

American

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President Obama Offers Redoubled U.S. Support for Africa Against Terror

By Stephen Kaufman, Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama said the United States will redouble its cooperation with Uganda and other African Union members against the Somali terror group al-Shabaab to try to ensure that it and similar organizations “are not able to kill Africans with impunity.”

Speaking with the South African Broadcasting Corporation at the White House July 13, Obama said he had conveyed to Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni the condolences of the American people for the July 11 attacks that killed more than 70 who had gathered at locations in Kampala to watch the World Cup final. Obama also told Museveni that the United States will support a thorough investigation into the attacks, for which al-Shabaab has claimed credit.

Obama said it was “tragic and ironic” that the attacks took place during South Africa’s hosting of the World Cup, which had offered “a terrific showcase ... for Africa as a whole” by refuting negative stereotypes of African capacity and demonstrating that “when given an opportunity, Africa is a continent full of leaders, entrepreneurs, [and] governments that can operate effectively.”

“On the one hand, you have a vision of an Africa on the move, an Africa that is unified, an Africa that is modernizing and creating opportunities; and on the other hand, you’ve got a vision of al-Qaida and al-Shabaab that is about destruction and death,” Obama said. “I think it presents a pretty clear contrast in terms of the future that most Africans want for themselves and their children.”

The international community needs to “support those who want to build, as opposed to want to destroy,” he said. And as Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government continues to try to establish itself, he said, African Union peacekeeping forces should work with Somali authorities to “try to stabilize the situation and start putting that country on a pathway that provides opportunity for people, as opposed to creating a breeding ground for terrorism” that could export more violence beyond Somalia’s borders if al-Shabaab gains more control within the country.

Obama said statements by terror organizations show that “they do not regard African life as valuable in and of itself. They see it as a potential place where you can carry out ideological battles that kill innocents without regard to long-term consequences for their short-term tactical gains.”

For that reason, he said, it is important that even as the international community deals militarily with al-Shabaab and other violent extremists, it must also promote development, entrepreneurship, democracy and human freedoms and build upon the models of countries like South Africa that “are trying to move in the right direction” and empower their citizens to improve their lives. “Hopefully, the United States can be an effective partner in that,” the president said.

Obama referred to his July 2009 speech in Ghana, where he said the United States can partner with African nations, “but ultimately, on whether it’s issues of eliminating corruption, ensuring smooth transitions of democratic governments, making sure that businesses are able to thrive and prosper and that markets are working for the smallest farmer and not just the most well-connected person — those are issues that Africans can work on together.”

The United States wants to provide resources to Africa but wants to partner with Africans “who are interested in growing their own capacity over time and not having a long-term dependency on foreign aid,” the president said.

Obama said former South African President Nelson Mandela has provided a path to understand “the standards of leadership that are needed” on the continent and expressed confidence that those standards could be met. Mandela is “not just a national treasure” for South Africa, “but a world treasure,” he said.

“We are constantly reminded that his legacy of seeing every person as important, and not making distinctions based on race or class but the degree to which they are people of character — that’s a good guidepost for how all of us should operate as leaders,” Obama said.

President Obama Announces New National HIV/AIDS Strategy

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — It has been nearly 30 years since the first five cases of HIV/AIDS were documented in the United States, but since then activists, researchers, community leaders and policymakers have waged a constant battle against a disease that was surrounded by fear and misunderstanding, says President Obama.

HIV/AIDS was “a disease we were too slow to confront and too slow to turn back,” Obama said. “In the decades since — as epidemics have emerged in countries throughout Africa and around the globe — we’ve grown better equipped, as individuals and as nations, to fight this disease.”

The White House issued the National HIV/AIDS Strategy July 13 in Washington to address a disease that infects about 56,000 people each year in the United States, with more than 1.1 million Americans currently living with HIV. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced that \$30 million of a new federally managed prevention fund will be used to help implement the HIV/AIDS strategy.

The funding will support the development of improved methods of disease prevention and will also support improved surveillance, expanded and targeted testing and other related health support activities, she said.

"Our strategy calls for aggressive efforts to educate Americans about how dangerous this disease still is and the steps they can take to protect themselves and their loved ones," Sebelius said during the White House announcement.

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy is the product of numerous discussions in 14 U.S. communities, and with more than 4,200 people, and from more than 1,000 recommendations sent to the White House from across the country. The strategy is based on addressing three goals – prevention, treatment and reducing health disparities.

The national strategy is similar to the Global Health Initiative, which is aimed at fighting HIV/AIDS and other diseases and health issues in other areas of the world, including Africa, where the disease has been especially harsh, Obama said. He said funding for that initiative has been increased.

But he added that funding alone is only part of the Global Initiative's objectives. There is also the need to expand capacity in health care systems.

"For example, what are we doing in terms of creating public health systems and infrastructure in a place like South Africa so that the incidents of infection are reduced? We're not just treating the disease itself, but we're also doing a much better job in terms of general public health so that fewer people are getting infected in the first place," Obama said.

Obama said it is a reorientation of thinking about how to address this global disease. Funding is essential and providing anti-retroviral medicines for treating the disease is critical to halting HIV/AIDS, but "we also want to build capacity at the same time." It is a strong lesson learned from fighting the disease in the United States.

Through the Global Health Initiative (GHI) the United States will invest \$63 billion over six years to help partner countries improve health care results through

strengthened health systems. It builds on the original President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), begun during the administration of former President George W. Bush.

"Reducing new HIV infections, improving care for people living with HIV/AIDS, narrowing health disparities – these are the central goals of our national strategy," Obama said. "They must be pursued hand in hand with our global public health strategy to roll back the pandemic beyond our borders."

Joint Statement by U.S., Laos on Bilateral Diplomatic Relations

Secretary Clinton, Lao foreign minister emphasize increase in bilateral relations

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
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MEDIA NOTE

Secretary Clinton's Meeting with Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith

Following is the text of a joint statement by the United States and Laos issued on July 13, 2010 in Washington, DC.

In this 55th anniversary year of bilateral diplomatic relations, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith met today for a cordial and productive discussion of common interests in Southeast Asia, and of growing areas of bilateral cooperation.

The United States and Laos continue their longtime cooperation in the search for Americans missing from the Indochina War, on clearance of unexploded ordnance remaining from the war, and on fighting drug addiction and illegal drug trafficking. More recently, the two countries have been working closely together on preventing the emergence of pandemic diseases, and continue to gradually expand military-to-military cooperation following the exchange of defense attachés. Secretary Clinton and Deputy Prime Minister Thongloun welcomed the signing of an "Air Transport Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic" that will facilitate greater trade and tourism exchanges. They discussed the opportunities to expand the role of the U.S. Agency for International Development in the Lao PDR.

Secretary Clinton and Deputy Prime Minister Thongloun both emphasized that increasing exchanges and

cooperation between the United States of America and the Lao PDR are producing mutual benefits and a constructive relationship contributing to peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world.

While expressing his sincere thanks for the warm welcome extended him and his delegation, Deputy Prime Minister Thongloun invited Secretary Clinton to pay an official visit to the Lao PDR at a convenient time.

U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue Shows Progress in Many Sectors

Pakistan meetings helping advance the U.S.-Pakistan partnership

By Carrie Loewenthal Massey
Special Correspondent

New York — U.S. and Pakistan officials strengthened plans for Pakistan's development during a series of working groups held in Islamabad throughout June and July, building on partnerships established under the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue.

Numerous strategic dialogue groups met to discuss such topics as water management, health, agriculture, education, economics and finance, access to markets, energy, science and technology, communications, women's issues, law enforcement and defense.

The Pakistan sessions incorporate field experts and U.S. and Pakistani policymakers in each sector. Approaching the issues separately, in concentrated discussions, has allowed leaders to identify projects in key areas and create "a road map for making consistent progress," said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, speaking at March meetings of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue.

Clinton and Pakistani Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi introduced the first ministerial-level discussions of the Strategic Dialogue in Washington in March. As a way to demonstrate the commitment of the U.S.-Pakistan partnership, the Strategic Dialogue includes a policy steering group and 13 topical working groups.

"Our success will be determined not by how often we gather in government summits, but in how well our partnership translates into lasting progress for the millions who live in cities and villages far from the halls of power and whose lives will be shaped by our actions," Clinton said. "Bettering the lives of people must remain the motivation for everything we do."

Qureshi requested that the working groups meet in Pakistan to continue the joint U.S.-Pakistan efforts. Clinton said she hopes the dialogue will "expand and endure," leading to more and more collaborative

accomplishments and strengthened relations between the two countries.

According to U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke, the Islamabad meetings have brought those ideas closer to fruition and have demonstrated a strong commitment to the dialogue's objectives.

"In all of these meetings, we are discussing real policy issues and how to work together to advance our common agenda," he said in Islamabad June 19. "This is real progress across the board."

PARTNERING ON WATER, ENERGY, SCIENCE

One of the key areas of collaboration is water management, which was discussed at one of the working groups in June. U.S. and Pakistani officials worked to develop a list of mutually agreed upon priorities to tackle the significant water-scarcity threat Pakistan faces. Areas of concern include irrigation systems, safe drinking water and sanitation, conservation and developing a sustainable infrastructure for managing the country's water supply, according to a joint U.S.-Pakistan press statement.

"This was the first time we have discussed water issues with Pakistan in such detail," Holbrooke said in June.

The United States will support Pakistan in creating a water regulatory authority to help manage the many components of water security and the demands of the country's different regions, many of which were represented on the working group. In fall 2010, the U.S. plans to host Pakistani water experts from the federal and provincial governments for meetings with American water specialists, "to study how the U.S. deals with our own serious federal-versus-state water issues — an issue that has been at the center of American history for over 150 years," Holbrooke said.

With the first phase of the U.S. energy program Clinton announced in Pakistan in October 2009 under way, the United States and Pakistan are working to rehabilitate power facilities, improve tube well pump efficiency and enhance energy companies' distribution performance, according to the Strategic Dialogue energy working group.

The group is considering more short- and medium-term solutions to remaining energy shortages, as well as long-term measures such as increasing private-sector investment in energy, the group said.

A science and technology working group is exploring ways to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in Pakistan as another area of cooperation.

WORKING TOWARD AN IMPROVED ECONOMY

Several of the Strategic Dialogue groups focused on economic issues, concentrating on agriculture, economics and finance and access to markets. The group on agriculture, meeting for the third time, agreed to focus on improving wheat and cotton productivity, combating animal and plant diseases, developing Pakistan's dairy sector and increasing market access in the United States for Pakistani products like mangoes.

Increasing market access includes efforts to advance legislation to create Reconstruction Opportunity Zones, under which the United States would grant duty-free market access to goods produced in designated conflict areas of Pakistan to improve the livelihoods of people living in those regions. U.S. support for mutually agreed Pakistani priorities of energy security, food security and human development was an important conclusion of the economic and finance group.

Holbrooke spoke of using trade shows, such as New York-based textile and apparel shows in July, to further the business dialogue. "We want to give the U.S. business community a chance to learn that Pakistan is open for business, and we want to help you showcase the quality of your great Pakistani products," he said.

FOCUSING ON WOMEN, HEALTH, EDUCATION

Health projects are an important element of the long-term U.S.-Pakistan partnership, as the Strategic Dialogue working group on health focused on Pakistan's National Health Policy, improving provincial health care systems and expanding immunization campaigns, particularly for polio and hepatitis.

A group on women's empowerment, conducting the first official U.S.-Pakistan dialogue on women's development and empowerment, focused on such issues as exploring economic opportunities for women by creating technical training programs on entrepreneurship and microfinance, addressing violence against women, making key judicial and law enforcement agencies more aware of gender issues, and empowering women politically, with training programs for female local leaders.

Ensuring that all Pakistanis have access to quality education, particularly girls, was the focus of the education working group. The group also explored support for technical and higher education, creating centers of excellence at Pakistani universities and deepening U.S.-Pakistani exchanges such as the Fulbright Program. Pakistan has the largest Fulbright Program in the world, now in its 60th year in the country.

COOPERATING ON DEFENSE, LAW ENFORCEMENT

Two working groups continue to explore ways to increase cooperation on defense and on law enforcement to combat terrorism, with the defense working group meeting in Rawalpindi in June and the law enforcement and counterterrorism group meeting in Islamabad in July.

The defense working group, also called an exchange on defense planning, focused on the challenges faced by both Pakistan and the United States in their multiyear cooperation, and worked on areas of future cooperation on security issues. The law enforcement group explored counterterrorism legislation, strengthening judicial and law enforcement capabilities and improving border controls to help trade move more effectively but block contraband and terrorists' travel.

Both groups issued statements with U.S. officials acknowledging and recognizing the sacrifices and courage of Pakistan's agencies and people in combating terrorism, while Pakistani officials expressed appreciation for U.S. support and assistance on counterterrorism.

The Strategic Dialogue groups will continue to meet in the coming months, as both the United States and Pakistan pledge a deepening commitment to their long-term partnership.

As Clinton said in March, "Pakistan's stability and prosperity is in the best interests of people everywhere. Its struggles are our struggles. Its future and ours are entwined. And its people and our people share many of the same dreams, dreams we are more likely to achieve working together."

U.S.-Egypt Project Uses Space Technology for Environmental Change

Cairo workshop results from Obama's promise to Muslim-majority nations

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington — Scientists and representatives from U.S. and Egyptian technical agencies met with industry and university partners in Cairo June 14-17 to examine the role that remote sensing and other space technologies can play in helping Egypt address multiple environmental issues, including climate change.

The workshop, hosted by the Egyptian space agency, the National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences (NARSS), is one of many science and technology partnerships resulting from President Obama's commitment in Cairo in June 2009 to renew engagement with Muslim-majority countries.

Egypt is a newcomer to the space enterprise, having sent its first satellite into orbit in 2007.

NARSS Chairman Ayman El-Dessouky Ibrahim participated in the workshop and NASA Administrator Charles Bolden addressed the workshop and answered questions.

“While the majority of NASA’s cooperation is accomplished with space-faring nations,” those that have built and launched manned spacecraft, Bolden told a Cairo University audience June 15, “other nations are increasingly relying on the unique capabilities of space for day-to-day activities such as urban planning, resource management, communications, weather forecasting, navigation and disaster management.”

The meeting’s 100 participants included scientists from the Egyptian government; from NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of Energy; from the Regional Center for Mapping of Resources for Development in Nairobi, Kenya; and from U.N. Habitat, the U.N. agency that promotes sustainable urbanization and access to clean water.

“One objective of the workshop was to bring professional and technical people together to exchange ideas and help them make connections in this field,” Marsha Goldberg of the Association of American Geographers, one of the conference organizers, told America.gov. “I think it was successful in doing that because people went away having met their counterparts.”

KNOWLEDGE FROM THE SKY

Information about Earth that comes from satellites, sometimes called geospatial information, is derived from combining new information technologies such as satellite remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning systems, and Web-based mapping tools like Google Earth to create multidimensional maps of an area that include information about an area’s elevation, forest cover, population, roadways, water infrastructure, electrical grid and more.

Collecting and using geospatial information involves people, satellites, computers, special hardware and software, and training. Satellite sensors acquire images of the Earth and transmit the data to receiving stations worldwide. When the raw images are processed and analyzed, they can document changing environmental conditions like deforestation, desertification, pollution, floods, urban sprawl and global climate change.

The U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) has several

elements: 24 satellites in Earth orbit with atomic clocks aboard, ground stations that control the system and receivers for users. Anyone with a GPS receiver can use the system. The technology is used in everything from cars, boats and airplanes to cell phones, wristwatches and computers. It is used in navigation, farming, mining, construction, surveying, routing of taxicabs, emergency vehicles and package-delivery trucks, and many other science and technology applications.

PRIORITIES FOR COOPERATION

From the workshop in Cairo came a list of about 30 priorities for cooperation between scientists in the United States and Egypt for applications in agriculture, water, urbanization, archaeology, space weather and small satellites.

GPS technology, for example, is key to improving the efficiency of agricultural water use.

“This is known as precision agriculture, where a GPS device is attached to any part of a tractor to improve the application of fertilizer, insecticides and any other input, including water, to an agricultural field,” said Fernando Echavarría of the Space and Advanced Technology Office, State Department Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science.

“When you have a population like Egypt’s with more than 80 million people who can only cultivate less than 3 percent of the national territory along a very narrow buffer on both sides of the Nile Valley and the Nile Delta,” he said, “improving the efficiency of water use for agriculture becomes critical. And it will become increasingly important as the climate changes.”

Proposals for possible future U.S.-Egypt collaboration include:

- With NARSS and NOAA’s National Weather Service, engage in projects involving satellite-based environmental monitoring to protect coastlines and predict weather.
- With NARSS and NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, use data from Egypt’s first remote sensing satellite, EgyptSat-1, to study water balance, manage disasters and improve atmospheric models.
- With NARSS, NASA, NOAA and Chapman and Cairo universities, assess the impact of climate change by using satellite data to monitor Nile River water resources, agriculture, land use changes, desertification and soil erosion.
- With Purdue University and Egyptian universities, improve regional public health surveillance by using remote sensing to detect and fight infectious diseases and create early warning systems for mosquito-borne diseases.

The projects will be forwarded for consideration to the board of the U.S.-Egypt Joint Science and Technology Fund, which provided initial funding for this workshop.

U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS

U.S. federal agencies and American companies and universities provided funding and expertise for the U.S.-Egypt workshop.

University experts attended from Arizona State University, the University of Alabama-Birmingham, Purdue University in Indiana and Chapman University in California. Industry representatives from the Environmental Systems Research Institute and Trimble Navigation Limited, both based in California, gave presentations.

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