ngurdoto-Tanzania Agreement signed on 8 September 2007 between the Uganda and DRC but expressed concern about the delay in its implementation. They agreed that issues which need urgent action to be immediately implemented as a priority and the Joint Permanent Commission, which is due to convene from 12 to 15 December 2007 in Uganda, to work out implementation mechanisms for the rest of the Agreement.

7. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

Tripartite member states noted the continued threat of other negative forces in eastern Congo, in particu-

lar the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). They commended the Government of the DRC for its active collaboration with the Government of Uganda for the return of certain LRA leaders in Uganda and encouraged the Government of the DRC to continue its efforts in this regard. They urged the LRA to be committed to Juba negotiations so that a peaceful settlement can be quickly concluded, stressing that these talks must not continue indefinitely. They called on the LRA to implement previous agreements, including its agreement to leave the Congo and assemble at Rikwangba in southern Sudan. Should the Juba peace process not have concluded successfully by January 31, 2008, the Government of the DRC reaffirms its September 8, 2007 commitment at Arusha, under which they shall take more firm action against the LRA in consultation with the Government of Uganda.

8. Other Armed Groups

Member state senior officials noted the continued threat to the region by other armed groups operating in eastern Congo, including ADF/NALU, and urged the government of DRC and MONUC to hasten efforts to disarm them. They urged the United Nations Security Council to pass a specific resolution establishing sanctions against such groups.

9. Palipehutu-FNL

The Tripartite Plus member states deplored and condemned the repeated cease-fire violations by the Palipehutu-FNL and its stubborn and unjustified refusal to resume its participation in the work of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM). They urged the Pali-

pehutu-FNL to halt unconditionally its violations of the accords and to resume its participation in the work the Joint Commission immediately.

Delegations recalled the deadline of December 31, 2007, determined by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and supported by the regional initiative for Burundi and the United Nations for completing implementation of the ceasefire accords.

Should this deadline pass, the Governments of the Tripartite Plus countries undertake to apply the following measures with respect to the leaders of the Palipehutu-FNL:

- Prohibition on entering and circulating within the territory of the Tripartite Plus member states;
- Adopting every possible measure to eliminate all sources of weapons, ammunition, and funding;
- Denial of refuge;
- Freezing of accounts and assets;
- Refusal to issue visas and to grant access to the media;
- Revival of the most-wanted list with respect to Palipehutu-FNL leaders;
- Arrest and extradition.

10. Joint Planning Cell

In order to prepare for and coordinate military action against negative forces, member states welcomed regular meetings of the Chiefs of Defense staff and the provision of intelligence to the Tripartite Plus Intelligence Fusion Cell. They also supported the recommendation of their Chiefs of Defense staff to establish a Joint Planning Cell (JPC)

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(Continued from page 5)

with a view to facilitating the elaboration of common strategies in the region, with strict respect for the sovereignty of each member state. Delegations decided that the Chiefs of Defense Staff (CHODS) should prepare at their next meeting in January a detailed plan for establishment of this cell for presentation to the ministers at the next meeting of the Tripartite Plus. They further agreed that the CHODS, in consultation with the Facilitator, recommend how best to integrate the Tripartite Plus Intelligence Fusion Cell with the JPC.

11. Political and Diplomatic Measures

Tripartite Plus member states expressed their support for the DRC initiative to organize a Round Table on peace and security in the Kivus. They agreed on the importance of taking measures to reassure all affected populations and of promoting their peaceful cohabitation.

12. MONUC

Senior officials of Tripartite Plus member states urged the United Nations Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to play an active role in the refinement and then implementation of the Congolese general plan of action dated November 30. To this end they requested that the United Nations Security Council authorize MONUC to conduct offensive op-

erations against negative forces.

Regional Security Architecture

13. Diplomatic Relations

Taking note of the Tripartite Plus Ministerial decision of September 17, 2007, the delegations committed to full normalization of diplomatic relations among all member countries in those cases in which member governments have not yet exchanged ambassadors. They agreed that their governments shall take the steps necessary to implement this commitment.

14. Strengthening Existing Regional Contacts

Member state delegations agreed on the need to develop and institutionalize a process to carry forward efforts to ensure regional peace and stability, including holding regular meetings of security and other officials of the four countries and retaining such mechanisms as the Joint Verification Mechanisms, the Tripartite Plus Fusion Cell, and a Joint Planning Cell, until such time the member states collectively determine they are no longer necessary.

15. International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

Senior Tripartite Plus officials confirmed that each of their governments had ratified the "Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Regions" signed in

December 2006 by the 11 member countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and agreed to complete the legal steps required for depositing instruments of ratification to the ICGLR Secretariat in Bujumbura. They also agreed to cooperate in fully implementing this pact.

16. Refugee Return

Member state delegations affirmed the importance of voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin when appropriate conditions are established. They endorsed the September Tripartite Plus agreement of their Foreign Ministers for the DRC to establish tripartite commissions with UNHCR and each of the other Tripartite Plus member states.

Final Remarks

17. Member state delegations decided that their ministers of foreign affairs, who are scheduled to meet in late February at the next Tripartite Plus Joint Commission in Bujumbura, would monitor these decisions and ensure their implementation. The Tripartite Plus representatives expressed their appreciation to the Government and People of Ethiopia for their warm hospitality during their stay. ♦

World AIDS Day 2007: U.S. Mission Stresses Awareness, Fighting Prejudice

On November 29, the U.S. Mission to Ethiopia's Workplace HIV/AIDS and Wellness Program Coordinator and the PEPFAR Ethiopia Coordination Office organized an event to recognize World AIDS Day. The event, aimed at increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education in the workplace, focused on the need for strong leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The PEPFAR Ethiopia team distributed T-shirts and information promoting the World AIDS Day 2007 motto: "Stop AIDS: Keep the Promise."

Public Affairs Counselor Michael McClellan opened the World AIDS Day event. In his remarks, Mr. McClellan emphasized the commitment of the U.S. Mission to Ethiopia to a workplace HIV/AIDS response program. He stressed that the U.S. Mission is committed to providing a supportive workplace for its employees regardless of their HIV status. "The U.S. Mission strives to create an environment that promotes compassion and understand-

ing and rejects discrimination and fear in the workplace", he added. The Mission invited Reverend Ayano Chule, a priest living with

ing his HIV status, coping with family tragedy and, eventually with the help of colleagues, getting treatment and using his own experience to help others. Recently, he has been working to establish an association of religious leaders living with HIV. The Reverend emphasized the need to reduce the stigma and associations of promiscuity attached to HIV/AIDS infection, stressing that even he, a priest who had been in a monogamous marriage, contracted the virus. He said prejudice and ignorance are fueling the spread of a preventable

disease (HIV) in Ethiopia. Finally, Hayat Mohamed, Miss World Ethiopian (2003), spoke about HIV prevention tools including abstinence, faithfulness and correct use of condoms. In her presentation, she also expressed concern about the stigma and discrimination as major obstacles for HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. She ended her speech by calling on U.S. Mission employees to join

hands to fight HIV in the workplace and in the larger community. ♦



*Top: U.S. Embassy staff pausing for photo after the World AIDS Day event.
Bottom: Public Affairs Counselor Michael McClellan opens the event*

HIV, to give testimony about positively living with the virus. He told his touching personal story of learn-

Ethiopia Launches U.S. President's Malaria Initiative

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2007 Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – Today, Ethiopia became a focus country for the historic \$1.2 billion, five-year U.S. effort to fight malaria across Africa. United States Ambassador Donald Yamamoto joined Dr. Kebede Worku, State Minister of Health, and retired Rear Admiral Tim Ziemer, U.S. Malaria Coordinator, to launch the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), a joint effort to fight the disease.

PMI will significantly increase resources to Ethiopia, providing the most advanced and effective prevention and treatment interventions available. This year's funding of \$20 million (180.8 million Ethiopian Birr) will be spent primarily in the Oromiya Region, which suffers most from the country's malaria burden.

"This is a tremendous opportunity to save lives and reduce disease by building upon successful malaria treatment and control activities already underway in Ethiopia," said Ambassador Yamamoto. "The United States is committed to the Government of Ethiopia and its people to achieve its development goals of reducing poverty and fighting disease."

The PMI is an interagency initiative led by USAID, with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

(HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as key partners. The goal of the PMI is to assist national malaria control programs to cut malaria-related deaths by 50 percent in the 15 focus countries in Africa by support-

ing a comprehensive malaria control effort led by national malaria control programs.

malarials; and the roll-out of new, lifesaving, artemisinin-combination therapy to treat patients with malaria.

Ethiopia, Liberia, Kenya, Zambia, Mali, Madagascar, Benin and



(L-R) Ambassador Yamamoto, U.S. Malaria Coordinator, Rear Admiral Tim Ziemer, State Minister of Health Dr. Kebede Worku and Deputy USAID Director Kevin Rushing.

ing a comprehensive malaria control effort led by national malaria control programs.

This goal will be achieved by reaching 85 percent of the most vulnerable groups -- children under five years of age and pregnant women -- with proven and effective prevention and treatment measures. This includes residual indoor spraying of households with insecticides; the distribution of long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets to families; intermittent, presumptive treatment of pregnant women with anti-

Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda and Senegal are PMI focus countries.

"Malaria is preventable and treatable, yet it is a major killer throughout Africa," said Rear Admiral R. Timothy Ziemer (U.S. Navy, retired), U.S. Malaria Coordinator. "President and Mrs. Bush should be credited for this historic effort that will save millions of lives." ♦

Bush Announces Plans To Travel to Africa in 2008

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Mount Airy, Maryland)
November 30, 2007

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT ON
WORLD AIDS DAY

Calvary United Methodist
Church
Mount Airy, Maryland
11:43 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Tomorrow is World AIDS Day, and Laura and I are honored to commemorate the occasion here at the Calvary United Methodist Church. And we're honored to commemorate the day with people who have dedicated their lives to save lives.

I want to start by thanking Ambassador Mark Dybul, who is the Global AIDS Coordinator. His job is to make sure that America's great compassion is effective and widespread; that the goals we have set are met. And I -- Mr. Ambassador,

you're doing a fine job and I want to thank you very much for serving. I also want to thank Pastor Dennis Yocum, the pastor of this church. Dennis, I want to thank you for your hospitality -- it's not easy to host the President and all those who follow the President. I want to thank the members of your church who have so graciously made our stay here so comfortable.

I really want to thank the people standing behind me for not only joining Laura and me in discussions, but for serving as such powerful examples of the human spirit. Behind me are folks who understand that the scourge of HIV/AIDS can

be mitigated and that people's lives can be improved; who have seen hopelessness and have seen hope; people who are willing to act on the universal call to love a neighbor. People here come from obviously different backgrounds and different denominations, yet they share this

blessing on the loved ones they have left behind. We also mark this day with hope -- for the improving prospects of those living with the virus, for the unprecedented number of infections being prevented, and for new progress toward eradicating this disease. Above all, we



In recognition of World AIDS Day, President George W. Bush delivers a statement Friday, Nov. 30, 2007, after he and Mrs. Laura Bush participated in a roundtable in Mount Airy, Md., with faith-based groups regarding their roles in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. White House photo by Chris Greenberg

timeless calling to heal the sick and comfort the lonely. And their stories are incredibly inspirational and touching.

I appreciate the fact that they live out their faith, just like hundreds of thousands of other people do who are involved with the HIV/AIDS crisis. And in so living out their faith, they better our world.

World AIDS Day is both a day of sadness and a day of hope. We remember with sadness all those lost to AIDS. We mourn their lives cut short, their dreams of future denied. And we ask for God's

rededicate ourselves to a great purpose: We will turn the tide against HIV/AIDS -- once and for all.

According to the most recent estimates by the United Nations, more than 33 million people around the world live with HIV. They are mothers, they are fathers, brothers and sisters, friends and teachers. And each day, some 5,700 lose their lives.

When Americans witness this suffering, they feel a duty to respond. Some are motivated by conscience and a conviction that America

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should use its great influence to be a force for good. Many others are driven by faith -- by the call to love your neighbor as yourself, even when that neighbor may live on the other side of the world. This spirit of brotherhood and generosity has long defined our country. And over the past six years, we have rallied that spirit in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Here at home, we've taken new measures to increase HIV/AIDS testing, expand treatment, and improve care. We've worked with healthcare providers to make voluntary HIV screening a routine part of medical care, so all Americans can know their status. And we've worked with Congress to renew the Ryan White Care Act, which helps HIV/AIDS patients receive lifesaving drugs.

Overseas, the scope of the challenge is much longer -- much larger, and this nation is responding. In 2003, I proposed the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief -- a five-year, \$15 billion initiative to expand prevention, treatment, and care in the most heavily-affected countries. Congress approved the plan with bipartisan support. I want our fellow citizens to think about what this means: Every year, American taxpayers send billions of their hard-earned dollars overseas to save the lives of people they have never met.

In return for this extraordinary generosity, Americans expect results. So the Emergency Plan includes specific, measurable targets for progress. It demands honesty and accountability for all those involved.

It puts local partners in the lead, because they know the needs of their people best. With this strategy, we have pioneered a new model for public health. And so far, the results have been striking:

Five years ago, only 50,000 people with AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa were receiving antiretroviral drugs. Today, thanks to the emergency plan and to the generosity of the American taxpayer, that number is nearly 1.4 million. Think about that, over a five-year period of time the number of people in sub-Saharan Africa has increased from 50,000 to 1.4 million thanks to the American taxpayer. Around the world, another 6.7 million people with HIV/AIDS have received compassionate care, including 2.7 million orphans and vulnerable children. Tens of millions have received prevention -- prevention messages based on the proven principles of ABC, which is Abstinence, Be faithful, and use Condoms.

The money that you have spent [sic] is being spent wisely and saving lives. Some call this a remarkable success. I call it a good start. So we have worked with the private sector and G8 nations to increase their commitments. This May, I proposed to double our nation's initial pledge to \$30 billion over the next five years. These American funds will help us support treatment for nearly 2.5 million people, prevent more than 12 million new infections, and support care for 12 million people, including more than 5 million orphans and vulnerable children. Now the time has come for United States Congress to act again. I'm confident they will, and I call on Congress to show America's leadership and

compassion by reauthorizing the emergency plan and doubling our commitment to this urgent cause.

One reason for the effectiveness of our efforts is the leading role of faith-based organizations. Last summer, volunteers from this church traveled to Namibia to serve at a home for AIDS orphans. Think about that -- people from this part of Maryland took it upon themselves to travel to a faraway land to help orphans, to say we love you, to inspire through their compassion. With me today is a fellow named Chris Dominick from the McLean Bible Church. He briefed Laura and me and the others on the training that he had received in order to go to Zambia tomorrow. Faith-based groups like these are the foot soldiers in the armies of compassion. They are changing behavior by changing hearts -- and they are helping to defeat this epidemic one soul at a time.

This morning, I also met a woman named Martha Chilufya -- was afraid you left. (Laughter.) Eight years ago, she established the Mututa Memorial Center in Zambia to honor her husband, who had died of AIDS. Today, the center partners with the emergency plan and faith-based care-givers to serve more than 150 patients. Martha hosted Laura and Jenna on their recent trip to Africa. And they listened to a choir of orphans who had received loving care at the center. The children sang these inspiring words: "God, you are really there Ĺ when I pray, when I cry, when I am ill, you are there."

Stories like these bring pride to our country. And they should bring

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Freedom Defenders Under Attack in Zimbabwe, United States Warns

*By Charles W. Corey
USINFO Staff Writer*

Washington -- As International Human Rights Day approaches on December 10, the world must be concerned about the situation in Zimbabwe -- where defenders of freedom are under attack and where the human rights situation is becoming worse every day, the assistant secretary of state for African affairs warns.

In Zimbabwe, under the government of President Robert Mugabe, "the attacks, arrests and abductions continue unabated with more than 500 instances of human rights abuses reported each month, Jendayi Frazer told USINFO November 30. "In fact," she added, "the number of victims requiring medial treatment this year alone was 3,463 -- nearly triple that of 2006. So ... the defenders of freedom in Zimbabwe are under attack."

Frazer noted that there have been more than 6,000 instances of human rights abuses reported by Zimbabwean nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since January. "The world must focus on the crisis in Zimbabwe," she said.

Asked what should be done, Frazer said that "it is extremely important for the international community to put pressure on this [Mugabe] regime to accept freedom of expression rather than beating people down -- to prepare for free and fair elections.

"I think that the neighboring countries -- the Southern African Development Community countries -- certainly support the efforts of Presi-

dent [Thabo] Mbeki to negotiate an agreement between the opposition Movement for Democratic Change and the [Mugabe] government, but we think that most important to signing an agreement is actually implementing an agreement."

ference but the fact that Zimbabwe will be discussed at the conference is extremely important in our effort to try to change the human rights abuses which are taking place there."

Frazer added, "It is interesting that



Demonstrators in central Kampala, Uganda, hold up banners November 22 calling for freedom in Zimbabwe. (© AP Images)

However, Frazer said, "We have not seen that will be carried out by this [Mugabe] government, so we are a little bit concerned that even if an agreement is signed, it won't be implemented."

Looking ahead to the December 8-9 European Union-African Union Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, Frazer said, "We are certainly concerned that the issue of Zimbabwe became a sticking point [in planning the conference]. We feel that Zimbabwe should not be invited to the EU con-

African countries would seem to come to the defense of a government that is so counter to all of the principles that they put forward -- the New Partnership for Africa's Development, good governance, peer review -- clearly they are not reviewing this peer of theirs by pushing for his attendance at the summit."

Frazer spoke to USINFO prior to a scheduled appearance December 3 at the Center for Strategic and In-

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Freedom Defenders Under Attack in Zimbabwe . . .

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International Studies in Washington on a program examining the ongoing human rights crisis in Zimbabwe.

Frazer called that CSIS program an "important forum for exchange to again look at how we can collectively work to see Zimbabwe return to democracy, return to its former strong economy [and] end the human rights abuses -- the ongoing crisis that is taking place there. I definitely think this is an opportunity to bring world attention to try to end President Mugabe's reign of terror on his population," she said.

"There are many in Africa who look at President Mugabe and the ZANU-PF legacy as advocates of liberation against the Rhodesian government

and that certainly is a legacy that ... should be held up for commendation, but President Mugabe at the time opened schools for children," Frazer said.

"Now that they are adults and free thinking people, he is beating them down. So he really has gone back on that legacy. He has actually failed the people of Zimbabwe and he has failed the aspirations of liberation of the region as a whole -- so I do believe that again, hopefully the SADC mediation will help to end this crisis" and that the international community will continue to focus on improving the situation there.

"Freedom loving ... Zimbabweans that are trying to return their country to democracy deserve our support and our assistance and we cer-

tainly will provide it," she said.

For more information, see Zimbabwe: Escalating Violence (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-english&y=2007&m=December&x=20071203150131eai-fas0.1220514>) and Timeline of Human Rights Violations in Zimbabwe in 2007 (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-english&y=2007&m=December&x=20071203150103WCyeroC0.6374018>).

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

Bush Announces Plans To Travel to Africa in 2008 . . .

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something more. When we support nations seeking to replace chaos and despair with progress and hope, we reduce the appeal of extremism. When we replace despair with progress, when we replace hopelessness with hope, we add to the security of our country. As well, we make friends who will always remember that America stood with them in their hour of need.

The new relationships that America has forged in Africa are a high priority for our nation. I'm pleased to announce that Laura and I will travel to sub-Saharan Africa early

next year. I look forward to seeing the results of America's generosity -- and to assure our friends that they have a steady partner in the United States of America.

The Scriptures tell us, "I have set before you life and death -- therefore, choose life." All who wage the battle against AIDS have made the choice for life. Because of their compassion and courage, millions who once saw the disease as a death sentence now look to the future with hope. This World AIDS Day is a day of importance, because it's a day we resolve to continue this work of healing and re-

demption. It's a day to strive for the day when the scourge of AIDS is a part of history.

Laura and I are honored to be here with you all. May God bless your work, may God bless those who suffer from HIV/AIDS, may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

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

Modern Transit System Comes to Cameroon, Thanks to U.S. Company

Washington -- In Cameroon, when 28 new buses moved from Douala, the port and commercial center, to the capital city of Yaoundé in August 2006, excitement was so high that people were lining the streets and the 200-kilometer highway connecting the two cities to cheer the convoy. The comfortable modern buses brought by Transnational Automotive Group (TAUG), a Los Angeles-based company, were a harbinger of something new for Cameroonians.

At that time, the capital had lacked a functioning mass transportation system for more than 15 years, and its streets were clogged with taxis, motor bikes and other vehicles packed beyond capacity with people, goods and livestock. On intercity routes, several operators competed, but they ran old or salvaged buses and the service was poor and sometimes unsafe.

"There was a screaming need for something better, more reliable and modern," Seid Sadat, TAUG chief financial officer, told USINFO.

In 2005, TAUG's founders, former auto industry veterans with experience in Africa, were asked by Cameroonian government officials to consider running city bus systems in their country.

Considered on a purely commercial basis, such an offer would have been rejected. City mass transportation systems worldwide tend to be either unprofitable or subsidized. But TAUG's corporate mission is to facilitate work force growth and

commerce in the developing world. So TAUG agreed to form a joint venture with the government the same year.

Building on economic momentum brought about by official debt relief in 2006, Cameroon's president, Paul Biya, was eager to attract

"We went through a mutual learning curve, both with government officials and the local private sector," he told USINFO.

But the Cameroonian leadership, including the president and the prime minister, was eager to resolve any problems, Thomson said.



Modern buses brought by Transnational Automotive Group (TAUG)

As a result, the September 2006 launch of LeBus, a subsidized city bus system in Yaoundé, was "notably smooth" and enthusiastically welcomed by city residents, according to both executives. It has served as a catalyst for positive effects on the city's modernization efforts and the life of its residents, they said.

The biggest challenge turned out to be winning the confidence of ordinary people and convincing them

more foreign investment and create some immediate improvements in the daily lives of average Cameroonians, according to TAUG executives.

A well-functioning city bus service was a high-priority project because the government expected it to bring the most tangible benefits to the population in a short time.

TAUG Chief Executive Officer Ralph Thomson says that in the early stages the venture had to deal with some challenges related to cultural differences and different views on the very nature of business.

that the company was in Cameroon to stay, Sadat said. TAUG, which employs 700 workers, all but three of whom are Cameroonians, vowed to become one of the largest employers in the country.

TAUG has introduced high-quality customer services and social programs. For example, schoolchildren, who used to walk three kilometers or more to school on unsafe roads, ride LeBus under supervision. Journalists have been promised discounted fares. The company also has promoted women drivers.

(Continued on page 15)

Religion-Based Employee Groups Enhance Culture of Inclusion

By Louise Fenner
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Employees at Texas Instruments in Dallas are proud of their company's culture of inclusion, which is marked by the presence of employee networking groups for Christians and Muslims that encourage mutual respect and understanding.

"Understanding and tolerance are the keys for success" in a multicultural workplace like Texas Instruments, according to Zafar Imam, chair of the Muslim Employees Initiative (MEI), one of the two religion-based employee groups at the company. "We think ignorance plays a big role in conflicts, in hostility, not only in the workplace but outside as well."

Kent Johnson, founder and head of the Christian Values Initiative (CVI), the other religion-based employee group at the company, believes the culture of Texas Instruments is "truly extraordinary" in its approach to religious diversity. He praises the "mutual trust, appreciation and affection that bridges spiritual divides here."

The two, along with another MEI member, Osama Elsafadi, spoke with USINFO recently about their experiences at Texas Instruments. They said MEI and CVI have held several events together, including visits to a mosque, a Baptist church and a Latter Day Saints (LDS) church; interfaith roundtables; and a fundraiser -- along with other company employee groups -- for Hurricane Katrina victims.

The visit to the LDS, or Mormon, church "was definitely an eye-opener for me," said Imam. "There

was a lot I learned."

"We think education is very important," he said. Each year MEI holds six to eight roundtable discussions at lunchtime for non-Muslim employees. "The idea is to introduce

Johnson, senior counsel at Texas Instruments, praised the company's leaders for their "groundbreaking" decision to sanction religion-based employee groups. Many U.S. companies permit employees to form



Employees at Texas Instruments in Dallas have formed Christian and Muslim employee networking groups. (© AP Images)

what we think is the right definition about Islam" and to counter inaccuracies in the media, he explained.

About 15 to 25 people usually attend. "We'll open the floor to questions, and nothing is off the table. We get very good questions, tough questions. It's a very open, frank discussion," Imam said.

Many Muslim employees "would like their managers to know about Islam and what issues of concern we have at the workplace," said Imam. He added that MEI appreciates the "serenity rooms" at Texas Instruments where Muslims and others can take prayer breaks or mediate.

groups based on common concerns -- blacks, Hispanics, people with disabilities, and gay and lesbian employees, for example. But faith-based groups are less prevalent. There are none at General Motors, for example, and Ford Motor Company has only one officially recognized group, the Ford Interfaith Network.

"There was some natural apprehensiveness," he acknowledged. Some people feared "that Christians would get together and start condemning everyone who didn't believe the way we do. We, as a group from the very beginning, have wanted to dispel that notion."

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Religion-Based Employee Groups Enhance Culture of Inclusion . . .

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Although CVI members may not agree with some other groups' beliefs or lifestyles, Johnson said, "Our feeling is that if you just put it under the table and pretend the differences aren't there, that's a mistake, because it prevents people from really relating to one another."

Having an inclusive workplace culture is "absolutely good business," he said. At Texas Instruments, which produces semiconductors and other high-tech products, "anything we do in such a complex production process requires collaboration and trust."

Elsafadi, a program manager for the company's automotive group, said he appreciated the positive atmosphere at Texas Instruments after

the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. "One of my co-workers came to me and offered her home for my family to come and stay," he said.

That particular co-worker is Jewish, said Elsafadi, who is Palestinian. "We did spend part of the night at her house, but then I decided to brave it and go home. And we were OK."

"Both Jews and Muslims, here in the U.S., care for each other in the most wonderful ways. I found this especially true at [Texas Instruments]," Elsafadi said.

Imam, a product engineering section manager at the company, had a similar experience. He is Pakistani. "My manager, on the day after [September 11], asked me about

myself and my family, and if my wife was having any difficulty, his wife was willing to go out with her for groceries and such -- which I thought was very nice and touching."

For eight years Texas Instruments has been on Fortune magazine's list of 100 Best Companies To Work For. In 2006, one of the reasons cited was the company's support for diversity through its employee-networking groups, including the Christian Values Initiative and Muslim Employees Initiative.

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

Modern Transit System Comes to Cameroon, Thanks to U.S. Company . . .

(Continued from page 13)

TAUG's operations were watched closely by other African governments and local and U.S. investors, who had been somewhat skeptical about the feasibility of infrastructure investment in sub-Saharan Africa.

Those operations are successful by any measure, according to TAUG executives. In a year, LeBus has transported around 5 million passengers. LeCar, a wholly-owned subsidiary launched in December 2006, makes a decent profit running intercity buses between the capital and Douala.

Biya told company executives in October that he had received very

favorable comments on the quality and reliability of their company's services from many sources.

TAUG also won a 2007 State Department Award for Corporate Excellence for its work in Cameroon. At the award ceremony in November, U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon Janet Garvey praised the company for employment practices and its clean, comfortable and reliable service.

The company's operations serve "as an example of how our nations can work together to forge win-win situations in Cameroon and serve as a model applicable across the African continent," she said.

But the best evidence of the com-

pany's success is invitations from the governments of 13 African countries that want TAUG to invest in their economies.

This success also opened "many doors" in Cameroon. TAUG, which already has increased its investment in Cameroon with support from a U.S. government agency, plans to expand into other sectors including oil, natural gas and renewable energy ventures, auto assembly, low-cost housing and quality hotel development.

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

Democracy Network Created for the Americas

By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- A new network of about 100 former government officials, academics and members of nongovernmental organizations has been created to help Latin American and Caribbean nations deal with issues related to promoting and defending democracy in the region.

The Democracy Practitioners Network will advise governments in the Americas on such subjects as electoral and constitutional reform, access to justice, good governance, citizen participation, transparency and efforts to combat corruption.

The network will back efforts of the secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS) to implement the Inter-American Democratic Charter and help nations in the region govern democratically. The group of practitioners has practical experience in democracy promotion and is familiar with the OAS's role in preventing and resolving conflicts in the Americas.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter, adopted by the 34 countries of the OAS on September 11, 2001, in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States, helps governments in the region deal with threats to democracy. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=May&x=20070525085327x1eneerg0.1014826>).)

OAS SECRETARY-GENERAL PRAISES NEW NETWORK

OAS Secretary-General José Miguel Insulza told USINFO November 28, after launching the program at his organization's headquarters, that the practitioners would be "distinguished OAS member-

tions, promoting democratic governance, and "providing solutions in moments of crisis."

On that last point, the practitioners will offer their practical experience in forestalling a looming crisis in a country, such as to help a government and its political opposition



OAS chief José Miguel Insulza announces creation of the Democracy Practitioners Network on November 28 in Washington. (OAS/Herrera)

country nationals of outstanding professional experience."

Insulza said the U.S.-backed group will consist of "known democrats" with a reputation for impartiality. They are people, he said, "who are not only believers in democracy but have been active in political affairs."

The secretary-general, in announcing the program, said in Spanish that the network will help the OAS in "three crucial moments" in a democratic process: observing elec-

reconcile outstanding differences.

An April 2005 meeting in Santiago, Chile, of the Community of Democracies also spoke of the need for a "democracy practitioner database" to carry out the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The Community of Democracies was created in 2000 to promote and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=July&x=20070525085327x1eneerg0.1014826>).)

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Visually Impaired Students Study Math Using Innovative Software

*By Jeffrey Thomas
USINFO Staff Writer*

Washington – Until recently, blind and visually impaired students found it extremely difficult to study certain subjects and pursue careers in science and technology because they could not see graphs and other visual representations. But now, a team at NASA has created easy-to-use software that allows students to graph equations, interact with the data and understand it all through text, tones and spoken language.

The program, MathTrax, transforms graphs and equations in real-time into words, so students have multiple ways to process complex information. “For blind and low vision kids ... MathTrax provides a tool for them to work along with their sighted peers in their math and science classes,” says Robert Shelton, a blind NASA mathematician who worked with Terry Hodgson and Stephanie Smith on the development of MathTrax.

Shelton realized that “even now, when modern assistive technology should be opening doors to STEM [science, technology, engineering and math] careers, many otherwise capable blind students are steered away from the math and science courses which could provide the basis for further education, employment and independence.”

His team at NASA had “a long history of developing innovative educational technology applications such as games, simulations and knowledge discovery tools, and we saw the development of an accessible math tool as a way that our efforts could make a large difference for an otherwise underserved population.”

NASA management “absolutely loved the idea” when Shelton’s team proposed it, he said. “NASA’s core business is very different from what we do, but it is generally understood that enlarging the STEM pipeline is critical, not only to NASA’s mission, but to the long-term security and prosperity of our civilization.”

“Like all other educational technology projects at NASA, we have to compete for resources and we operate on a shoestring [budget], but NASA has a proud history of trying innovative ideas that work, and MathTrax is definitely one of those,” Shelton said.

At a NASA science camp for students with vision impairments called “Rocket On,” students used MathTrax for dealing with rocketry for mission planning, trajectory planning and data analysis.

“There was no other tool on the planet that would have let them do that rocket camp without an engineer helping them,” Shelton said in a NASA article on the camp. “And this year the kids did it [on their own].”

Besides analyzing rocket launches, kids also can use MathTrax to do things like study ozone change, illustrate air and sea interactions, study rainfall distribution, forecast ecosystem changes, investigate the nature of black holes, explore the expansion of space, estimate solar activity, model solar wind, compare body adaptations to microgravity, track the effects of space radiation and represent and model scientific information.

MathTrax received an education award from the Tech Museum of Innovation at a ceremony November

7 in San Jose, California. The award was based on the recommendation of an international panel of judges. In 2006, MathTrax was the runner-up for NASA Software of the Year.

MATHTRAX ALSO VALUABLE FOR SIGHTED STUDENTS

MathTrax can be helpful to, and deepen the mathematical understanding of, all types of students. In fact, “we have a wealth of anecdotal evidence that the majority of our users are sighted,” Shelton told USINFO. “We are over 100,000 downloads now, and I’m pretty sure that most of those people can see. Failure to complete basic algebra is a multibillion a year problem in the United States and a tool like MathTrax can make a difference to anyone who has issues with graphical concepts.”

Most math students are familiar with graphing calculators, which turn mathematical equations into visual forms. MathTrax presents the equation in additional ways, providing a text description and an audio version of the graph, with sounds that correlate to the visual image.

“MathTrax demonstrates how graphing software can be made more accessible to everyone. We’ve made the technology available, worldwide, with the Open Source release of the Math Description Engine Software Development Kit. We hope that industry and researchers will build on the technology and apply it as widely as possible.”

There is a proposal pending to produce a Spanish-language version of MathTrax, Shelton said. ♦

Music Role-Playing Games Popular Among Teens, Adults

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- For classical musician Monica Cho, 14, who is preparing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 15 in B flat Major for a piano competition and Mendelssohn's Concerto in E Minor for Violin for a recital, there is little time on school nights to relax.

In addition to taking private music lessons, the teenager practices both piano and violin at least two hours a day and is a member of the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra. Playing classical music has been an important part of Monica's life for as long as she can remember -- she began playing violin at the age 6 and piano at age 9 -- and her parents have made a significant financial commitment to Monica's passion by paying for costly music lessons and expensive performance-quality musical instruments.

But on the weekends, when Monica has time to unwind, she plays electric guitar in a rock band with her friends. Except they do not actually play any instruments, and they meet in front of the family television set instead of in the family garage.

Monica is among millions of teenagers -- and, increasingly, adults -- around the world who play music on interactive computer game platforms in virtual rock bands.

"Personally, I enjoy playing the guitar," Monica told USINFO. She said

she likes its simplicity.

The game controller is shaped like a guitar, and is fitted with five fret buttons and one strum bar. "You just hold the fret button and strum the strum bar at the same time to produce a note," Monica said. The game comes with a drum kit, in-



Rock Band players choose their personal characteristics -- including hair color, clothing, accessories and even tattoos. (Harmonix)

cluding drumming pads as well as a pedal, a microphone for the vocalist and a controller for bass guitar.

Depending on the quality of the players' television speakers, even without real instruments, the virtual rockers have the potential to wake up the neighbors.

Rock Band, one of the newest virtual music games, also known as music role-playing games (RPGs), is a collaboration between the companies MTV and Electronic Arts. The guitar-shaped game controller is based on the Fender Stratocaster electric guitar of the 1950s and is made by Contel Corporation, designer and manufacturer of digital

media products in China. The game was developed by Harmonix Music Systems for the Playstation 2, Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 game platforms.

When another music game, Guitar Hero, was released in 2005, the game appealed to "a mass of peo-

ple," said Robert Kotick, chief executive of Activision, the game's publisher, in newspaper reports. In the first week of its release in late November, the game's newest version, Guitar Hero III, had sales of \$115 million. Like Rock Band, it puts players in the role of rockers. The latest Guitar Hero game is also owned by Harmonix, which was purchased by MTV in 2006.

Although Monica has played the all-vocal RPG Karaoke Revolution with her parents and younger brother, she plays Rock Band and Guitar Hero with her friends. The newest music RPGs can form bands with players around the world using a

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Character Attacks Heat Up U.S. Presidential Campaign

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- With the first presidential nominating contests less than a month away, candidates in both parties are stepping up their attacks on opponents.

The dynamics of the primary system drive candidates to appeal to the most aggressive voters, said Pietro Nivola, director of the Governance Studies Program at the Brookings Institution in Washington, at a forum hosted by the League of Women Voters November 28. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=December&x=20071203092217hmnietsua1.266116e-02>).)

"The result is when the chips are down, the races are getting tight as they are now ... it's just simply too tempting to go on the attack," Nivola said.

This is evident in the Democratic-nomination race between New York Senator Hillary Clinton and Illinois Senator Barack Obama. Polls show Clinton winning nationally, but with a narrower lead than in previous months. In Iowa, the first state to hold a nominating event, polls show the race too close to call.

Although the candidates initially said they would run positive campaigns, many of their recent events have focused on attacking each other's proposed policies. The battle continues on the Internet, where Clinton's Web site includes "The Fact Hub (<http://facts.hillaryhub.com/>)," showing Obama's false statements on health

care. Obama's team launched "Hillary Attacks (<http://hillaryattacks.barackobama.com/>)" to document her attacks against him.

"What's happened in both parties is as the Iowa caucuses and other events approach, the candidates running second and third start to get more desperate and start to criticize the front-runner," Howard Reiter, professor of political science



at the University of Connecticut, told USINFO. "There is an old rule in politics that if you don't attack the front-runner, then the front-runner is likely to remain the front-runner. This is something we have done for a long time."

For the Republicans, this old rule is beginning to play out in Iowa, where former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, once considered a long-shot candidate, now narrowly leads in some polls. This has made him a new target for his rivals, who are criticizing decisions he made as governor.

On the national level, it is more complicated. Early in the Republican

nomination race, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney often were considered to have the best chances of winning the nomination, and therefore faced attacks from other Republicans as well as from each other.

But today, there is no clear front-runner, meaning many candidates are attacking multiple opponents at once. For example, an ad by former

Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson features old video footage of Romney, Huckabee and Giuliani making statements that contradict their views on certain topics today.

Negative campaigning and personal attacks on political rivals are common in both primary and general elections. It

is not just presidential races that go negative -- many closely contested congressional races feature attacks as well.

When asked in polls, Americans say they do not like watching candidates speak negatively of others. Yet political scientists say evidence shows that negative campaigns work, which is why they are consistently used.

"None of us like it when people attack other people," Sandy Maisel, professor of government at Colby College in Maine, told USINFO. "But, it works."

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Character Attacks Heat Up U.S. Presidential Campaign . . .

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One reason attacks work is that Americans want to feel secure, and candidates can show their strength by being aggressive, especially when responding to another candidate's attacks, said Drew Westen, a psychology professor at Emory University in Atlanta.

Westen, author of the book *The Political Brain*, which examines how politicians connect emotionally with voters, told USINFO that while campaign attacks can be effective, they must be used by a candidate in a way that associates the negative comments strictly with the opponent. Too much negativity can make a candidate seem like the "angry candidate," and the angry candidate never wins, Westen said.

Primary candidates also must consider how their attacks may play out if they win the nomination, Maisel said. History has shown that

while candidates may attack their opponents in the primaries, they often need their opponents' help to win the general election.

As a primary candidate, "you want to win, and to win you might have to attack your opponent in this race," Maisel said. "But you don't want to attack your opponent ... to the point that their supporters won't support you in the general election."

NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNING DATES BACK TO EARLIEST ELECTIONS

"In the first decades of this country, you had some pretty bitter quarrels between presidential candidates," Nivola said.

Some of America's earliest political contests were its meanest. Supporters of John Adams' bid for the presidency in 1796 called his opponent Thomas Jefferson cowardly, weak and a person who did not

share Americans' values.

The 1828 election between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson was one of the country's bitterest. Jackson's supporters called Adams "the pimp," alleging that Adams convinced a woman to have an affair with a Russian leader. Adams' team fired back, accusing Jackson's wife of being a prostitute. Adams supporters called Jackson a "jackass" -- and used the illustration of a donkey to make the point.

In an ironic twist, Jackson liked the donkey so much he started using it on his own campaign material. Today, the donkey widely is used to represent the Democratic Party.

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Music Role-Playing Games Popular Among Teens, Adults . . .

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high-speed Internet connection.

The games allow players to assign such characteristics as hair color and clothing accessories to their game avatars to create a virtual display of the band. They choose a name for the band and create a logo, and when the band is performing in front of a crowd of screaming fans, another player can act as the concert director by using lighting effects and interesting camera shots. For now, the games do not have the capability to allow players to compose music.

The single-player RPG offers the opportunity for musicians to practice on a single instrument, according to Dan Teasdale, senior designer of Rock Band, in a published interview. "You can create your character and go through playing songs ... on a single instrument," Teasdale said, practicing increasingly difficult material and preparing vocal, guitar or drum solos.

Monica said that playing music always will be an important part of her life even though she looks forward to a career in politics or eco-

nomics. What kind of music, though, is "TBD," [to be determined] she said -- and "how" she will play it might be virtually impossible to guess.

"These games introduced me to new music, and it turned out I really enjoy it," Monica said.

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Americans' Political Divisions Not Necessarily Bad, Experts Say

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Although Americans feel politically divided today, this polarization is not necessarily a bad thing, political experts say.

Today, the division among Americans is often depicted in the colors red and blue. During the contested 2000 election between George W. Bush and then-Vice President Al Gore, Americans spent weeks looking at maps depicting in red the states that voted Republican and in blue the states that voted Democrat. Since then, defining political views as "red" (Republican) or "blue" (Democratic) is a regular occurrence.

American history has shown that there are periods of polarization and periods of consensus in the political landscape. This current era of polarization is seen by many as beginning in the years following the end of the Cold War.

"There's no question that the partisan polarity between the Democrats and Republicans these days ... runs deeper, certainly, than it did a generation ago," said Pietro Nivola, director of the Governance Studies Program at the Brookings Institution in Washington. Nivola, who is the editor of the book *Red and Blue Nation?*, spoke at a November 28 forum in Washington hosted by the League of Women Voters.

"Not everything about political polarization is a bad thing," Nivola said.

Polls show that Republicans and

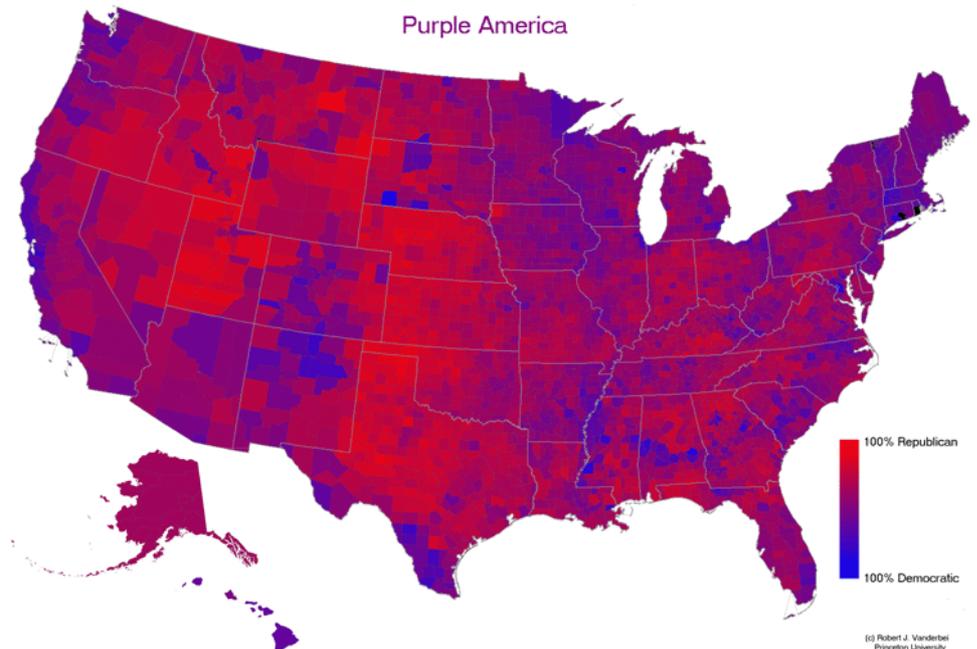
Democrats care about different social issues and have different perceptions of what the United States' priorities should be. For example, Nivola said, there are striking differences when it comes to foreign policy. Republicans' top priorities are keeping nuclear weapons out of the

servative and the Democrats more liberal, Nivola said.

An increase in the number of "safe seats" in Congress, seats typically held by the same political party from one election to the next, has furthered this polarization, accord-

2004 Presidential Election

Purple America



hands of rogue states and destroying al-Qaeda. Democrats' top goals include withdrawing from Iraq and improving multilateral relations with allies, he said.

A number of factors influence today's divide. One is that the characteristics of parties' supporters have changed in recent decades. At one time, the Democratic Party base was in the South, and Southerners tended to hold conservative views similar to many in the Republican Party. Today, those Southerners predominately support Republicans. Additionally, religious voters have moved more into the Republican camp, making the party more con-

ing to Nivola. Because a congressman knows his district will support his party, he has no incentive to work with his opponents, Nivola said.

The media also has had an impact. The rise of Internet blogs, talk radio and cable news has created outlets that cater to certain political viewpoints, allowing Americans to choose to watch sources they find agreeable, Nivola said.

There are many problems with having such a polarized electorate, but there are some advantages as well, according to William Galston, senior

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Americans' Political Divisions Not Necessarily Bad, Experts Say . . .

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fellow at the Brookings Institution.

"Passion, conflict and a measure of divisiveness are to be expected and, within limits, are not to be deplored," he said.

A divided government may have difficulties solving long-term domestic policy problems because it is difficult to reach compromises, Galston said. Polarization also "makes sustainable foreign policy much harder to put into place," he said, and when parties disagree, it is difficult to send a clear international message.

When one party controls the executive and another controls the legislature, it can be difficult to fill judicial vacancies because one branch must nominate a judge while the other must approve the nomination. On the other hand, if one party controls both branches in an era of polarization, congressional oversight of the executive is limited, affecting the accountability of government, Galston said.

Additionally, "high degrees of polarization are not good for public

trust and confidence," he said. "That does not mean ... that the public is driven out of the political arena -- in fact you can see high levels of political participation coinciding with very high levels of political mistrust." This is likely one of the reasons why voter turnout has been higher in recent elections.

Having distinct alternatives is one of several advantages of having a divided electorate, Galston said. "When there is greater polarization between the parties, the electorate is offered clearer choices."

In a period of polarization, Americans realize that if they vote for a Republican, they are going to get a different type of foreign policy and a different focus on social issues than if they vote for a Democrat, Galston said. They may doubt what the differences will be when the candidates are more alike.

"Because the choices are clearer, politics are more intelligible to average citizens," he said, citing studies conducted over the past 10 years that show that Americans are improving their understanding of politics.

During a time of political consensus, those who do not share the majority's views may not be heard. When these eras end, there is an opportunity for new political views to be represented, Galston said.

Nivola and Galston suggested some potential ways of decreasing polarization. These include setting term limits for judges so there are less contentious battles over lifetime appointments, using election run-off voting so candidates have to appeal to a wider base to gain a majority of votes rather than a plurality and establishing bipartisan commissions to oversee redistricting to reduce the number of safe congressional seats.

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

AIDS Experts See Hope, Concerns in Confronting Virus

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – On the eve of World AIDS Day, President Bush renewed his pledge to fight the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

“The pandemic of HIV/AIDS can be defeated,” he said November 30, through international cooperative efforts such as his President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). “We continue to fund research and develop new methods of treatment and prevention,” he said, referring to PEPFAR’s five-year, \$15 billion commitment to fight the disease.

World AIDS Day also gives health professionals and public health advocates a chance to send a message, and in 2007 the message from AIDS experts was blunt.

“We are losing the fight against AIDS,” Dr. Ward Cates, president of Family Health International and a leading epidemiologist, said at a November 28 briefing at the U.S. Capitol building. He acknowledged significant successes in treatment with anti-retroviral drugs of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS. But he cited annual HIV/AIDS infection statistics -- 2.5 million worldwide -- saying more must be done to contain the disease.

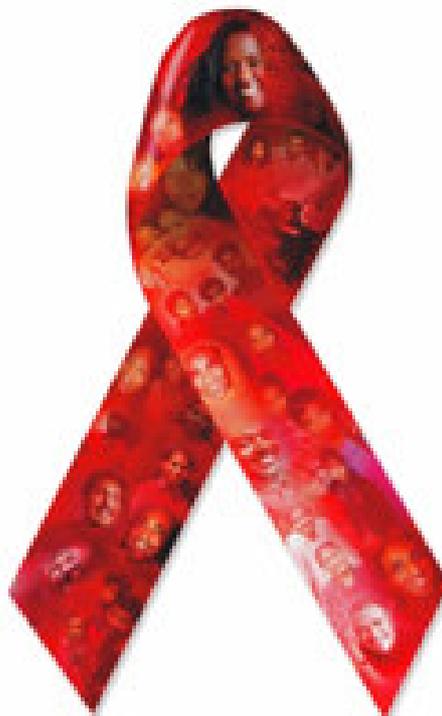
“We have to reverse this. We need prevention now,” he said.

Cates was one of several experts who spoke at the function sponsored by the Global Health Council (GHC), the African Union Mission to the United States, Family Health International (FHI) and the Pan

American Health Organization (PAHO).

There was consensus on the need for better preventive measures.

World AIDS Day
December 1



Amalia Del Riego, PAHO project manager, emphasized the importance of hindering mother-to-child transmission. She said there is a huge gap between need and prevention in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Domestic violence and sexual abuse of young people are contributing factors to the spread of AIDS there, as elsewhere, she added.

Africa remains the continent most ravaged by HIV/AIDS. Dr. Robert Einterz of Indiana University described a successful partnership with Moi University in Kenya that

tackles the multifaceted problem at all community levels. The Academic Model for Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS (AMPATH), funded by PEPFAR and private philanthropy, centers on a teaching referral hospital. “Kenyans do the work,” Einterz said, who is a consultant there. “We’ve treated over 60,000 individuals now in 26 sites,” rural and urban.

The AMPATH approach has developed over time to include a farm to help patients with nutritional needs, after they found that many people on anti-retroviral drugs failed to thrive because they were on the verge of starvation. He said that after six months or so, “they get healthy enough to go back to do their farming.”

U.S. Assistant Global AIDS Coordinator Michele Moloney-Kitts agreed that “while we have a lot of success to claim around the world,” prevention of mother-to-child transmission must be improved, as must outreach activities. “We are still operating at a hospital level ... reaching out to communities is an ongoing challenge,” she said.

“HIV/AIDS is really a disease of inequality, it is not necessarily a disease of poverty, although it does make poor people poorer,” Moloney-Kitts said. “[A]ddressing gender issues and the inequality of women throughout all our interventions is hugely important.”

Numerous U.S. government agencies participate in international partnership programs with governments and the private sector, but the United States Agency for Interna-

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“Substantial Progress” in Global Avian Flu Response, Report Says

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

New Delhi -- The world community has made progress in its response to avian influenza, according to a new United Nations-World Bank report whose results were announced in New Delhi December 4, the first day of the New Delhi International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza.

More than 600 delegates from 105 countries -- including 70 ministers from the public health and animal health sectors -- and 20 international and intergovernmental organizations convened to assess, review and exchange information on highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu in animals and people.

The third global progress report, *Responses to Avian Influenza and State of Pandemic Readiness*, jointly produced by the U.N. System Influenza Coordinator and the World Bank, indicates progress in the initial -- emergency -- phase of the global response to H5N1 and threats to public health.

“While we have made progress during the years since the virus first appeared,” Ambassador John Lange, head of the U.S. delegation and special representative for avian and pandemic influenza at the State Department, told the assembled delegates, “we now need to shift some of our efforts from the emergency phase of identifying human and avian outbreaks to a greater emphasis on long-term capacity building to improve animal and human health systems as they relate to” H5N1 and other emerging diseases.

The U.S. delegation includes senior representatives of the departments of State, Agriculture, Health and Human Services and Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The government of India is hosting the meeting in collaboration with the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, launched by President Bush in 2005. (See fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Sep/22-113180.html>).)

STATE OF PANDEMIC

The U.N.-World Bank report covers developments over the past two years, with a focus on January-June 2007. It analyzes efforts made and financial assistance provided to date, and assesses progress in nations’ capacities to respond to H5N1 and their preparations for the next influenza pandemic.

During 2006-2007, said U.N. System Influenza Coordinator David Nabarro, the number of human H5N1 cases and deaths has decreased.

“The general understanding,” he said, “is that human cases are the sentinel of the overall load of virus in the animal community. This is circumstantial evidence that just at the moment in 2007 we can start to ask ourselves whether the continued intensive spread of H5N1 is perhaps slowing and we’re beginning to see a situation where this threat has been brought under control.”

In the majority of national situations, he said, it is possible now to

bring outbreaks under control more effectively. Such progress is the result of efforts of hundreds of thousands of people who have been working tirelessly to achieve this result.

But the news is not all good. Since the most recent outbreak began in 2003, some 60 countries and territories have had H5N1 outbreaks in poultry or wild birds or both, according to the report. Continuous transmission of H5N1 occurs in some settings: the virus is considered entrenched (enzootic) in parts of Indonesia, Egypt, Nigeria and possibly parts of Bangladesh and China.

Challenges include the need to expand from short-term to sustained responses with increased focus on biosecurity in family and commercial poultry production systems, the importance of intensive responses where the virus is entrenched, the need for sufficient capacity at the country level for compliance with the revised International Health Regulations and the need for convergence in capacities for animal and human health.

ONE WORLD

During the meeting, whose theme is One World: United for Avian Influenza and Pandemic Preparedness, World Health Organization Secretary-General Dr. Margaret Chan called for avian flu preparedness to extend beyond the health sector.

“SARS taught us how much the world has changed in terms of its vulnerability to the consequences of a new disease,” she said. “These consequences include massive eco-

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“Substantial Progress” in Global Avian Flu Response, Report Says . . .

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conomic and social disruption.”

Preparedness must include plans to ensure business continuity and maintain essential services such as food production and distribution, transportation, communication, energy, finance and law enforcement, she said.

In the fight against H5N1, Lange said, the United States listed priority areas that call for systematic effort, including:

Coordinating efforts where H5N1 is entrenched and enhancing biosecurity practices in poultry-rearing and marketing systems;

Ensuring the international community can help an affected nation respond rapidly to an incipient human pandemic;

Seeing that all countries can institute nonpharmaceutical interventions (social distancing) to mitigate the impact of a pandemic on communities before a vaccine is available;

Helping relief agencies and others plan for enormous humanitarian assistance needs that could arise during a pandemic; and

Ensuring that the Global Influenza Surveillance Network works efficiently and transparently for the benefit of global public health.

The government of Egypt will host the next international meeting in October 2008.

The full text (http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6077_Responses_to_Avian_Influenza_and_State_of_Global_Readiness_Dec_2007.pdf) (PDF, 1.73MB) of Responses to Avian Influenza and

State of Pandemic Readiness, Third Global Progress Report, December 2007, is available online (PDF format).

More information (<http://www.state.gov/g/avianflu/>) on U.S. international engagement on avian and pandemic flu is available on the State Department Web site and at a Department of Health and Human Services Web site, Avian-Flu.gov (<http://avianflu.gov/>).

See also Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) (http://usinfo.state.gov/global_issues/bird_flu.html).

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Democracy Network Created for the Americas . . .

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John Maisto, former U.S. permanent representative to the OAS and a member of the pool of democracy practitioners, told USINFO that the network will examine political difficulties in the region’s various countries and “provide information” and “recommend ways” to the OAS secretary-general “on how to deal with such problems.”

The network includes also former U.S. Peace Corps Director Mark Schneider, now with the Washing-

ton-based International Crisis Group. Schneider is a former assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Other members are Manfredo Marroquín, executive director of the Guatemala-based Acción Ciudadana (Citizen Action), which works to increase citizen participation and promote transparency in government; Enrique Ochoa, a former member of Mexico’s Federal Electoral Institute, an autonomous organization responsible for organizing federal elections in that country;

and Ana María Sanjuan, director of the Center for Peace and Human Rights at the Central University of Venezuela.

A complete list of the democracy practitioners will be available soon on the OAS Web site (<http://www.oas.org/>).

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High Stakes Accompany Global Climate Change

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- As delegates gather for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia, the stakes could not be higher. The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) makes it clear that global warming is an "unequivocal" reality whose effects now are being felt around the world.

"Climate change is a serious problem, and humans are contributing to it. We are at a critical moment," Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky recently told the U.S. Congress. "We are committed to doing our part."

"We seek a 'Bali Road Map' that will advance negotiations" under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to be in place by 2009, she said. Dobriansky leads the U.S. delegation to Bali, which also includes senior climate negotiator Harlan Watson.

Greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, produced by human activity are major contributors to global warming, according to the IPCC report. Reducing emissions is critical for conservation of the global environment. Irreversible effects of global warming already have been seen, but scientists say that prompt action can stop many more negative effects.

Habitat degradation and losses of up to 30 percent of plant and animal species and a 1.4 meter sea level rise by 2100 are among the potential impacts of climate change, the report says. Crop production

will be affected; large human migrations will occur. The developing world is most vulnerable.

"Bali is a starting point, not the conclusion," Watson said after the



Antarctic ice is melting more rapidly as global temperatures rise.
(© AP Images)

release of the IPCC final synopsis November 17.

The Bali conference that runs December 3-14 involves 191 countries and will consider ways to meet the looming environmental crisis.

The participants face tough questions, according to Angela Anderson, vice president for climate programs at the National Environmental Trust, a Washington-based, nonpartisan advocacy group.

"Do we continue to maintain the notion of common but differentiated responsibilities? Everyone agrees that the developing world has to make a contribution toward reducing emissions. ... The IPCC has made it pretty clear that if only developed countries reduce emissions, we can't get where we need to go" to stabilize greenhouse gases, she

said.

"There are tremendous needs that go beyond the standard sustainable development assistance that the U.S. and other nations provide," she said.

The "touchiest" and most critical challenge is "to set guiding principles for the mitigation goals for the next two years," Anderson said, adding that at U.N. talks in August, goals were outlined for an agree-

ment that would put emissions reductions "within the range of 25-40 percent below today's levels."

The chief elements to negotiate in the face of the rapid global climate change detailed in the IPCC report, U.S. officials say, are mitigation, adaptation and technology development and transfer.

"The issue warrants urgent action, and we need to bring forward, in a more accelerated way, the technology that will make a lasting solution possible," White House Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James Connaughton said, adding the United States wants mutually acceptable agreements with other nations to curb greenhouse gas emissions in a manner that does not hinder economic growth.

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AIDS Experts See Hope, Concerns in Confronting . . .

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tional Development (USAID) and the National Institutes of Health take the lead in strategies against AIDS.

Dr. S. Ken Yamashita, USAID's director of the Office of HIV/AIDS in the Bureau for Global Health, told USINFO, "We want to make sure that the technical content of these programs has the highest level of expertise and best possible impact."

He said that the infection rate is grim -- "for every one person that goes on treatment, six become infected." He added, "It's not so much that we are losing the war on prevention. It's unless we deal with prevention, we will eventually lose the war on AIDS."

That said, research on new prevention technologies goes on apace and the landscape changes quickly. Changing risky sexual behavior is still the key to prevention, the experts say. Peer outreach is an essential tool in prevention.

"The international theme is 'keep the promise,'" Yamashita said, "and it's the promise that we will remain engaged ... that we'll do everything we can. The promise of making sure we are good partners."

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High Stakes Accompany Global Climate Change . . .

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The U.S. government promotes and funds a wide range of programs, domestic and international, to mitigate these worst outcomes. Cooperation with major economies of Europe and Asia to utilize existing clean and sustainable energy technologies and develop new ones is a high priority, U.S. officials say.

The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate and the Global Village Energy Partnership are two such U.S. initiatives that engage governments and the private sector in China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Latin America to work toward clean development goals alongside national objectives.

"What may happen in Bali is a

likely agreement on the road map for the future," Radjendra Pachauri, IPCC chairman, told the Associated Press. He said he looks for "likely timetables and deadlines" that will extend beyond 2012. The Kyoto Protocol, which commits signatory countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expires in 2012.

The urgency is underlined by recent scientific evidence not reflected in the IPCC report. Scientists say the new data are alarming.

"The scary part of the most recent research is that it appears that the impacts of climate change are happening faster than we've expected," Angela Anderson said, yet she emphasizes the positive. "Estimates of the technology, the solutions, and the mitigation sce-

narios that are available are within our grasp. They are affordable when you look at the global economic cost of them. It's doable. We can mitigate the worst impacts of global warming," she said, "if there is the worldwide political will to do so."

As Pachauri said, "What will be of critical importance is for all the countries of the world to realize that we are all in this together."

For more information on U.S. policies, see Climate Change and Clean Energy (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/climate_change.html).

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