

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Pledges to Work with Young African Leaders

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama told young African leaders at the start of a three-day conference that as they work to build strong economies with jobs and opportunity, the United States will work with them, promoting the trade and investment on which growth depends.

“No one should have to pay a bribe to get a job or get government to provide basic services,” Obama told delegates to the first President’s Forum with Young African Leaders, which is meeting in Washington August 3-5. “As part of our new development strategy, we’re emphasizing transparency, accountability and a strong civil society — the kinds of reform that can help unleash transformational change.”

“It will be up to you — young people full of talent and imagination — to build the Africa for the next 50 years,” the president said.

Obama convened the conference with approximately 115 young leaders from a cross section of African life to examine how they see Africa’s future over the next half century and to help craft innovative solutions to regional challenges. Working with American counterparts and U.S. government officials, the delegates are sharing their insights on key conference themes of youth empowerment, good governance and economic opportunity.

The conference is being held at the White House and State Department as well as at locations in the Washington area with American business leaders and nongovernmental organizations. Delegates came from 46 countries and represent an array of political, economic, cultural and social arenas in their African homes.

A key event in the conference was a town hall meeting between the delegates and Obama in the East Room of the White House August 3. Obama spoke for about 10 minutes from prepared remarks, but told the delegates that “I don’t want to do all the talking. I want to hear from you.”

“You are the heirs of the independence generation that we celebrate this year. Because of their sacrifice, you were born in independent African states,” Obama said.

In Africa this year, 17 sub-Saharan nations are celebrating 50 years of independence, and since the early 1990s, democracy has made significant strides on the continent.

Recently, democratic elections have been held in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius and Ghana, which illustrates the importance that Africans are placing in democracy and good governance.

“Just as the achievements of the last 50 years inspire you, the work you do today will inspire Africans for generations,” Obama told the delegates.

Asked about the disruptive power of corruption found in many African societies, Obama told delegates that while the problem is not unique to Africa, good governance is at the center of economic development on the continent, and there has to be a clear sense of the rule of law for growth and opportunity to flourish. It is one reason, he said, why the United States stresses the values of good governance to African leaders.

A young woman asked what commitment Obama could offer to the people of Somalia, a nation that has been torn apart by conflict for nearly two decades and struggles daily to maintain some degree of order. The president said that Somalia has the support of the American people, even through all it has suffered. “We desperately want Somalia to succeed,” he said.

But extremists have made a home in Somalia, the president said, because they believe it is a failed state. There is concern in Africa and in the region that continued instability there could have a destabilizing impact across the region, but the resolution of that strife will not happen soon, he said.

When challenged on how much support the United States is offering Africans in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, which has posed a significant health challenge across the continent, Obama said funding has been increased during his administration, and that it is now included in a broader program attacking worldwide diseases. He said that former President George W. Bush, during his administration, initiated the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which vastly improved health care support for Africans dealing with the highly infectious disease.

That health program is being expanded under Obama’s broader Global Health Initiative. It does not stop at AIDS treatment, he said. It includes building a public health structure that also attacks transmission of the disease. One significant aspect of curbing transmission rates is empowerment programs for women, he added. Where women are empowered, researchers say, HIV transmission rates decline over time.

Another aspect of the Global Health Initiative, Obama said, is to improve public understanding of the nature of HIV/AIDS, how it is transmitted and what is needed to

curb its spread.

U.S. Works to Eliminate Threats from Land Mines, Munitions

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Civilians across the world confront the remnants of wars and civil strife each day in the form of unexploded land mines and leftover small arms that can destroy lives and livelihoods. Since 1993, the United States has worked with governments, private groups and organizations in more than 50 countries to eradicate these threats, says Brigadier General Thomas Masiello.

“The United States is the largest contributor in humanitarian demining as well as conventional weapons destruction,” said Masiello, a U.S. Air Force general who is also a deputy assistant secretary of state in the State Department’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.

“This year for 2009 ... we continue a very strong and robust effort, investing and contributing up to \$130 million,” he said. “We have programs ongoing in 32 countries.” The funds also support education programs to teach local populations about the dangers of these leftover weapons, and the programs help survivors recover from injuries sustained when they have come into contact with unexploded munitions and long-buried land mines.

The State Department released its *To Walk the Earth in Safety* 2009 report on August 3.

Assistant Secretary of State Andrew Shapiro said that in many countries struggling to recover from conflicts, land mines and unexploded bombs and other munitions often obstruct the path to stabilization and inhibit long-term development. While there has been significant progress in the last decade, Shapiro says, including several countries that have been declared free from the impact of land mines, much work remains.

At a special Washington press briefing August 3, Masiello said that since 1993 the State Department has worked in close cooperation with the Defense Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Leahy War Victims Fund, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to assist in the destruction of 1.4 million small arms and light weapons and 80,000 tons of munitions. The third piece of conventional weapons destruction is 32,000 surface-to-air missiles.

Much of the work to eradicate land mines, small arms and unexploded munitions is done at the local or community level, Masiello said. The United States helps provide the funding, training and often equipment to remove munitions. The work is also done through a highly

effective network of nongovernmental organizations that works with local communities.

Masiello cited Bosnia-Herzegovina as a country that had a significant residual land mine problem — “probably one of the most heavily mined areas in the entire world, which we’re helping to demine.” In addition to land mines, the country also has stockpiles of small arms and light weapons stored throughout its boundaries, he said.

The Bosnian Defense Ministry helped to identify those stockpiles, especially those most at risk, and the United States helped with the development of sustainable programs to reduce and destroy those munitions and weapons, Masiello said. “That leads to security — national security.”

In Afghanistan, Masiello said, the United States is supporting weapons eradication efforts through community-based mine removal. In Angola, the United States has supported clearance of 900 kilometers of roads and 300 acres of arable land. Albania has been able to announce its mine-safe status as a result of clearance programs.

The United States has stopped the use of all undetectable mines, both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle, and will end the use of persistent land mines by the end of this year. After 2010, all land mines that might ever be used by the United States will self-destruct or self-deactivate after a matter of hours or days.

Masiello said the United States is conducting a comprehensive review of its land mine policies. The United States has ratified the Amended Mines Protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, an international agreement that establishes reasonable, transparent and verifiable standards for the use of land mines to reduce risks to civilians.

Latest Developments in U.S. Response to Flooding in Pakistan

Outlines U.S. humanitarian aid, relief efforts to affected people in region

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
August 3, 2010

Fact Sheet

U.S. Response to Pakistan’s Flooding Disaster

The United States has responded immediately and generously to Pakistan’s call for assistance following the tragic and devastating floods that started on July 29. Our response has been consistent with our humanitarian

values and our deep commitment to Pakistan. The U.S. support to Pakistan represents both financial assistance and the immediate provision of urgently needed supplies.

Latest Developments:

- The Government of Pakistan has issued a detailed request for assistance which U.S. and international officials are working to validate and fulfill.
- U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates today authorized the deployment of 4 Chinook and 2 Black Hawk helicopters to support flood relief efforts. However, weather conditions prevented them from completing their journey. They will fly to Pakistan as soon as the weather permits.
- A total of 316,584 halal meals from U.S. stocks in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region have been delivered to civilian and military officials in Pakistan on 13 separate supply flights. More than 110,000 halal meals are expected to be delivered tonight.

U.S. Contributions To Date:

- The U.S. has made an initial pledge of \$10 million for humanitarian assistance under the supervision of Pakistan's National Disaster Relief Authority.
- U.S. helicopters assigned to Ministry of Interior's 50th Squadron have airlifted a total of 733 people and transported 11,873 pounds of provisions to flood victims since July 30.
- Four Zodiac inflatable rescue boats with power motors and two water filtration units -- which provide pumping, purification, and distribution of potable water for up to 10,000 persons daily -- are being provided for use in the affected area.
- Twelve pre-fabricated steel bridges have been made available as temporary replacements for highway bridges damaged by flooding in Peshawar and Kurram Agency.

Private Sector Response:

- Working with mGive, Americans are contributing to Pakistan flood relief by texting the word "SWAT" to 50555. The text will result in a donation of \$10 to the UNHCR Pakistan Flood Relief Effort. Every \$10 helps provide tents and emergency aid to displaced families.

Past Decade Warmest Ever Recorded, Scientists from 48 Nations Say

Report shows human society faces consistently warmer climate conditions

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington — Earth has been warming for 50 years and the past decade was the warmest ever recorded, according to more than 300 scientists in 48 countries who

contributed to the 2009 *State of the Climate* report released July 28.

The data are historical, not theoretical. The data come from weather stations, satellites, weather balloons, ships and ocean buoys all over the world. Scientists used the data to study 37 different indicators of global temperature change with a focus on 10 that are most directly related to surface temperatures.

According to the report, seven of the indicators are rising: air temperature over land, sea-surface temperature, air temperature over oceans, sea level, ocean heat, humidity and temperature in the troposphere, the layer of the atmosphere nearest the surface where weather occurs. Three are falling: Arctic sea ice, glaciers and spring snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere.

Human society has developed for thousands of years under one climatic state, the report says, and now a new set of climatic conditions is taking shape.

"The instrumentation goes from the top of the atmosphere to several thousand meters deep in the ocean," said Deke Arndt, co-editor of the report and chief of the National Climatic Data Center's Climate Monitoring Branch at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

"The evidence for warming is very widespread," Arndt told America.gov. "In the science arena it's not controversial at all — it's really apparent that all of these things are being driven by a common factor and that common factor is that the planet is getting warmer."

NOAA produced the report with editorial leadership from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia and technical contributions from 160 research groups worldwide. *State of the Climate* was published as a special supplement to the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society and was edited by Arndt, M.O. Baringer and M.R. Johnson of NOAA.

REGIONAL CLIMATES

In 2009, large areas of South America, southern Asia, Australia and New Zealand experienced extreme warmth and the United Kingdom, China and the Russian Federation reported severe cold snaps.

Large parts of southern North America, the Caribbean, South America and Asia experienced drought, and heavy rainfall and floods affected Canada, the United States, Amazonia and southern South America, many countries along the east and west coasts of Africa and the United Kingdom.

Extreme weather events around the world included the following:

- In Brazil, extreme rainfall in the Amazon basin caused the worst flood in a century; 40 people were killed and 376,000 left homeless.
- In northwest England, heavy rainfall flooded the Lake District, setting new records for river flows and damaging 1,500 properties.
- Three heat waves broke temperature records in Australia. One was accompanied by high winds that fanned brush fires, killing 173 people.
- In southeastern South America, the wettest November in 30 years displaced thousands of people.
- In northern Iberia and southern France, a North Atlantic storm raked the land with record winds, downed power lines, closed airports and blocked railroads.
- The central north Pacific, which includes Hawaii, experienced several tropical cyclones after years of relative calm.

"We get extreme events every year," Arndt said. "We can't really say climate change caused item number three in that list, but what we can say is that climate science would expect higher-magnitude events to occur more often. In the United States, where we thankfully have the data to study these things, we are seeing more extreme events happen more often."

WARMING OCEANS

According to the report, more than 90 percent of the warming that's happened on Earth during the past 50 years has gone into the oceans, and new studies show that the world's oceans are heating up as they absorb most of the extra heat being added to the climate system from the build-up of heat-trapping greenhouse gases.

Warming has been observed as far as 6,000 feet (1,829 meters) below the surface, the report says, but most of the heat is accumulating in the oceans' layers near the surface.

"It's becoming more and more apparent that the ocean is a huge reservoir for heat and energy," Arndt said. "The question is when does its carrying capacity run out. There's a big flurry of research in that arena."

Water expands as it warms, and ocean heating is responsible for much of the world's sea-level rise, the report says. Melting of land-based ice is responsible for the rest. Because they warm and cool much more slowly than air, the oceans will hold on longer to the heat they've accumulated.

"If you warm the ocean it's going to have an impact on living things that depend on the ocean, and for landlubbers the ocean is connected to the atmosphere,"

Arndt said.

"If you warm the ocean, you warm the atmosphere and encourage a lot more evaporation so that moisture feeds back into the system, and we likely see that as bigger precipitation events," he added. "So what happens in the ocean doesn't stay in the ocean — the connection with a lot of other pieces of the climate system is water."

Statement on Detention of Article 31 Rally Participants in Russia

U.S. concerned by detentions, raises human rights concerns

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

August 3, 2010

Statement by NSC Spokesman Mike Hammer

Detention of Article 31 Rally Participants Raises Human Right Concerns

The United States is concerned by the detention on July 31 of Russian citizens who were participating in rallies throughout Russia to demonstrate their support for Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees to Russian citizens the right of assembly.

The United States reiterates the importance of embracing and protecting universal values, including freedoms of expression and assembly, enshrined in the Russian Constitution as well as in international agreements which Russia has signed. Freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are also characteristics of a modern political system that supports economic modernization. The infringement of Russian citizens' rights to exercise these freedoms runs counter to our shared commitments to international norms and common interests in fostering modernization.

The United States remains committed to supporting those in Russia and around the world who are working to protect and advance the human rights and democratic values of their fellow citizens.

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