

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Secretary Clinton, State Councilor Liu Launch U.S.-China People-to-People Initiative

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chinese State Councilor Liu Yandong have launched a people-to-people initiative aimed at enhancing understanding and engagement between the Chinese and American people through a variety of exchange programs.

Clinton and Liu signed the initiative in a ceremony at the National Center for the Performing Arts near Beijing's Tiananmen Square May 25. They were joined by more than 300 American and Chinese students, scholars, teachers, musicians and cultural representatives.

The relationship between China and the United States “must extend beyond the halls of governments to our homes, businesses and schools,” Clinton told the audience. “We need Chinese and Americans of all ages, professions and walks of life to get to know one another, to understand each other better, to connect and collaborate.”

“What we call people-to-people diplomacy has taken on greater significance as our world has grown more interdependent and our challenges more complex,” Clinton said.

The people-to-people engagement ceremony came amid two and a half days of intense strategic and economic negotiations in Beijing on the second of three stops during Clinton's three-nation diplomatic mission to Northeast Asia. She stopped first in Tokyo before traveling to Shanghai for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo and then to Beijing for the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.

Clinton concludes her trip in Seoul May 26 for what is expected to be equally intense consultations over measures to take against North Korea for the sinking of a South Korean naval vessel March 26.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE

Clinton and Liu co-chaired the first U.S.-China Consultation on People-to-People Exchange, which is aimed at promoting better engagement and understanding among the Chinese people and Americans. The engagement will focus on educational, cultural, science and technology, sports and related fields.

And Clinton launched the “100,000 Strong” initiative, which was announced by President Obama during a

November 2009 visit to China. It promotes mutual understanding through private-sector student exchanges and aims to have 100,000 American students study in China over the next four years. The exchange is designed for American students to study Mandarin Chinese and to interact with everyday Chinese people in ways that cannot be done in college classrooms in the United States.

In support of the initiative, China announced that it will provide 10,000 “Bridge Scholarships” to American students for Chinese-language study in China.

Clinton said the under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, Judith McHale, will coordinate the expanding exchange efforts.

Bilateral relations between the United States and China were re-established in 1979, and educational and cultural exchange programs have since played an increasingly important role. Efforts include the U.S.-China Fulbright Program, the U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers who teach English, and science and technology cooperation. The newly launched people-to-people exchange program also will encourage greater private-sector involvement, such as the cooperative effort by Sesame Workshop and Shanghai Media Group that will produce children's educational programming.

“Our people represent our greatest resource in both of our countries,” Clinton said at the Performing Arts Center. “Encouraging their mutual engagement will better ensure that the United States and China make the most of this exciting time in our shared history.”

Secretary Clinton Says Iran Nuclear Swap Plan a Ploy

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in China for strategic and economic negotiations, says a plan offered by Iran to swap some of its enriched uranium for reactor fuel is a “transparent ploy” to avoid U.N. Security Council sanctions.

On May 17 the Iranian regime announced that it has agreed to a plan negotiated by Turkey and Brazil to ship 1,200 kilograms of low-enriched uranium to Turkey, where it would be stored. After one year, Iran would have the right to receive about 120.2 kilograms of uranium enriched to 20 percent from Russia and France in fuel rods for a medical reactor in Tehran.

“There are a number of deficiencies with it that do not answer the concerns of the international community,” Clinton said at a press conference in Beijing. Clinton was in Beijing on the second stop of a three-nation diplomatic mission to Northeast Asia.

"There is a recognition on the part of the international community that the agreement that was reached in Tehran a week ago between Iran and Brazil and Turkey only occurred because the Security Council was on the brink of publicly releasing the text of the resolution that we have been negotiating for many weeks," she added.

"It was a transparent ploy to avoid Security Council action," she said.

Clinton announced at a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing May 18 that the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany had reached agreement on a draft sanctions resolution that has been presented to the other members of the U.N. Security Council. The six countries are known as the P5+1 and include the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany.

Details of the sanctions resolution were not announced, but it is expected to carry broad economic penalties against Iranian officials and institutions responsible for the nuclear development program. Work toward the sanctions resolution began after Iran failed to comply with an October 2009 agreement on its nuclear materials.

"There is a clear choice which Iran faces. It's been the same choice that it has faced since the Obama administration undertook its dual-track approach of engaging with Iran and holding in abeyance international pressure," Clinton said.

The six countries had offered Iran a means of swapping its enriched uranium that would have eliminated the risk the material would be used for nuclear weapons, but still give Iran the nuclear fuel needed for its Tehran reactor. Clinton said the difference now is that the diplomatic track has moved to the Security Council. The Security Council previously imposed three sets of political and economic sanctions on Iran.

Clinton said there is a standing invitation from the six nations that have tried to negotiate with Iran: begin a discussion about its nuclear program, forgo uranium enrichment and accept the offers made by the P5+1.

"We discussed all of this in great detail with our Chinese friends and we are moving forward to hold Iran accountable," Clinton told reporters.

Agricultural Development Essential to Economic Development

International agriculture expert addresses symposium

By Charles W Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Nations and governments must recognize

that agricultural development is essential to their economic development and security, says Paul Schickler, president of Pioneer Hi-Bred seed company.

"If you look throughout the world, a lot of the issues around food shortages and deficiencies are in areas of conflict," he told the Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security May 20 in Washington.

"There is no better person I can quote to make this point even stronger than the father of the Green Revolution," noted scientist, humanitarian, founder of the World Food Prize and 1970 Nobel laureate, Norman Borlaug, who said, 'You can't build a peaceful world on empty stomachs and human misery.'"

Illustrating his point, Schickler said in the 1980s Brazil was not open to outside investment and technology imports and had a "very closed approach" to agriculture.

Schickler said his company experienced that "protectionism" firsthand. But then things changed, he said, as Brazil started to welcome international involvement, investment and technology and then took down some of its trade and tariff barriers. Look at what has happened to Brazil in the wake of that decision, he told his audience.

The country has blossomed into a leading world agricultural power in citrus, soybean, coffee, sugar cane, pork and chicken production. "As a result of those investments, now we look to Brazil as a technology leader as well," he said.

(Schickler, who joined Pioneer Hi-Bred in 1974, was named vice president and director of Latin American operations in 1999, with Africa added in 2002. In October 2003, he was named vice president for international operations.)

Schickler said agricultural development must be looked at holistically. "A company, a nongovernmental organization [NGO], an individual, a government cannot do it by themselves," he said, and, for that reason, a holistic approach must be adopted if agricultural productivity is to be moved forward.

He said there is also a fundamental need in countries for a strong legal system, property rights, land rights and the ability to use land as collateral for loans, so farmers can get much-needed credit.

Other factors are important as well, he said, like the availability of tools and technology, the sharing of information, roads, storage facilities and access to markets. Education for farmers and strong extension services (help services) for farmers are also essential

ingredients in achieving agricultural progress, he said. "You need to have education to train agricultural producers," he said, "and you need extension services to deploy information throughout the agricultural sector."

Citing an example of the holistic approach, Schickler said his company went into a banana-producing suburb of Nairobi – which had largely exhausted its ability to produce bananas and was experiencing major insect infestations as well. To address the problem, Schickler said, his company went in with new disease-resistant plants, but did not stop there.

"We also put in place a credit system and an education [system that was built] around agronomic practices, so you could get the most out of the banana plants that were provided. We created a market organization so that we could bring those products to the market in Nairobi and finally we also put in a maize project inside the banana project so that they could learn about other opportunities besides just improving banana production." Seven years later, he said, that program is still thriving.

Agriculture is very, very local, Schickler said. "You can't look at solving issues from a distance or providing uniform solutions across differing environments." Instead, he said, you need to focus on local implementation and the local environment. "That is the nature of our business. When we operate anywhere in the world we use local people, local resources. We also develop products that are specifically tailored for the environment where our customers will use them," along with the support services necessary for them to prosper.

Schickler said his company recently helped reforest hillsides and rebuild canals on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, where Pioneer operates a seed production facility. That was necessary because the facility had been adversely affected by deforestation, erosion and decreasing water quality. With those repairs done, Pioneer is now back in the seed production business there and contributing to the success of the local community, which is dependent on the local irrigation system and needs the seeds that Pioneer can provide.

Earlier at the same symposium, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Rajiv Shah announced the Feed the Future initiative, which will increase the incomes of 40 million people over 10 years and reduce chronic malnourishment. Feed the Future involves the expertise of several U.S. agencies, including USAID, the departments of Agriculture and Treasury, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Peace Corps, working in collaboration with a potential 20 "focus countries" in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Coptic Church Festival Promotes Egyptian Culture in America

St. Mark Church celebrates Egyptian life with handicrafts, music and food

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington – Storms often ruin weekend plans, but not at St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church in Fairfax, Virginia.

Despite heavy rains, Northern Virginia's largest Coptic church held its annual Egyptian Festival May 22-23 by moving activities into its gym on Sunday.

"I think they did a good job of plowing through the rain and setting up indoors," said Ben Thompson, a visitor to the festival from nearby Arlington, Virginia.

Held for the past 17 years, the festival promotes Egyptian culture to Americans through food, music and handicrafts. St. Mark administrator Adel Messeh said the festival is a good way to perform community outreach.

"We want to get the community around us to know about us," Messeh said. "We want them to know about our culture."

Built in 1994, St. Mark Church serves a congregation of some 1,000 families living in and around Washington. The festival also promotes a spirit of unity for the church community.

"We spend two days talking, eating and having fun in a spiritual setting," Messeh said. The event is managed by church volunteers and most of the food is donated by congregation members.

Musicians played modern and traditional Egyptian songs during the two-day festivities. Handicrafts for sale included traditional Egyptian clothes, furniture, papyrus, statuettes, tableware and jewelry boxes. Congregation members purchase the goods in Egypt and donate them to the church. The Egyptian Embassy in Washington donated items for sale at this year's festival.

Egyptian Embassy Consul Ashraf Salama, who attended the event, said the embassy represents all Egyptians abroad.

"The Coptic community is part of the Egyptian community and we are there for the Egyptian community," Salama said. "We donate items so that fundraising for the church improves."

Messeh said funds raised by the sale of food and handicrafts go to church programs such as the Hope Clinic, part of the church's Mission Life Center. Staffed by

church volunteers with medical expertise, the clinic serves members of the church and the community at large who cannot afford medical care.

Ingy El Wekil, a culinary arts student of Egyptian origin, attended the event because a member of the congregation invited her family. El Wekil said cultural festivals educate Americans about diversity in Arab countries.

“Events like this give a different perspective to people who think that all Arabs are Muslims,” El Wekil said. “It sheds some light on the fact that there are other religions [in the region] ... and really shows that at the end of the day people are people.”

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