

American

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Arms Treaty Would Enhance Security and Encourage Peace	1
Education Nonprofit Prepares Middle East Youth for Jobs.....	1
First U.S.–African Union Talks Open in Washington.....	2

Arms Treaty Would Enhance Security and Encourage Peace

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The landmark New START Treaty between the United States and Russia would lower the limits on strategic nuclear warheads and the means to deliver them, enhancing each nation's security while also improving relations between the two nuclear superpowers, says Under Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher.

It goes far beyond the traditional arms control treaties of the Cold War years, Tauscher said April 20 in a briefing at the Washington Foreign Press Center. The treaty was signed by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev April 8 at the Prague Castle in Prague, Czech Republic, and would effectively reduce the level of warheads each nation possesses to the lowest levels in more than 50 years.

The treaty, which is designed to succeed the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START I, establishes lower limits on nuclear warheads and the means to deliver them, and it includes a verification regime designed to assure compliance, Tauscher said. Arms reduction verification regimes are critical to a treaty's effectiveness and have been included in every such pact the United States has signed.

"It does this while allowing us to retain the nuclear force levels we need to protect our country and our allies," Tauscher said. "The treaty does nothing to constrain the testing, development or deployment of current and planned United States missile defense systems."

Providing modernized protection from a nuclear strike by another nation and the ability to field a limited missile defense system are major concerns of Congress. Approval of the treaty by the U.S. Senate requires a vote of two-thirds of the membership, or 67 votes. The Russian Duma must also approve the treaty.

But Tauscher, who is under secretary of state for arms control and international relations, also emphasized that this treaty, which would replace the START pact that expired in December 2009, would advance another significant goal of the United States — a resetting of its relationship with Russia while also reinvigorating the arms control process.

"This treaty shows that the United States and Russia can work together on issues of mutual interest, including top priorities like nuclear security and nonproliferation," she said. "The real issue at hand is that the treaty increases

transparency and predictability."

"The lack of both is too costly and too risky for both sides," she added.

Tauscher said the United States is working toward Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and further progress on the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty as additional components of the president's nuclear nonproliferation agenda.

Ambassador Susan Rice, the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations, told the U.N. General Assembly April 19 that the signing of the New START Treaty is a major milestone the president set toward his goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Obama was awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to reduce nuclear weapons and establish effective arms control regimes.

Rice emphasized that the initiative shows a joint determination to pursue responsible global leadership on arms control and a joint commitment to the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). A 25-day review conference on the NPT begins May 3 at the United Nations in New York.

The United States recently has shown that it offers less of a role for nuclear weapons in its national security strategy, Rice said. A newly released Nuclear Posture Review stipulates under what conditions and when the United States might be likely to employ its nuclear arsenal to protect the nation and its interests.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the General Assembly April 19 that disarmament is among the longest-held goals of the United Nations. "When we advance this issue, we are returning to our roots — but we are also looking forward," he said.

Ban said the world today is overarmed and development is underfunded. "Spending on weapons worldwide is now well above \$1 trillion a year and rising," he said. "These priorities should be reversed."

By placing less emphasis on arms and more on development, the world is better positioned to combat climate change, address food insecurity and achieve development goals for the poorest of nations, Ban said.

Education Nonprofit Prepares Middle East Youth for Jobs

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Washington — Doing business in Ireland in the mid-1990s, Ron Bruder saw that as more companies invested

in the country and schools better prepared people for jobs, tensions between the society's factions melted. That perception stuck with him.

The New York entrepreneur, who built businesses in real estate, pharmaceuticals and the travel industry, has moved on to spreading education that helps youths in the Middle East and North Africa land better jobs.

Bruder's Education for Employment Foundation, a nonprofit, partners with local groups, governments, employers and educational institutions to create training programs for young people in the Middle East and North Africa in areas like construction, banking, teaching and hospitality.

The foundation runs programs in the West Bank, Gaza, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Yemen. Several hundred students received diplomas in the first graduating classes in 2006. Bruder expects thousands of students to graduate in 2010. Training courses run from about two months to two years.

Bruder wants his foundation's partnerships, which provide modern curriculums, education loans and jobs, to grow and multiply. The Middle East-North Africa region is expected to need trained people to fill more than 100 million jobs by 2020, he said.

"Having a job is critical to self-esteem and becoming part of the mainstream society," Bruder said in an April 19 CO.NX webchat.

Students in Jordan for the first time are learning land surveying and air conditioning repair. In the West Bank, unemployed engineers are learning how to manage construction sites. And in Gaza, out-of-work accountants are enrolling in a customized master's of business administration program developed in partnership with the University of Maryland. U.S. publishing company McGraw-Hill has contributed a "workplace success" course covering topics like résumé writing, interviewing and leadership.

Morocco's largest employer, the Chaabi industrial group, aided by Harvard University, developed a sales training course for the foundation. It was a stroke of enlightened self-interest. The course produced enough qualified job candidates to enable Chaabi to expand. The head of one of the largest public universities in Morocco then asked to make the course available for all of the school's 27,000 students. "This changes the landscape of the whole university," Bruder said.

"It's important that a country's government and education systems allow young people to harness their ambition and intelligence so they can have meaningful

employment," Bruder said.

Many of the foundation's training programs focus on helping women qualify for jobs. In Yemen, more than 60 percent of those who graduate are women, and in Morocco, female graduates account for more than 70 percent of all graduates. In Egypt, all of the women graduates have found jobs, Bruder said.

Bruder will be participating in the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship April 26-27 in Washington.

First U.S.-African Union Talks Open in Washington

U.S. calls African Union "an essential institution"

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington – The first U.S.-African Union High Level Bilateral Meetings opened at the U.S. Department of State April 21 with the goal of broadening the U.S.-African Union (AU) relationship and deepening the level of engagement between both parties.

Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew welcomed the AU delegation, headed by the chairperson of the African Union Commission, Jean Ping. The three-day session will include visits by the delegation to other U.S. government departments and talks with Cabinet officials such as U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk. Plans call for the meeting to be held annually.

Welcoming the delegation, Lew said the United States is "excited" to host such a meeting with the AU to discuss common priorities for Africa and ways to strengthen the U.S.-AU relationship.

"The United States is a strong supporter of the African Union – an organization with 53 African states and over a billion citizens," he said. The AU is "increasingly the institution that we turn to to help resolve some of Africa's most intractable issues." Lew said the United States is one of only two nations that have a dedicated ambassador to the African Union and is the largest supporter of the AU's peace and security programs.

Lew called the African Union "an essential institution for defending our common principles of democracy and governance. The African Union's courageous stance against unconstitutional changes in governments in Mauritania, Guinea, Niger and Madagascar deserve much praise. The members of the African Union have made a clear decision that the AU will not be a club for generals and dictators, and we applaud the strong steps the organization has taken in this regard."

While cautioning that democracies are never perfect, Lew pledged that the United States stands ready to help any country striving to strengthen its own democratic institutions.

Lew praised the African Union for its “pre-eminent role” in African peacekeeping, particularly in Somalia and Sudan, and pledged that the AU has the full support of the United States for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). “Achieving stability in Somalia and avoiding further bloodshed in Darfur is tremendously important for the region and for the United States,” he said.

In addition, Lew told the delegation that the United States is counting on the AU to support its global health and food security initiative. The United States is also committed to working with Africa to help boost agricultural productivity, he said.

Lew echoed President Obama’s remarks during the president’s visit to Accra, Ghana, noting that Africa is a fundamental part of the interconnected world. He reiterated the Obama administration’s deep commitment to Africa and to fostering the development of institutions like the AU.

“We believe the pursuit of peace and prosperity in Africa is very directly in the interest of the United States and the American people, and finding ways to better support our shared objective will be the focus of our discussions,” he said.

Commission Chairperson Ping said his organization is convinced that Africa and the United States can easily design and build a 21st-century relationship based on shared values, mutual respect, confidence, commitment and partnership.

“Africa and the United States have had a long history of cooperation and are bound together by strong economic, social and cultural ties, but “such cooperation has been mainly at the bilateral level,” he said.

“Now it is clear that the world has been marked by tremendous changes, particularly globalization, the arrival of new players such as civil society, the advent of a new era of empowerment and, above all, the visibility and surge of regional organizations and groupings such as the African Union, the European Union and Mercosur [the Latin American trading bloc of countries].”

New threats have emerged, Lew said. Terrorism, the global financial crisis, piracy, illicit drugs and related problems, organized crime, criminal trafficking and climate change are all assuming greater prominence on

the global agenda, he said, and no longer can be addressed by one country alone. “All of our threats to global security call for global solidarity,” he said.

Africa has a “duty and responsibility” to address its challenges, he said, particularly in the areas of poverty, underdevelopment, democratic governance, health, food security and conflict management.

Ping said the African Union Commission – which he chairs – is the body charged with executing the objectives and mission of the African Union. That, he said, ends with the dream of an independent and strong Africa in a position of comparative advantage vis-à-vis the world and a continent whose concerns are seriously solicited and considered worldwide.

The AU is pursuing four major objectives in its strategy for the continent, Ping said: peace and security; development; shared values; and institutional and human capacity building. He said progress has been made in all four areas.

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