

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Aung San Suu Kyi's Release "Long Overdue," Obama Says

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomed the release of Burmese pro-democracy leader and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest and urged Burma's military government to release all the country's political prisoners and to work with Suu Kyi and other leaders to bring reconciliation, democracy and prosperity to their country.

Obama said Suu Kyi "is a hero of mine and a source of inspiration for all who work to advance basic human rights in Burma and around the world."

In a November 13 statement, he said the United States "welcomes her long overdue release," and he called on Burma to release all of its 2,100 political prisoners — "not just one."

Suu Kyi, who has led the National League for Democracy (NLD), has been under house arrest for 15 of the past 21 years. In 1990, the NLD won parliamentary elections, but the military junta prevented her party from taking power. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 in recognition of her nonviolent struggle to bring democracy and human rights to Burma.

On November 6, the military held the country's first elections since 1990. The conduct of the vote and the restrictions placed on the political opposition led most world leaders, including President Obama, to denounce the process as a sham.

Suu Kyi and the political opposition she represents have "been systematically silenced, incarcerated, and deprived of any opportunity to engage in political processes that could change Burma," Obama said, adding the United States "looks forward to the day when all of Burma's people are free from fear and persecution."

Secretary Clinton said the military rulers have repeatedly rejected Suu Kyi's offers to engage in a peaceful dialogue and work with them, but that through it all, her commitment to the Burmese people "has not wavered."

In a November 13 statement, Clinton said the Burmese regime must ensure that her release is unconditional, and allow her to "travel, associate with her fellow citizens, express her views, and participate in political activities without restriction."

"We urge Burma's leaders to break from their repressive

policies and begin an inclusive dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic and ethnic leaders towards national reconciliation and a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future," Clinton said.

Suu Kyi addressed thousands of supporters outside the NLD's headquarters in Rangoon November 14 and urged them "not to give up hope," according to press reports.

"We must work together," she said. "We Burmese tend to believe in fate, but if we want change, we have to do it ourselves."

"Nothing can be achieved without the participation of the people," she said.

She told the BBC November 14 that she remains willing to meet with Burma's leader, senior General Than Shwe, for talks to promote national reconciliation.

"I think we will have to sort out our differences across the table, talking to each other, agreeing to disagree, or finding out why we disagree and trying to remove the sources of our disagreement," she said.

Suu Kyi's detention prevented her from playing any role in the November 6 election, which was officially won by the military-backed Union Solidarity and Democracy Party in a process that President Obama described on November 8 as "fundamentally flawed."

The NLD was officially disbanded in May after it chose to boycott the vote, citing "unfair and unjust laws" that included barring Suu Kyi and thousands of other dissenters from participating.

But Suu Kyi said at a November 14 news conference that she did not found the NLD as "just a party."

"I founded it as a movement for democracy, an organization for change. As long as the people want democracy in Burma, the organization will exist," she said.

"I'm not going to be able to do it alone. You've got to do it with me," she told the news conference. "One person alone can't do anything as important as bringing genuine democracy to a country."

Statement by President Obama on Release of Aung San Suu Kyi

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
November 13, 2010

Statement by the President on the release of Aung San Suu Kyi

While the Burmese regime has gone to extraordinary lengths to isolate and silence Aung San Suu Kyi, she has continued her brave fight for democracy, peace, and change in Burma. She is a hero of mine and a source of inspiration for all who work to advance basic human rights in Burma and around the world. The United States welcomes her long overdue release.

Whether Aung San Suu Kyi is living in the prison of her house, or the prison of her country, does not change the fact that she, and the political opposition she represents, has been systematically silenced, incarcerated, and deprived of any opportunity to engage in political processes that could change Burma. It is time for the Burmese regime to release all political prisoners, not just one.

The United States looks forward to the day when all of Burma's people are free from fear and persecution. Following Aung San Suu Kyi's powerful example, we recommit ourselves to remaining steadfast advocates of freedom and human rights for the Burmese people, and accountability for those who continue to oppress them.

Statement by Secretary Clinton on Release of Aung San Suu Kyi

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 13, 2010
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STATEMENT BY SECRETARY CLINTON

Release of Aung San Suu Kyi

Today I join with billions of people around the world to welcome the long-overdue release of Burmese democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest.

Aung San Suu Kyi has endured enormous personal sacrifice in her peaceful struggle to bring democracy and human rights to Burma, including unjustified detention for most of the past twenty years. The Burmese regime has repeatedly rejected her offers to engage in dialogue and work together, trying instead to silence and isolate

her. Through it all, Aung San Suu Kyi's commitment to the Burmese people has not wavered.

The United States calls on Burma's leaders to ensure that Aung San Suu Kyi's release is unconditional so that she may travel, associate with her fellow citizens, express her views, and participate in political activities without restriction. They should also immediately and unconditionally release all of Burma's 2,100 political prisoners.

We urge Burma's leaders to break from their repressive policies and begin an inclusive dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic and ethnic leaders towards national reconciliation and a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future.

APEC Members Pledge Concrete Steps to Create Free Trade Area

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and other Asia-Pacific leaders said they remain focused on liberalizing trade and investment among their economies and pledged to work toward greater economic integration and creation of an Asia-Pacific free trade area.

The 21-economies that make up the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum concluded their two-day summit in Yokohama, Japan, November 14 and issued a joint statement that praised APEC as "an engine for progress in the world's most economically dynamic region," which has "driven rising prosperity for all across the globe."

The statement said APEC members would build on that progress by recommitting themselves to "pursue an even more closely integrated regional economy and strong, sustainable, and balanced growth in the region."

That includes "taking concrete steps" toward the realization of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), which APEC members say will "bring about greater prosperity and well-being for all peoples in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond."

The joint statement also endorsed a report that assessed progress among the APEC members toward meeting goals set in their 1994 meeting in Bogor, Indonesia, for industrialized economies to achieve free and open trade and investment in 2010 and for developing countries to do so by 2020.

Although the statement acknowledged that "more work needs to be done," it said significant progress has been made toward meeting the so-called Bogor Goals, thanks

in part to the willingness of some APEC leaders to liberalize their economies.

"This confidence to open up domestic economies would not have been possible were it not for the formation of APEC. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to achieving free and open trade and investment in the region," the statement said.

The White House also welcomed "solid progress" on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which aims to conclude an ambitious trade deal among Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.

A November 14 statement issued by White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said negotiations on the deal are "well under way," and that the TPP "is now the most advanced pathway to Asia-Pacific regional economic integration."

UNITED STATES COMMITTED TO ASIA

President Obama told a November 13 business summit in Yokohama that the economic relationship between the United States and Asia "will only become more important as this region continues to grow," and that the security and prosperity of both are "linked inextricably" in the 21st century.

"Asia Pacific is where the United States engages in much of our trade and our commerce; where our businesses invest and where we attract investment to our shores; where we buy and where we sell many of our goods and services — exports that support millions of jobs for our people," the president said.

"Seven of America's 15 top trading partners are now APEC members. Sixty percent of the goods we export go to this region of the world," he said.

However, he said the overall U.S. share of trade in the region has declined over the past five years, and that trend needs to change if the United States wants to continue selling its goods and services to the region's rapidly developing markets.

Reducing trade barriers through deals like the TPP will bring not only economic benefits to all sides, but also sends a message that the United States "is here to stay" in Asia.

"We are invested in your success because it's connected to our own. We have a stake in your future because our destiny is shared," the president said.

There is "no need" for Americans or Asians to see trade or

economic growth as "zero-sum games, where one country always has to prosper at the expense of another."

"If we work together and act together, strengthening our economic ties can be a win-win for all of our nations," Obama said.

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