

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

May 6, 2010

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President Obama Praises Indonesia's Intent to Ratify Test Ban Treaty

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama welcomed Indonesia's announcement that it is initiating the process of ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), describing it as a signal that more countries are joining what he called "a renewed effort to reinforce global nonproliferation."

Obama thanked Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and the Indonesian government for "responsible leadership in the global effort to reinforce the nuclear nonproliferation regime" in a May 4 statement.

Indonesia's announcement "advances the vision I outlined in Prague in 2009, and advances the security of the United States, Indonesia and the world," the president said.

"Reinforcing the norm against nuclear testing will help prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and support our efforts to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," Obama said.

The United States has signed the treaty, which prohibits nuclear explosions in all environments for military or civilian purposes. However, the U.S. Senate has not yet ratified the treaty. In his statement, President Obama said his administration is committed to its ratification and its "early entry into force," and will work with U.S. lawmakers.

The United States has observed a moratorium on nuclear testing since 1992, and has no plans to resume testing, U.S. officials said in April.

President Obama said the United States "stands ready to work with all states and encourages them to ratify the treaty and to help bring it into force."

The CTBT has 182 signatories and has been ratified by more than 150 countries. However, it cannot enter into force until it has been ratified by 44 designated countries. Of these 44, India, Pakistan and North Korea have not signed it, and China, the United States, Israel, Egypt, Iran and Indonesia have not ratified it.

In his prepared remarks for the May 3 opening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference in New York, Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said his government's decision follows positive developments that show countries "appear

awakened to the urgency for nuclear disarmament."

He cited the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed by the United States and Russia in April, as well as "positive aspects" stemming from the revised U.S. Nuclear Posture Review.

"We welcome these developments, and what we expect will be the further marginalization of nuclear weapons," Natalegawa said. "Every step forward, no matter how small, should give us new momentum toward the next step so that we advance inexorably to our final goal of complete nuclear disarmament."

"It is our fervent hope that this further demonstration of our commitment to the nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation agenda will encourage other countries that have not ratified the treaty to do the same," Natalegawa said.

Vice President Biden to Discuss Security, Economic Issues in Belgium, Spain

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden will conduct consultations with officials from NATO, the European Union and Spain during a three-day trip that will focus on critical strategic, security and economic issues, the White House says.

The vice president is expected to make a major address to the European Parliament on U.S.-EU cooperation, especially in the areas of security and counterterrorism, the White House said in a statement May 5. Biden left for Brussels May 5 and will conduct meetings May 6 and May 7 there before traveling on to Madrid for meetings May 7 and May 8.

"During these meetings, the vice president will discuss how the United States and the EU can improve cooperation in areas of mutual concern, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran, counterterrorism, climate change and energy security, and the promotion of economic growth," the White House statement said. While in Spain, Biden is expected to consult on shared issues and the Spanish presidency of the EU.

The vice president is expected to address bank data-sharing between law enforcement authorities in the European Union and the United States that is intended to combat terrorism. A measure on this subject has met with some resistance in the 27-nation bloc. The EU had wanted to give U.S. counterterrorism agencies access to data collected by the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), which records and tracks all financial transactions among European banks,

but that became controversial over privacy concerns.

New negotiations are to be held between EU and U.S. Treasury officials to reach an agreement that sets more stringent requirements for obtaining financial data and also provides for privacy safeguards.

NATO MEETINGS

Biden is expected to hold talks with NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen May 6 that will include the NATO-led security mission in Afghanistan, a limited missile defense system for Europe, NATO's Strategic Concept, and its relations with Russia. NATO's Strategic Concept contains the guiding principles used to address security threats and prepare the alliance for the challenges it will face in the 21st century.

In an article in the online *International Herald Tribune* May 5, Biden said he will meet with NATO ambassadors to advance the ongoing dialogue among the United States and its closest allies on the future of European security.

"I do so because the United States is firmly committed to the view that any decisions about Europe's security must be made in close coordination with our European allies and partners. We will decide nothing about our European allies and partners without them," Biden said in the newspaper commentary.

Biden said the United States and NATO must seek to increase transparency about all of their military forces, including conventional and nuclear forces and other defensive assets in Europe, including missile defense. "Our hope is to do this with Russia," Biden said.

"Promoting trust within Europe requires understanding how neighbors understand their security challenges and how they intend to confront those challenges," Biden said.

Biden also said the United States will explore proposals for limits on the size and location of conventional forces, saying these forces should be relevant to today's security challenges, "not yesterday's world."

He also said the United States and Europe need a more effective conflict-prevention, conflict-management and crisis-resolution mechanism to defuse crises before they can escalate out of control.

On May 6 Biden will address the EU Parliament. Following the speech he will meet with European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek and other parliamentary leaders, the White House said. Biden will meet with Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme on May 7.

In Spain Biden will meet with King Juan Carlos to discuss the ongoing cooperation between the United States and Spain on significant global challenges, the White House said. The vice president will conclude his trip May 8 with meetings with President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and members of his government.

United States Seeking to Boost "Fast-Track" Climate Aid

Developed nations pledge \$30 billion over next two years

By Karin Rives
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States plans to do its share to meet "fast-track" financial obligations spelled out by the Copenhagen Accord on climate change, U.S. officials say.

For fiscal year 2011, which begins October 1, President Obama's administration has requested \$1.9 billion in international climate funds from Congress, which must approve all federal spending. That's up from the \$1.3 billion the administration received in 2010 to help developing countries reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adjust to climate change. The 2010 appropriation, in turn, was three times higher than the 2009 amount.

At the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen last December, the United States and other parties to the Copenhagen Accord agreed to raise \$30 billion from 2010 to 2012 in financing for developing nations most at risk of flooding, drought, disease outbreaks and other catastrophes caused by climate change. They also pledged to raise \$100 billion annually by 2020 and to establish the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund to help such nations curb greenhouse gas emissions and adjust to climate challenges.

Since then, questions have been raised over whether developed nations are able and willing to open their wallets to fully meet their promises — especially when many countries, including the United States, face tough economic times and a host of other domestic challenges. Speaking after the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in April in Washington, however, officials told reporters that the world's leading economies are still on board and prepared to fulfill their Copenhagen pledges.

"I think there is an appreciation — I think, really, by everybody in the room — that it's important to make good on that commitment," Michael Froman, U.S. deputy national security advisor for international economic affairs, said at the briefing. While the discussion in Washington did not focus on how individual countries will make their contributions, there was "a broader agreement that that funding needs to be made available," he said.

Todd Stern, U.S. special envoy for climate change and the nation's top climate negotiator, added that United States assistance that is part of the \$30 billion "fast-track" funding has already begun to flow and will continue to build in 2010. About 40 percent of the money will go to projects that U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) runs under its foreign assistance programs in individual countries. The rest will be sent to various channels, including climate investment funds managed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, he said.

"We're fully transparent about what our financing plans are," Stern said.

So far, individual countries are disbursing money through programs of their own choosing, Stern said, but discussions have begun about coordinating the climate money channels in the future.

U.S. international climate assistance for 2010 and the money the administration requested for 2011 will cover the \$1 billion the U.S. government has pledged to spend on forest projects under the United Nations-led Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) program. The program will offer financial incentives to landowners not to cut trees, giving them an economic reason to preserve forests. It will also help fund forest conservation and sustainable forest management.

Each time a tree is felled, carbon dioxide stored in that tree is released into the atmosphere. Deforestation is estimated to account for about 20 percent of current greenhouse gas emissions and, if successful, REDD could have a significant impact on global temperatures.

U.S. Expects Mideast Proximity Talks to Begin Within Days

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell has begun four days of discussions with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, and the State Department has described his first meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "good and productive," adding that it expects proximity talks between the two sides will begin before Mitchell returns to Washington May 9.

Speaking to reporters May 5, State Department Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs P.J. Crowley said Mitchell will meet again with Netanyahu May 6 before having discussions with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas May 7 and May 8.

"We hope and expect formally to move forward with proximity talks before Senator Mitchell leaves the region on Sunday," Crowley said. After his return to

Washington, the special envoy will report to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on what was discussed, Crowley said.

During the four days of meetings, "issues can be discussed, they can be evaluated, and follow-up meetings can further refine what was discussed," Crowley said. "At the end of this string of meetings, we'll be in a position to characterize where we are."

The Obama administration has been working to start indirect or "proximity talks" between the two sides with the goal that they will lead to direct face-to-face talks.

Secretary Clinton said April 30 that the United States is seeking a two-state solution to the conflict, as well as a regional peace that would include Syria and Lebanon and the normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

"We believe that through good-faith negotiations, the parties can mutually agree to an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the [19]67 lines with agreed swaps and Israel's goal of a Jewish state with the secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israel's security requirements," Clinton said.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said President Obama spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu May 3 ahead of Mitchell's arrival in the region.

"They discussed how best to work together to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East, in particularly by making full use of substantive proximity talks between Israel and the Palestinians and transitioning to direct negotiations as soon as possible. They also discussed regional challenges and the president reaffirmed his unshakable commitment to Israel's security," Gibbs said.

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