

American

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Secretary Clinton Urges Cambodia to Seek Justice

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged Cambodian leaders to confront their country's troubled past by bringing Khmer Rouge leaders to justice for crimes against humanity in the 1970s.

Clinton said her first priority is to ensure Cambodia has the nearly \$50 million it needs for the United Nations-backed trial of four senior regime leaders, scheduled to begin in 2011.

"I will personally be reaching out to help raise the money," Clinton said at a November 1 joint press conference in Phnom Penh with Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong.

Cambodia refuses to prosecute lower-ranking members of the regime. Hor said expanding the scope of the tribunal would "jeopardize peace and stability in Cambodia." The Khmer Rouge regime is believed to be responsible for killing more than 1.5 million people from 1976 to 1979.

Clinton's visit to Cambodia is part of her 13-day trip to meet with leaders of at least eight East Asian and Pacific nations.

While in Phnom Penh, Clinton opened talks for the first time since 2006 on settling a \$400 million debt Cambodia owes Washington. Cambodia maintains it cannot afford to pay the debt, but Clinton said the United States is open to exploring alternate settlement options.

"There are things that the government of Cambodia could do that would satisfy the need to demonstrate some level of accountability, but more importantly, to invest those funds in the needs of the people of Cambodia," Clinton said. The debt was incurred during the Lon Nol regime in the 1970s.

In a town hall meeting with Cambodian youth in the capital city, Clinton urged the country to avoid relying too much on China. "You don't want to get too dependent on any one country – you want to have partnerships that cut across regional geographic lines," Clinton said.

U.S. officials say countering China's interests in Cambodia will be difficult. China is the top provider of aid to Cambodia, giving more than \$200 million annually for development, infrastructure, military training and more.

Clinton arrived in Cambodia from talks in Vietnam and

China. Her trip to Vietnam marked the U.S. accession to the East Asian Summit – a group that includes the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) along with Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. This year, for the first time, the United States and Russia were invited.

The secretary began traveling October 27 and is set to visit Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Australia and American Samoa before returning to Washington November 8. The secretary's trip overlaps with President Obama's travel to India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan November 6–14.

Strengthening Global Economy Tops APEC, G20 Agendas

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – Fostering global economic growth through the Group of 20 (G20) advanced economies is fundamental to a lasting recovery at home, says a senior Obama administration official.

Economic policy figures strongly in President Obama's final two stops of a four-nation Asian trip that begins November 6 in India, with a visit to Indonesia before the G20 meeting in South Korea and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Japan. In addition to economic talks, the president will hold one-on-one talks with world leaders on the sidelines of both meetings.

The president will attend the G20 Summit in Seoul, South Korea, November 11–12 and then the annual meeting of APEC in Yokohama, Japan, November 13–14.

Presidential adviser Ben Rhodes told reporters during a November 1 briefing on the president's travel to Asia that Obama has shifted the focus of U.S. international attention from the Group of Eight (G8) most advanced economies to the larger and more inclusive G20.

"We see the G20 as fundamental not just to our international economic agenda, but to our ability to have a lasting recovery at home because fostering balanced, global growth is essential to fostering growth here in the American economy," Rhodes told reporters. And the president believes that a stronger export agenda for the United States is fundamental to creating jobs growth at home, he added.

The G20 became more prominent with the onset of the 2007–2009 global recession, which economists have determined was the deepest since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The G20 group leaders have met four times to coordinate global policy responses to the recession and to

discuss the need for strengthened financial reforms.

These countries play a significant role in international economic stability because they represent about 90 percent of the gross domestic product globally, nearly 80 percent of world trade, and two-thirds of the world's population. The group, formed in 1999, includes the G8 members – Great Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States – plus Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey and the European Union (EU).

Coming out of the previous four meetings, the G20 has encouraged programs that foster sustainable public finances. The group also has emphasized the need to reduce national budget deficits by half by 2013 and stabilize or reduce government debt by 2016 in relation to a nation's gross domestic product level, which is the broadest measure of the total value of a nation's goods and services.

G20 leaders also have created a framework designed to shrink surpluses in export-rich countries such as China and boost savings in debt-laden nations, including the United States, to develop a balanced global economy. Obama pledged to foster growth in the U.S. domestic export sector over the next five years to promote a broader economy and reduce dependence on consumer spending, which makes up about 80 percent of the U.S. economy.

Mike Froman, the deputy national security adviser for international economic affairs, told reporters that in addition to maintaining a sustainable global growth pattern and strengthened financial reforms, the leaders are expected to address energy security, global warming, free trade and anti-corruption measures. South Korea, as host to the meeting, has included sustainable economic development on the agenda.

"This agenda is critical to our economy back here at home, to our recovery and our ability to increase exports and create well-paying jobs here at home," Froman said. "And that's key to our objective of doubling our exports and creating jobs here at home."

The APEC forum is the primary vehicle for economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region, Froman said. Expanding economic integration and trade liberalization in the Asia-Pacific region is a vital element in the United States' ability to export more and to strengthen its domestic economy, he added.

USAID Personnel Preparing Haiti for Approaching Storm

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has 20 members of a disaster assistance response team (DART) on the ground in Haiti to help prepare the country for the tropical storm Tomas, which is moving toward the country and could regain hurricane-level strength after devastating Saint Lucia, south of the island of Hispaniola.

State Department Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Philip J. Crowley said November 2 that the team members, nine of whom were dispatched from the United States on November 1, were sent to "prepare the ground for the storm" by helping the Haitian government "mitigate potential damage through canal clearing and drainage channel preparation, and providing information to the Haitian people."

According to news reports, up to 1.3 million people are living in tents in camps that were set up after the country's January 12 earthquake and would be at special risk from the storm's heavy winds, rainfall and landslides.

Crowley said the DART team will also help Haitian authorities provide information to Haitians as to when they should seek safer shelter in such structures as community centers and churches and with relatives living in sounder structures, as well as providing information on where safer locations can be found.

USAID sends its rapidly deployable DART teams around the world in response to major disasters. The teams are usually made up of specialists trained in a variety of relief skills who assess the situation on the ground and notify their headquarters in Washington on what is needed. A DART team was first deployed to Haiti one day after the earthquake struck to identify priority needs and priority aid commodities. More recently, a team was sent in response to the cholera epidemic to facilitate the sharing of information and provide coordination among humanitarian agencies, according to an October 28 press release from the U.S. Embassy in Port au Prince.

Tomas struck the island of Saint Lucia on October 30 with winds of 150 kilometers per hour, making the storm a Category 1 hurricane. According to Agence France Press (AFP), at least 12 people were killed and as much as \$100 million worth of the island's banana crop was destroyed. The storm later weakened and is currently classified as a tropical storm, but is expected to regain strength before reaching Haiti.

"We expect that it will begin to have an effect on Haiti on

Thursday," Crowley said.

According to Martin Nesirky, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's spokesman, humanitarian groups are continuing to prepare by dispatching supplies to key areas across the country, including those that are expected to face the brunt of the storm.

On November 1, Nigel Fisher, the U.N.'s humanitarian coordinator in Haiti, and other U.N. personnel visited vulnerable areas of the country to evaluate emergency preparedness measures, and preparations are also being made in camps for internally displaced persons, Nesirky told reporters November 2.

Local Festival Sustains Dance from Around the World

San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival fosters many styles at home and abroad

By Michael Gallant

Michael Gallant is the founder and chief executive of Gallant Music (gallantmusic.com). He previously lived in San Francisco and now lives in New York City.

Thanks to its beautiful rolling hills, iconic Golden Gate Bridge, picturesque seaside views and rich cultural history, the city of San Francisco, California, attracts millions of visitors each year. But the city is quickly gaining recognition for another reason: the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival.

San Francisco is home to a uniquely diverse dance community. Some of the most outstanding local ethnic dance companies perform throughout the month of June as part of the annual San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, created by the not-for-profit World Arts West organization. The festival not only showcases many rare and unique forms of dance, it actively preserves those dance traditions, helping them stay vibrant both within the United States and around the world.

Building the Festival

"I believe that we have the most extraordinary dance community anywhere," says Julie Mushet, executive director of World Arts West. "We work with over 400 dance companies in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, easily 20,000 dancers who sustain over 100 distinct traditions from around the world."

Culling the festival lineup from such a large group of potential participants is no easy matter. The festival's producers put audition attendees, all of whom must be based in Northern California, through a rigorous selection process that involves both live auditions and written essays about the cultural traditions from which their performances spring. A panel of experts reviews each

applicant, applying criteria ranging from stage presence to appropriateness to the dance's cultural origins. The competition can be fierce; for the 2010 festival 137 auditions culled about 2,500 dancers down to the final line-up of some 600 artists in 37 performances.

In 2010, the festival program represented cultures from every part of the globe. One evening's performance featured companies dedicated to Indian, Haitian, Peruvian, Tahitian, Indonesian, Spanish and Japanese dance traditions. Several years earlier, one performance even featured the rarely seen Balinese Gamelan *jegog*, an ensemble of giant bamboo marimbas that musicians must climb in order to play.

Mushet says she loves spotlighting such a diverse array of dance traditions within a single performance. "People may come to see Spanish Flamenco but fall madly in love with other forms they would never have otherwise been exposed to," she adds.

Ethnic Dance Beyond San Francisco

While the festival focuses on local dance companies, its effects touch communities thousands of miles away, especially since World Arts West recently began sponsoring the involvement of guest artists from around the world. "There was one Muslim tribal chief from the Philippines who had never left [his home] island of Palawan before he participated in this festival," says Mushet. "Two dancers from San Francisco had gone to Palawan years before, trained and learned the local dance form. They taught it to a San Francisco-based dance company and brought the chief over as a guest artist for our festival. The company performed that style to 3,000 people across three sold-out shows."

"The tribal chief videotaped the whole performance to bring back to the people in his tribe. It was transformative. Kids in that culture [had] less-than-wonderful American movies as their only window into what American life was like — and this was really troubling to the tribal leaders." Playing the video of the dance festival performance sparked a new interest in America among the children on Palawan and showed that appreciation of their own culture extends far beyond the Philippine borders. This realization "made a big difference in the chief's ability to sustain his own local culture."

Though the festival seeks to nurture and share traditional dance forms, stylistic innovations regularly make it to the festival stage. "There are dancers who have significantly changed their form," says Mushet. "It can be controversial, but after years of being masters in their fields, they have the credibility to pull it off."

One recent example included Charya Burt, a former faculty member of Cambodia's Royal University of Phnom Penh who immigrated to the United States in 1993. "Three years ago, she stood in the wings before going on stage, very nervous," says Mushet. "To her knowledge, this was the first time in 2,500 years that a Cambodian dancer had ever sang and danced at the same time. She was so afraid that she was ruining the authenticity of the form. But as a Cambodian American, she felt that this was the next step in her artistic development."

"Not many in the audience knew this major change was being made to the art form, but for people in that culture, it was certainly a huge shift. It wasn't 'authentic,' but it was beautiful and well received."

For Mushet, the significance of ethnic dance transcends any particular style or tradition. "Dance is core to human experience," she says. "It's amazing that, in cave drawings from 30,000 years ago, the images that are repeated millennia after millennia are of hunting and *dancing*."

"Dance has been key to humans' sense of community, to living a rich life. These styles that the festival celebrates come from a cultural context that brought people together to celebrate, to mourn, to connect spiritually. There's so much that is embedded and transferred in the knowledge of these dance forms."

The culture and artistry intrinsic to any given dance form make events like the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival all the more important and necessary. These festivals help ensure that dance traditions are seen far from the lands where they originated, resulting in greater understanding and appreciation of a broad array of cultures and forms of cultural expression.

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