

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

September 24, 2010

President Obama Promotes Middle East Peace in U.N. Address	1
President Obama, China's Wen Discuss Economic Cooperation.....	2
Obama Administration Gives \$5 Million for Kyrgyz Elections.....	3
Award-Winning Palestinian-American Writer Inspired by Two Worlds	4

President Obama Promotes Middle East Peace in U.N. Address

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – President Obama called on world leaders at the United Nations to support efforts to bring peace to the decades-long Middle East conflict and to renew efforts to eradicate global poverty and improve lives through good governance, economic opportunity and the growth of democracy for all people.

In a speech to the annual session of the U.N. General Assembly September 23, Obama emphasized the need to seize the opportunity that the renewed Middle East peace talks represent to resolve differences and usher in the era of the two-state solution – Israel and Palestine at peace. He noted that the conflict between Israelis and Arabs is as old as the United Nations itself.

“Peace must be made by Israelis and Palestinians, but each of us has a responsibility to do our part as well,” Obama said. The alternative to peace is that “more blood will be shed. This holy land will remain a symbol of our differences, instead of our common humanity.”

“If an agreement is not reached, Palestinians will never know the pride and dignity that comes with their own state,” he said. “Israelis will never know the certainty and security that comes with sovereign and stable neighbors who are committed to co-existence.”

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell have met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the U.N. meetings in New York. The leaders met with the president in Washington September 1-2 to renew direct talks, and then met September 14-15 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and Jerusalem. They have pledged to keep meeting every two weeks with the goal of resolving core issues within a year.

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

Obama told world leaders gathered in the cavernous General Assembly Hall that “neither dignity nor democracy can thrive without basic security.”

“It is our destiny to bear the burden of the challenges that I have addressed – recession and war and conflict,” he said. “But even as we confront immediate challenges, we must also summon the foresight to look beyond them, and consider what we are trying to build over the long term.”

Obama encouraged the expansion of global human rights and democracy, saying that at its core the United Nations has long recognized the dignity and the equality of all members of the human family with a foundation based on freedom, justice and peace. But human rights have never gone unchallenged, and tyranny is still a global issue that confronts nations in many forms, he said. He called for the protection of the right of women and children to live full, safe lives with the dignity envisioned in the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The global economy has been pulled back from the brink of a depression and is growing again, Obama said. The world has resisted protectionism in trade, and is exploring new ways to expand trade and commerce among nations. But the seeds of progress must grow into broader prosperity for all people around the globe, the president said.

Obama noted that he will meet in November with leaders from the Group of 20 nations in Seoul to assess where the global economy stands and what must still be done, including a major initiative for greater regulation of the global financial sector. The president is also planning to travel to India, Indonesia and Japan.

Obama recounted U.S. progress in ending its combat mission in Iraq, continuing to weaken and destabilize terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, and working to build security and capacity in Afghanistan.

“From South Asia to the Horn of Africa, we are moving toward a more targeted approach – one that strengthens our partners and dismantles terrorist networks without deploying large American armies,” Obama said.

Obama defended U.S.-led efforts to reach the Iranian regime through diplomacy to stop its nuclear weapons development program. He said that when those efforts were unable to produce a positive result, additional sanctions were sought and were imposed. The permanent members of the U.N. Security Council – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – plus Germany again offered talks to the Iranian regime. Iran has signaled a willingness to restart the talks.

The United States and its allies are working to confront climate change, Obama said. At climate change talks in Denmark in December 2009 the United States helped forge an accord that for the first time commits all major economies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

But this just a first step, Obama said. “Going forward, we will support a process in which all major economies meet our responsibilities to protect our planet, while unleashing the power of clean energy to serve as an engine of growth and development.”

Obama repeated a pledge he made the day before that the United States will partner with nations that offer their people a path out of poverty, saying it is critical to unleash growth that powers individuals and emerging markets across the globe. This requires letting entrepreneurs start a business without paying a bribe, and establishing governments that support opportunity rather than stealing from their people, he said.

There is no reason why Africa should not be an agricultural exporter, which is why the U.S. food security initiative is designed to empower farmers, he said. There is no reason why entrepreneurs should not be able to build new markets in every society, he said.

Obama's speech to the General Assembly comes during three days of intense global diplomacy that includes speeches, bilateral meetings and private sessions with world leaders.

President Obama, China's Wen Discuss Economic Cooperation

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — After meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, President Obama says extensive U.S.-China cooperation was critical in dealing with the recent global financial crisis.

"Obviously we continue to have more work to do on the economic front, although the world economy is now growing again," Obama said at a joint press briefing after he and Wen met on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

"It's going to be very important for us to have frank discussions and continue to do more work cooperatively in order to achieve the type of balance and sustained economic growth that is so important," he said.

Obama and Wen held wide-ranging talks September 23 on issues that included nuclear nonproliferation, especially regarding North Korea; climate change; and global security issues.

The two leaders discussed currency issues related to China's yuan and its exchange rate against the U.S. dollar as part of a broader discussion of trade relations between the two nations, said Jeffrey Bader, an Obama adviser and senior director for Asian affairs on the National Security Council. He said Wen reiterated China's intention to continue with gradual reform of its exchange rate mechanism.

At the press conference, Wen echoed Obama's remarks, saying through an interpreter that "our common interests

far outweigh our differences."

The United States and China have created a strategic and economic dialogue that meets twice a year to work through a range of issues.

The two countries "have to work cooperatively together in order to achieve regional peace and stability because the world looks to the relationship between China and the United States as a critical ingredient on a whole range of security issues," Obama told reporters.

Wen said the two nations have worked cooperatively during the financial crisis and in efforts to meet the climate challenge.

China hosts the Six-Party Talks that are designed to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and long-range missile development programs, which are considered a threat to the security of the Northeast Asian region. The talks include China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and the United States. China, a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, also participates in negotiations with the other permanent members — Britain, France, Russia and the United States — plus Germany in trying to convince the Iranian regime to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao are expected to meet at the Group of 20 (G20) leaders' meeting in Seoul in November and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, which follows the G20 meeting, in Yokohama, Japan.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged China and Japan to resolve their current maritime dispute before it has an impact on the Northeast Asia region. Clinton met with Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara at the United Nations September 23.

"The minister did bring up the current tensions with China," said State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley at a press briefing, "and just provided Japan's perspective on the incident involving the [Chinese] fishing boat and the [Japanese] coast guard vessel, and indicated that Japan was working this in accordance with both its legal process and international law." The boats collided September 7 in an area of the East China Sea claimed by both nations.

"The secretary's response was simply to encourage dialogue and hope that the issue can be resolved soon, since relations between Japan and China are vitally important to regional stability," Crowley said. The United States is not acting as a mediator in the dispute and has not been asked to mediate, he said.

Obama Administration Gives \$5 Million for Kyrgyz Elections

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration has allocated \$5 million to help Kyrgyzstan organize its October 10 parliamentary elections, which U.S. officials hope will be free and fair and will include wide participation from the Kyrgyz population as the country continues to recover from ethnic violence earlier in the year.

Speaking in New York September 22, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake said the money will complement assistance that international organizations are providing to help the Kyrgyz people establish the first parliamentary democracy in Central Asia.

The U.S. assistance is targeted toward “helping to build up the election commission there, to help provide for observers, to help civil society to organize for this, and countless other technical preparations that need to be made,” Blake said.

Blake said 29 political parties are contesting 120 seats in the new Kyrgyz parliament, and “an intensive amount of work is now being done in Bishkek and elsewhere” to help the country prepare.

“I think the assessment from our team on the ground is that preparations are going well for those elections. But all of that work needs to continue,” he said, adding that the vote will be “a very, very high priority” for the United States, Kyrgyzstan and others in the coming month.

“Almost all of the parties recognize that this is a significant opportunity for them, so there is really quite an energetic campaign under way since the campaign opened on September 10th,” Blake said. “They all see this as a significant opportunity for them to, if not lead the new government, at least have a share in a coalition government.”

President Obama will meet with President Roza Otunbayeva in New York September 24. Blake said Obama wants to show support for the country and reaffirm the importance of the opportunity presented by the election.

The United States also wants to help Kyrgyz authorities respond to the humanitarian needs of people displaced by ethnic violence in June, which largely targeted the country’s ethnic Uzbek population. Many homes were destroyed; Blake said the Obama administration wants to see them rebuilt before the onset of winter.

It also continues to support plans by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to deploy a police advisory group that can train and mentor local police forces and “bring a measure of reassurance to the ethnic Uzbeks, who still live in some fear as the people who are responsible for the June violence have not been identified or brought to justice,” Blake said.

There should be domestic and international investigations into the causes of the ethnic violence to bring perpetrators to justice, Blake said. Discussions are under way with the Kyrgyz government on how to set up a commission of investigation.

Blake said there remains “great room for improvement” on human rights in most of Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan. He expressed concern over the case of Kyrgyz human rights advocate Azimzhan Askarov, who was sentenced to life in prison September 15 in a trial that apparently lacked due process and was marked by procedural irregularities.

“We also felt that where the trial actually took place led to a certain amount of intimidation. We also want to be sure that it’s not simply ethnic Uzbeks who are prosecuted for whatever violence took place and that there is balance in these proceedings and that all those who may have been responsible for the violence are brought to justice,” he said.

In a September 23 statement, the U.S. ambassador to the OSCE, Ian Kelly, said the United States is concerned that the prosecution against Askarov “failed to present clear evidence of Askarov’s guilt, and that Askarov was not afforded access to his lawyer, as is required by Kyrgyz law.”

“In addition, it was reported that local authorities allowed intimidation and abuse of the defendants, their families and their attorneys to take place within the courtroom itself,” Kelly said.

He called on the Kyrgyz government to fully investigate those reports, as well as allegations that Askarov and others were abused and tortured while in police custody.

“The U.S. urges the government of the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure that Mr. Askarov and the other defendants receive the full benefit of an appeals process under Kyrgyz law, and that appeals hearings are conducted in a secure location where the government can ensure a civil atmosphere that fully respects the rights of all defendants and court officers,” Kelly said.

He also urged Kyrgyz authorities to postpone the trial of Ulugbek Abdusalomov, who is vice president of the Uzbek Cultural Center in Jalalabad and chief editor of the

regional Uzbek newspaper *Didor* ("Meeting"). Abdusalamov, who faces charges of inciting ethnic hatred along with three other ethnic Uzbek defendants, suffers from a heart condition and had a stroke on September 17, Kelly said.

"We call on the Kyrgyz authorities to postpone his trial until he has regained his health, and to ensure a fair and transparent trial process," he said.

Kyrgyzstan's handling of its judicial processes sends "a strong signal to the international community of the Kyrgyz commitment to the rule of law," and is important to the country's reconciliation after the ethnic violence, Kelly said.

He urged Kyrgyzstan to be mindful of the OSCE's new commitment to comprehensive security as its members prepare to meet in Kazakhstan in December for the organization's first summit in 11 years.

Award-Winning Palestinian-American Writer Inspired by Two Worlds

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — Palestinian-American writer Naomi Shihab Nye has fashioned a successful career from a fascination with words, a love of Arab culture and a determination to be heard.

"I had parents who really cared about language and about communication and about using words properly," she said. "I think from hearing my parents tell stories and read to us before we could read ourselves, I developed a fascination with what words could do."

Nye, the daughter of a Palestinian father and an American mother, lives in Texas. She has won four Pushcart Prizes and the Paterson Poetry Prize, and the Jane Addams Children's Book Award for her novel *Habibi* and picture book *Sitti's Secrets*. These books and much of her poetry draw from her experience in two cultures.

"I grew up with a great love for the Middle East and a fascination with it and a desire to travel there and know my family there," she said.

Nye also grew up with a love of writing, and felt that it came naturally. By the first grade, she was writing poems and short stories. When she was 7, she sent her first work to a magazine to be published.

Though many writers fear rejection and hesitate sharing their works, Nye takes a different approach.

"If they don't accept your work, it doesn't mean that you

are a failure; it is just a way to make outreach into the world and possibly connect with people you don't know," she said.

Another hurdle writers face is finding the time to write, Nye said. What works for her is waking up at 5 a.m. to begin. Nye said that sometimes it just takes little steps to help an aspiring writer find the creative outlet.

"I try to encourage people to know that even seven minutes or 10 minutes a day devoted to your own writing can be very beneficial. You don't have to have a full hour," she said. "I think in the modern world how to negotiate our own sense of time is one of the most crucial elements in life that we each have to develop."

Writers are sometimes stymied when it comes to finding someone to publish their work. Nye said the Internet can help because it is "an incredibly optimistic and sizzling tool" to open doors of communication.

Moreover, though, aspiring authors need to find self-confidence to publish, she said.

"It also involves, at times, a basic kind of courage just to share something you have written and not have to apologize for it," Nye said. "That little bit of bravado of belief that helps someone share their work — that is one of the issues."

Nye said she has drawn inspiration in writing from the lives and work of great writers of the past. Two she cited lived worlds apart but represented the two cultures with which she grew up: American poet Emily Dickinson and Palestinian Fadwa Touqan. She said they were similar in that they were women who never married and spent their lives at their family homes, but, more important, their works touched people in dramatic fashion.

They "wrote these brilliant short poems that changed people's lives forever," Nye said. "They are both, I think, strong models for devotion to writing and to education because both were highly educated."

Dickenson lived in the 19th century, but Touqan was a 20th-century poet who died in 2003, and Nye met her while on a visit to Jordan. "She just made an incredible impression on me," Nye said. "That was one of those unforgettable encounters with a writer that you feel you are a better person forever because you just encountered them once."

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