

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

November 8, 2010

President Obama on Burma Elections	1
President Obama to Students: India Has Biggest Stake in Pakistan’s Success.....	1
Trade a Key Element of U.S.-Australian Relations	2
United States and New Zealand Enhance Partnership.....	3
United States Examines Its Own Human Rights Record	3
U.S. “Well Prepared” with Its Support for Haiti.....	4

President Obama on Burma Elections

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
November 07, 2010

Statement by President Obama on Burma's November 7 Elections

The November 7 elections in Burma were neither free nor fair, and failed to meet any of the internationally accepted standards associated with legitimate elections. The elections were based on a fundamentally flawed process and demonstrated the regime's continued preference for repression and restriction over inclusion and transparency.

One of the starkest flaws of this exercise was the regime's continued detention of more than 2,100 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, thereby denying them any opportunity to participate in the process. The unfair electoral laws and overtly partisan Election Commission ensured that Burma's leading pro-democracy party, the National League for Democracy, was silenced and sidelined. The regime denied the registration of certain ethnic parties, cancelled elections in numerous ethnic areas, and stage-managed the campaign process to ensure that pro-democracy and opposition candidates who did compete faced insurmountable obstacles. Ultimately, elections cannot be credible when the regime rejects dialogue with opponents and represses the most basic freedoms of expression, speech, and assembly.

We will monitor the situation in Burma closely in the weeks and months ahead. The United States will continue to implement a strategy of pressure and engagement in accordance with conditions on the ground in Burma and the actions of the Burmese authorities. We renew our calls for the authorities to: free Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, cease systematic violations of human rights, begin to hold human rights violators accountable, and welcome pro-democracy and ethnic minority groups into a long-overdue dialogue. Only genuine, inclusive dialogue can place Burma on the path to a truly representative democracy which upholds human rights and builds a better future for its citizens.

President Obama to Students: India Has Biggest Stake in Pakistan's Success

By Stephen Kaufman, Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama told Indian college students that their country is taking "its rightful place" in

the world, but urged India to work toward a peace settlement with neighboring Pakistan, saying Pakistan's stability is very much in India's interests as it continues its economic growth.

"I am absolutely convinced that the country that has the biggest stake in Pakistan's success is India," Obama said November 7 in an hour-long town hall meeting at St. Xavier's College in Mumbai.

"India is on the move," he said, and instability in South Asia is not in its interests "at a time when you're starting to succeed in incredible ways on the global economic stage."

The president said that although the Pakistani government's progress against violent extremists inside the country "is not as quick as we'd like," Islamabad now understands the potential threat and the Pakistani army is adapting in order to face the challenges of extremist groups.

Obama said he hopes trust will develop between India and Pakistan over time and that dialogue between the two will begin "perhaps on less controversial issues and building up to more controversial issues." Eventually, there needs to be "a recognition that India and Pakistan can live side by side in peace and that both countries can prosper," he said.

The United States is willing to be a friend and a partner in that process, but ultimately it will be up to the two countries to "arrive at their own understandings in terms of how the relationship evolves," he said.

Obama took several questions from young Indian men and women, who filled the forecourt of the Catholic college that was founded by German Jesuits in 1869.

The president said he had come to India because he believes that its partnership with the United States "has limitless potential to improve the lives of both Americans and Indians, just as it has the potential to be an anchor of security and prosperity and progress for Asia and for the world."

India has already risen to become a world power, and the president said its emergence is good for the United States and for the world. The relationship between the world's two largest democracies "will be indispensable in shaping the 21st century," he said.

But he told the students that their country's future "won't simply be determined by powerful CEOs and political leaders," but also "by you, and by young people like you across this country."

As India continues its economic expansion, Obama urged young people not to dismiss “healthy materialism” because companies and businesses play a large role in lifting people out of poverty.

“We should not underestimate how liberating economic growth can be for a country,” he said. “It forms the basis for folks to get an education and to expand their horizons, and that’s all for the good.”

At the same time, he warned that an exclusive focus on material wealth “shows a poverty of ambition.”

Many Americans themselves are debating the positives and negatives of globalization, and the president said that the United States can no longer meet the rest of the world “economically on our terms” as it did in recent decades.

With the rise of countries like China, India and Brazil, “there’s real competition out there,” but he expressed confidence that the United States can retain its competitiveness.

The changing era requires the United States to be more insistent upon the need for free trade and an end to protectionism, he said.

In the past, “we didn’t need, necessarily, reciprocity because our economy was so much larger,” Obama said.

Today, it is “not unfair” for the United States to insist that if its economy is open to everyone, “countries that trade with us have to change their practices to open up their markets to us,” he said.

“If we can have those kinds of ... truthful, constructive conversations about how we produce win-win situations, then I think we’ll be fine,” the president said.

Trade a Key Element of U.S.-Australian Relations

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says trade between the United States and Australia is a vital part of the heartbeat of the relationship — generating jobs, creating economic opportunities, and improving lives and livelihoods.

In a speech at a U.S. trade promotion event, Clinton said the 2005 Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement has deepened economic ties and added a new dimension to the strong relations both nations enjoy. The United States and Australia are celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations.

“Done right, free trade and open markets are powerful

tools to improve living standards far and wide,” Clinton said November 7 at the Port of Melbourne Education Center.

“They do create jobs. They do open up new economic opportunities, raise standards of living, and lead to the kind of win-win solutions that bring people and countries closer together,” she said.

Australia is the world’s 14th largest importer of American goods and services, Clinton said.

Through August of this year U.S. exports to Australia totaled \$13.97 billion and imports reached \$5.622 billion. For all of 2009, U.S. exports to Australia totaled \$19.6 billion and imports totaled \$8.011 billion, according to the U.S. Commerce Department’s Foreign Trade Statistics.

For Australia, the United States is its fifth largest merchandise export market and its most important market for services, according to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The United States is Australia’s largest import source for services and second largest import source for merchandise. The United States remains the largest investor in Australia.

Clinton said that because of the trade and manufacturing relationship, more than 325,000 Australians are employed by U.S. companies. “The Port of Melbourne alone, which is the busiest port ... in Australia, is handling 100,000 containers of American goods every year.”

Bill Scales, the chairman of the Port of Melbourne Corporation, said the port has formal sister and partner ties to a number of U.S. ports, and the U.S. exporters who use the facilities have been a major contributor to its success.

“Exports from the United States ... have helped to create and develop essential Australian infrastructure, harvest our crops, and in fact underpin Australia’s prosperity,” Scales said.

The challenge now, Clinton said, is to broaden the benefits of trade and look for opportunities to increase trade and investment. Australia is a critical partner in negotiating an ambitious new multilateral trade arrangement known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is also known as the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership.

The agreement aims to integrate economies of the Asia-Pacific region through a multilateral free-trade agreement. The original 2006 agreement was between Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore. Australia, Malaysia, Peru, the United States and Vietnam are negotiating to join the TPP arrangement.

"We hope to deliver a groundbreaking agreement that connects countries as diverse as Peru and Vietnam with America and Australia to create a new free-trade zone that can galvanize commerce, competition and growth across the entire Pacific region," Clinton said.

Pursuit of the free-trade agreement is part of a broader U.S. export initiative begun by President Obama with the goal of doubling U.S. exports by 2015. The aim of the national export initiative is to balance the U.S. economy, which is about 80 percent driven by consumer spending, reduce the U.S. trade deficit, expand domestic jobs, and expand the U.S. manufacturing sector.

United States and New Zealand Enhance Partnership

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray Stuart McCully signed an agreement to enhance the partnership between their nations and address issues including nuclear nonproliferation, counterterrorism and climate change.

"This Wellington Declaration makes it clear that we want to cooperate across the board in every aspect of our civilian efforts and our military as well," Clinton said November 4 at a news conference in Wellington with McCully and Prime Minister John Key.

Clinton said the agreement will allow the United States and New Zealand "to explore greater cooperation on everything from promoting sustainable economic development and strong democratic institutions across the region to working on security issues, clean energy and responding to natural disasters."

"Today we've decided we want to be more ambitious for the U.S.-New Zealand relationship," McCully said. "The Wellington Declaration asserts a determination to do more and achieve more together."

"In my view, we have turned a very important page in the history of U.S.-New Zealand relations," McCully said.

Clinton said the agreement "sets the stage for a deeper and more regular dialogue on everything from regional security issues to clean energy to our response to natural disasters."

The leaders agreed the declaration establishes a strategic partnership that includes enhanced political-military discussions.

Clinton commended New Zealand for a defense strategy

it released November 1, noting it emphasized "the U.S. and New Zealand will continue to be close security partners over the next 25 years," and that the two countries want to do more in military cooperation, including officer exchanges, joint exercises and training.

Clinton paid tribute to New Zealand's military dead with a trip to the National War Memorial in Wellington.

She later visited the U.S. Antarctic Program in Christchurch, which represents 50 years of U.S.-New Zealand scientific cooperation. Also in Christchurch, the secretary participated in a town hall meeting to reach out to local residents who recently suffered a 7.1-magnitude earthquake, which caused widespread regional damage.

Clinton was in New Zealand as part of a 13-day trip to seven East Asian and Pacific nations. State Department officials say her tour is intended to signal enhanced U.S. engagement with the region.

The secretary began traveling October 27 and is set to visit 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.

United States Examines Its Own Human Rights Record

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Presentation of the U.S. Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva November 5 marked the first time the United States has evaluated its own human rights record for the United Nations.

The UPR was established by the U.N. General Assembly in 2006 as a process through which the human rights records of the 192 U.N. member states could be reviewed and assessed. This review, conducted through the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC), is based on human rights obligations and commitments expressed in a number of international instruments, such as the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The United States' 29-page report was submitted to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights on August 20, but the official presentation to member governments — and the tough questioning that went with it — took place November 5. Later the same day, U.S. officials held a town hall-style meeting that was open to civil society organizations. That event provided electronic participation to activists and nongovernmental groups from around the world. Esther Brimmer, assistant secretary of state for international organizations, Michael

Posner, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, and Harold Koh, the State Department's legal adviser, took questions. Also on hand to answer questions were officials from the departments of Homeland Security, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, and Education.

Questions at the November 5 town hall covered a wide range of topics, including police brutality, treatment of Native Americans, possible independence for Hawaii, torture of prisoners and treatment of immigrants. The U.S. delegation will continue to accept suggestions for improvement in U.S. human rights policies and will present an action plan to the United Nations in March 2012.

During a press conference earlier in the week, Eileen Donahoe, the U.S. ambassador to the Human Rights Council, said the UPR process is an opportunity for the United States "to reinforce the idea that open dialogue is valuable."

"This is a genuine opportunity for us to engage in self-reflection and improvement with the help of civil society and other countries," Donahoe said.

In preparing the report, U.S. government officials met with nearly 1,000 people around the United States. Representatives from a diverse group of communities expressed their views on U.S. human rights practices at gatherings in New Orleans; New York; El Paso, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Window Rock, Arizona; the San Francisco Bay Area; Detroit; Chicago; Birmingham, Alabama; and Washington. More information on the process and the text of the report are available on the State Department website.

The U.S. UPR report explains that the document "gives a partial snapshot of the current human rights situation in the United States, including some of the areas where problems persist in our society." And it states, "Progress is our goal."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has made it clear that holding all nations, including the United States, accountable to universal standards of human rights is a priority.

"By holding ourselves accountable, we reinforce our moral authority to demand that all governments adhere to obligations under international law," Clinton said in December 2009.

U.S. "Well Prepared" with Its Support for Haiti

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States has supported the Haitian government's response to Hurricane Tomas by prepositioning relief supplies for 125,000 and has also been working with the World Food Programme to help stockpile enough food in the country to feed more than 1 million people for six weeks.

"We were well prepared," said Mark Ward, the acting director of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Speaking to reporters at the State Department November 5, Ward said U.S. relief supplies, such as hygiene kits, water containers, kitchen sets and blankets, are stockpiled in several areas of the country, including those facing the brunt of the storm, and "we're able to get supplies out to people quickly that are going to need it."

Ward said prepositioning supplies for 125,000 people "probably will be enough" to meet the expected demand, "but should it not be enough we could move more from our warehouse in Miami, and we can even turn to [Federal Emergency Management Agency] warehouses in the southern United States."

He said Tomas, which has already devastated other countries in the region, such as Saint Lucia, may cause more damage, and the USAID warehouse in Miami will remain fully stocked "should we need to send supplies from there to other places."

The U.S. response "has been very much in support and coordination with the government of Haiti," Ward said, adding that U.S. officials are "impressed so far with the work that the Department of Civil Protection is doing."

Ward said Haitian authorities estimate that 50 percent of the people who had been living in camps that were set up after the January 12 earthquake left before the storm reached Haiti early November 5. Most of them left to "stay with host families, [and] with friends and family in safer housing," he said.

While the storm remains over Haiti, USAID and other relief agencies are trying to assess damage in order to determine where the prepositioned relief supplies need to be sent, he said.

"In the coming days ... we'll be able to tell you more about the actual areas that have needed help and what we've been able to provide them," Ward said.

The U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince issued a statement November 4 offering additional details on the Obama administration's cooperation with the Haitian government and the international community to prepare for the hurricane season.

"Together we have developed a flash-flood guidance system and improved access to weather forecasting data for the Haitian weather service; supported disaster preparedness plans, risk assessments and response drills; funded the government of Haiti's Command Center, as well as the construction of emergency operations centers and disaster relief warehouses; and stockpiled relief supplies for 20,000 families in key locations throughout the country," the embassy statement said.

The embassy said it remains in direct contact with the Haitian government and with local officials, as well as international organizations and relief partners. The United States is "prepared to respond quickly in the aftermath of the storm if the Haitian government calls upon us to do so," the statement said.

About 1,600 U.S. civilian and military personnel, including specialists in medicine, engineering, aviation and logistics, are standing by aboard the USS Iwo Jima off the coast of Haiti. The ship is also carrying 10 helicopters and two amphibious landing craft units to transport relief supplies to remote locations.

According to a November 5 report by U.S. Southern Command, the initial support that the personnel aboard the Iwo Jima are likely to provide will be to perform aerial road and damage assessments once the storm has passed and move relief supplies to areas where they are most needed.

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