

American

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Secretary Clinton Praises Democracy in Kyrgyzstan

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton continued her three-nation Central Asia trip with a stop in Kyrgyzstan, where she praised the country's new parliamentary democracy and the quality of recent national elections.

Clinton and Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbayeva spoke to reporters after meeting December 2 in the country's capital, Bishkek. The secretary's visit came as Kyrgyz political leaders were finalizing the formation of a new coalition government.

"This is a bold endeavor that the people of this country have undertaken, reinventing its democratic governance with a strong parliament designed to represent the full diversity of the people and regions of Kyrgyzstan," Clinton said.

She said U.S. leaders "salute the resolve" Otunbayeva and the Kyrgyz people showed in holding elections "widely applauded as being free, fair and legitimate."

The successful October parliamentary elections established Kyrgyzstan as a leading Central Asian parliamentary democracy and led to efforts to create the coalition government. The vote took place just months after violent ethnic clashes in the country's south caused hundreds of deaths and drove thousands from their homes.

"This is a country that has been through a great deal of change and upheaval. ... However, the elections show that the people of Kyrgyzstan want to resolve disputes peacefully through politics, not violence," Clinton said.

She said the United States is committed to supporting Kyrgyzstan.

"America will stand with the government and people of Kyrgyzstan as you work to deliver economic results and national reconciliation, and safeguard the basic rights and freedoms for people here," Clinton said.

Otunbayeva thanked the United States for its financial aid as well as its "support, understanding and assistance" during the last six months. She expressed appreciation in particular for U.S. support in Kyrgyzstan's economic and political development.

Clinton said she and Otunbayeva also discussed their shared interest in securing the region through stabilizing Afghanistan.

"Both the United States and Kyrgyzstan will be more secure if we can help the Afghan people build a peaceful, stable country free of violent extremism and those who promote it," Clinton said.

The secretary thanked Otunbayeva for hosting and supporting the transit center at Manas, which many coalition troops pass through on the way to Afghanistan.

Clinton visited Kazakhstan before her stop in Kyrgyzstan, and then traveled to Uzbekistan. She is set to close her trip in Bahrain, where she will deliver a keynote address at a regional security forum, the Manama Dialogue 2010. She is scheduled to return to the United States December 3.

Geneva Talks Present Iran with an Opportunity, U.S. Says

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. officials are welcoming Iran's agreement to engage in talks about its nuclear program December 6-7, and say there is still an opportunity for Iran to build confidence with the international community.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the Obama administration is encouraged that Iran will meet in Geneva with European Union foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton, who will be representing Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, the United States and Germany, collectively known as the P5+1.

Speaking December 1 in Astana, Kazakhstan, Clinton said the meetings offer Iran "an opportunity ... to come to the table and discuss the matters that are of concern to the international community," principally its nuclear program.

"We hope that Iran will enter into these negotiations in the spirit that they are offered. We want to see Iran take a position as a responsible member of the international community. But in order to do that, it must cease violating international obligations, [and] cease any efforts it is making and has made in the past toward achieving nuclear weapons," Clinton said.

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns told U.S. lawmakers on the House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee December 1 that it is still possible to reach a solution that ensures Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy while fulfilling Iran's international responsibilities and convincing the international community that its claims that its nuclear activities are for purely peaceful purposes are true.

"If Iran wanted to demonstrate the exclusively peaceful purpose of its program, it wouldn't be hard to do it," by responding to questions and concerns that have been posed to it by both the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Security Council, Burns said.

"There is still time for diplomacy if Iran is prepared to engage in serious discussions," he said. "We will show what's possible if Iran meets its international obligations and adheres to the same responsibilities that apply to other nations."

Burns said the past year has shown growing international recognition of "what's at stake and about the dangers of a nuclear-armed Iran." The costs of Iran's continued noncompliance are rising, he added.

The June passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929 "broke important new ground in curbing arms transfers to Iran," by targeting the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iran's proliferation efforts, instituting the first-ever ban on Iranian ballistic missile activities, limiting Iran's ability to fund nuclear and missile proliferation through international financing, and "for the first time highlighting formally potential links between Iran's energy sector and its nuclear ambitions."

Resolution 1929 was followed by measures against Iran imposed by the United States, the European Union, Canada, Australia, Norway, Japan and South Korea. In addition, major European and Asian energy companies have been persuaded to "terminate existing sanctionable activities in Iran and provide clear assurances that they would not undertake any such activities in the future."

Burns estimated that Iran may be losing \$50 billion to \$60 billion in potential energy investments, "along with the critical technology and know-how that comes with them."

In addition, due to international sanctions, Iran's import of refined petroleum products has dropped by 85 percent from an estimated 130,000 barrels per day in July to 19,000 barrels per day in October, he said.

Undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey told the committee that under Resolution 1929, U.N. member states must "prevent the provision of financial services if there are reasonable grounds to believe that such services could contribute to Iran's nuclear missile program."

Iranian access to the international financial system has been reduced because, given its past behavior, "it is virtually impossible for banks and governments to assure themselves that transactions with Iran could not

contribute to proliferation-sensitive activity," Levey said.

In the face of increased financial pressure, "the Iranian government has increasingly turned to the IRGC for key economic projects." This, he said, is likely to exacerbate Iran's isolation because "companies around the world have begun to shun all business with the IRGC, given its support for terrorism and involvement in Iran's proliferation activities and human rights abuses."

Burns said Iran has a choice to make in its talks in Geneva.

"We are not taking issue with the right of Iran or any other country to a peaceful nuclear program. What's at issue here is its responsibility, like any other country in the world, to demonstrate that it's going to conduct a purely peaceful program," he said.

"There is a path whereby Iran and its people can have access to peaceful nuclear power, just like any other country in the world. They just have to convince the international community of the seriousness of their willingness to live up to their responsibilities. And that's really what's at issue here," Burns said.

U.S., Japan, South Korea to Discuss North Korean Actions

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will host the foreign ministers of South Korea and Japan in Washington for discussions concerning recent North Korean activities and their impact on regional security, says Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Philip J. Crowley.

Speaking December 1, Crowley said the planned December 6 meeting in Washington "provides an opportunity for us to engage with two key partners" following North Korea's November 23 artillery attack on South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island and recent claims to have centrifuges capable of uranium enrichment, which could be used to make nuclear weapons.

Clinton will host South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan and Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara "to discuss the recent developments on the Korean Peninsula and their impact on regional security, as well as other regional and global issues," Crowley said.

"This demonstrates the close coordination between the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan and our commitment to security on the Korean Peninsula and stability in the region," he added.

The United States will continue to consult with other countries, including China and Russia, who with the United States, North Korea, South Korea, Japan and Russia make up the six-party process aimed at achieving a peaceful and nuclear weapons-free Korean Peninsula.

According to press reports, in the wake of North Korea's actions, China had called for an emergency meeting of the Six-Party Talks. However, U.S. officials have said that talks would not be fruitful until North Korea has agreed to end its provocations and take a serious approach toward fulfilling a September 19, 2005, joint statement in which it agreed to take verifiable and irreversible steps to end its nuclear programs.

"It's up to [North] Korea to show demonstrably that it is willing to be a constructive player in the region. It is not right now, with its series of provocations," Crowley said.

Along with the recent nuclear claims and the shelling of Yeonpyeong, in which two South Korean marines and two civilians were killed, North Korea also attacked the South Korean vessel Cheonan in March, leaving 46 sailors dead.

"We are not interested in talks, and talks are no substitute for having North Korea fulfill its international obligations, meet its commitments and cease provocations," Crowley said. "As North Korea demonstrates a willingness to do that, then we will act accordingly," he said, adding that the United States "is not ruling out" further consultations with its partners in the region following the December 6 meeting.

Entrepreneurs Must Jump-Start African Economic Growth

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

New York — Africa is coming onto the world business stage and, for that reason, it is ultimately up to the private sector and its most important player — the entrepreneur — to find ways to jump-start economic growth and development across the continent.

Murray B. Low, the director of the Eugene Lang Entrepreneurship Center at Columbia Business School in New York, made that point in a recent interview with America.gov.

Speaking in his office on the campus, where he also serves as an adjunct professor of management, Low said Africa has huge business opportunities, and "people are now figuring out how to tap those opportunities. I think there is pretty clear consensus that the straight aid model, in and of itself, is not sufficient to spur economic

development and that finding the right way to have the private sector engaged is the secret to development."

"Africa is the poorest continent in the world and there are a lot of models of economic development that have proven not to have worked," Low said. "Today there is increasing agreement that private-sector development is the key to sustained long-term economic and social development.

"At the core of all of that are obviously entrepreneurs, who identify needs, raise capital, deliver products and create wealth for themselves and wealth for the larger society."

Low called entrepreneurs the very essence of the business development model. "I think there are many things needed for economic development, but clearly one essential component is entrepreneurship. When I talk about entrepreneurship, it is not just the lone individual who comes up with an idea and starts a business; it is also that same sort of entrepreneurial spirit that drives existing businesses to new and better performance."

"In Africa," he said, "there is a great need for entrepreneurship and greater leadership and managerial ability in the private sector as well as in the nongovernmental organization [NGO] space."

To help meet that need, Low said, Columbia University, through its Eugene Lang Entrepreneurship Center and its business school, is working closely with Africans in a number of ways.

Low teaches a course, "Entrepreneurship and Private Equity in Africa," with Paul E. Tierney Jr., chairman of the board of TechnoServe, an NGO that provides investing advice and technical assistance to agricultural entrepreneurs in Latin America and Africa.

As part of their coursework, students are sent to Africa on strategic business consulting assignments to help African entrepreneurs. Columbia Business School is also working to enhance its affiliation with business schools at two major African universities: the United States International University (USIU) in Nairobi, Kenya, and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

"Every year we send about 40 students to different parts of Africa in four- or five-person teams to do value-added consulting projects or case-study writing, and that again adds to the richness of our understanding," Low said.

"About four years ago, we decided as a business school and a university that we wanted to make a contribution to the economic development of the continent. We thought, 'Well, we are a pretty good business school, maybe we

can work with one or two business schools in Africa and help them develop their capacity.' There is a huge need for locally relevant, low-cost, high-quality, affordable business education," he said.

"If you talk to professional investors as they look at business opportunities across the continent, there is no shortage of consumer demand. Ironically, I don't think there is shortage of capital. The greatest shortage is the managerial talent to exploit those opportunities."

"I believe the raw talent is pretty universally distributed and there are huge amounts of it in Africa," Low said. "But to be able to run a business that has the capacity to grow to a substantial level requires a level of managerial sophistication that is in short supply in Africa. So we believe that by helping improve the quality of management education that we can make a real significant contribution."

Besides teaching, Low said, Columbia Business School is also working to help its partner universities in Africa develop their research and administrative capabilities. About 10 Columbia faculty members will be traveling to Africa at various times to work with faculty at both universities and to advise "underserved entrepreneurial women." The investment firm Goldman Sachs and its 10,000 Women program – a five-year investment initiative in Africa and throughout the world – are helping to fund this initiative, Low said.

Low said Columbia has helped USIU develop a global-executive MBA program in which the participants are a mix of senior business leaders, entrepreneurs, executive directors of NGOs and some people in government service.

Two faculty members from the University of Dar es Salaam are completing their doctoral degrees and will come to Columbia Business School as visiting scholars in the spring semester of 2011.

Reflecting on his experience working with Africans, Low said, "I have learned a lot about what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur by studying these very successful African entrepreneurs and seeing how under extremely difficult circumstances – where you are dealing with political instability, massive currency fluctuations, corruption and poor infrastructure – that even under these conditions, entrepreneurs can and do thrive and build wonderful, impressive businesses."

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