

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Secretary Clinton Making Trip to Promote Middle East Civil Society Groups

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. support for Middle Eastern civil society groups is “the organizing principle” for Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton’s January 8-13 visit to the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar.

Clinton will meet with government officials, civil society activists and business leaders to encourage their cooperation in providing greater political, social and economic opportunities for the region’s youth.

Speaking to reporters January 7 via teleconference, a senior State Department official said Clinton will be discussing bilateral and regional issues such as Iraq’s political situation, Iranian nuclear activities and Middle East peace efforts, but “a lot of the emphasis” in her public and private engagements “is going to be on how governments and civil society can partner on behalf of progress for people in the region.”

Most people in the region are under the age of 25 and are seeking greater political, social and economic opportunities. They are “very aware of the world around them and of the trends in other regions,” the official said. “They want to be a part of that, and they’re putting increasing demands on government to create more opportunities for them and to help them create opportunities for themselves.”

While some are offering the young “a dark vision for the future” that is devoid of hope, “there are those in the region, including many very brave and dynamic civil society leaders and including many government and business leaders, who are putting forward a very dynamic and positive vision for the future.”

The Obama administration wants to support their efforts, and in her meetings with civil society, government and business leaders, Clinton will urge all three sectors to view each other as partners rather than adversaries.

“In order to take on the challenge of integrating this rising young generation and all the potential that it represents ... government, business and civil society need to work together in partnership ... to solve problems, to hold each other accountable for commitments, and to create real opportunities,” the official said.

The secretary’s trip will culminate in Qatar with her participation in the Forum for the Future.

Founded in 2004, the forum is an initiative between the

countries of the Middle East and North Africa and the G8 major industrialized economies. It provides an opportunity for officials from government, civil society and the private sector to discuss political and economic reforms aimed at promoting greater freedom, democracy and economic growth in the region.

“At the forum there are going to be gathered delegates from civil society all across the region, from Morocco to Afghanistan. And they face a variety of different operating environments” and challenges, the official said.

Clinton will meet with a representative group of the delegates at the forum. Just as they will have specific issues to raise with the United States, Clinton wants to “have the opportunity to hear directly from them about the work that they’re trying to do, about some of the challenges that they face and about what we can do to help them do their work,” the official said.

In all three countries, the secretary will engage with civil society actors, including those working to end child marriage and domestic violence, as well as groups focused on innovation, promoting business development, education and working with young people, the official said.

Clinton views the civil society sector around the world “as an essential partner, alongside governments, in democracy and development,” the official said. “This trip is really meant to manifest that very concretely.”

## Bernanke Says U.S. Economy Beginning Self-Sustaining Recovery

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — A self-sustaining recovery that is driven by improving consumer and business spending may be taking hold in the U.S. economy, the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve says.

“Real consumer spending rose at an annual rate of 2.5 percent in the third quarter of 2010 [July to September], and the available indicators suggest that it likely expanded at a somewhat faster pace in the fourth quarter [October to December],” Fed Chairman Benjamin Bernanke said in congressional testimony January 7.

Bernanke said business spending on new equipment and computer software has “grown robustly in recent quarters” from a previously low level as businesses begin the lengthy process of replacing aging equipment and making investments that had been delayed by the recent recession. The housing sector remains depressed, he said, as a huge inventory of vacant houses continues to drag down home prices and new home construction.

Overall, Bernanke told the U.S. Senate Budget Committee, the pace of the economic recovery in the United States will likely be moderately stronger this year than in 2010.

But jobs expansion in the U.S. economy is still lagging and is not expected to grow fast enough to accommodate the normal increase in the labor force and reduce the unemployment rate, Bernanke said. The U.S. Labor Department announced January 7 that unemployment in the United States fell from 9.8 percent in November 2010 to 9.4 percent in December 2010. Though welcome news, it is still well below what is needed, he said.

"Persistently high unemployment, by damping household income and confidence, could threaten the strength and sustainability of the recovery," Bernanke told the senators.

Bernanke said the initial stages of the economic recovery, which began in the second half of 2009 and into early 2010, were largely attributable to the stabilization of the U.S. financial system by the federal government, and expansionary monetary policies by the Federal Reserve, which is the U.S. central bank.

"Growth slowed somewhat this past spring as the impetus from fiscal policy and inventory building waned and as European sovereign-debt problems led to increased volatility in financial markets," Bernanke testified.

Bernanke said measures that should be taken now to stabilize and improve the U.S. economy include finding a long-term plan to reduce the trillion-dollar budget deficit.

"It is widely understood that the federal government is on an unsustainable fiscal path," Bernanke told the Budget Committee. "Yet, as a nation, we have done little to address this critical threat to our economy."

"Doing nothing will not be an option indefinitely; the longer we wait to act, the greater the risks and the more wrenching the inevitable changes to the budget will be," he said.

Bernanke told the senators that reforms in the government's tax policies and spending priorities to reduce the federal deficit should also be designed to enhance the long-term growth potential of the U.S. economy.

### **U.S., Haiti Partner for Reconstruction**

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden led a team of U.S. government officials in meetings with Haitian-American

leaders ahead of the one-year anniversary of Haiti's devastating earthquake to discuss the "unprecedented challenges that remain for recovery and reconstruction efforts."

According to a January 7 White House statement, Biden's meeting "underscored the important work the United States and our international partners have engaged upon in partnership with the Haitian people since last year's devastating earthquake" and highlighted "the United States' lasting commitment to Haiti."

A key area of cooperation between the U.S. and Haitian governments has been in providing food for those affected by the disaster.

"After the earthquake, we worked quickly to scale up food aid distributions, initially to 3 million and eventually to 4 million people," said Jonathan Dworken, deputy director of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Food for Peace.

Dworken said during a phone briefing that USAID's efforts began with universal food distributions and later transitioned to more targeted assistance focusing on children and pregnant women.

"Then, as food became available in the markets, we provided food vouchers and instituted cash-for-work programs. Underlying this approach is that by undertaking these programs, we're able to not just help Haitian families meet their food needs, but also support the recovery of local markets."

Patricia Haslach, who oversees the State Department's Feed the Future program, also emphasized the importance of food and agriculture in supporting Haiti's overall recovery.

"We recognize that food security isn't only about food — it's also closely linked to economic security, environmental security and human security," she said. The Feed the Future initiative, she added, works closely with the Haitian government, as well as local nongovernmental organizations, to create sustainable progress.

Cheryl Mills, counselor and chief of staff to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, praised progress in Haiti, but said more work is needed.

She said during a news briefing with USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah that more than 1 million people are still living in tents nearly one year after the earthquake, which killed at least 200,000 people and injured more than 300,000.

Shah, who has coordinated the U.S. response, said the success of the recovery and reconstruction effort “will depend on both the deep partnership with the government and people and institutions of Haiti and our collective will and commitment to see the effort through.”

“In that spirit, we’ve taken a number of steps to try to put in place the innovations in how we work to make sure that we’re really capturing the opportunities of the moment to build back better even in a very difficult environment,” Shah said.

He added that the U.S. government has partnered with Haitian companies to develop improved construction standards and to be part of the reconstruction work, “thereby creating jobs ... and also creating a more vibrant local economy that’s capable of sustaining and seeing through the overall reconstruction and recovery effort.”

He emphasized that the United States remains committed to being “good partners with the people and government of Haiti” as they work together toward long-term recovery and rebuilding.

### **United States Imposes Sanctions on Côte d’Ivoire’s Gbagbo**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States has imposed financial sanctions against former Côte d’Ivoire President Laurent Gbagbo, his wife, Simone Gbagbo, and three members of his inner circle, the U.S. Treasury Department said.

The sanctions were announced January 6 by the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which is responsible for the administration of economic and financial sanctions. The office cited recent actions by Gbagbo that threaten the peace and the national reconciliation process in Côte d’Ivoire. The sanctions also targeted three of Laurent Gbagbo’s associates for acting for him or on his behalf: Desire Tagro, Pascal Affi N’Guessan and Alcide Ilahiri Djedje.

Côte d’Ivoire has been in a political crisis since the conclusion of the November 28 presidential runoff election, when Gbagbo and his opponent, Alassane Ouattara, both claimed victory.

As a result of the sanctions, U.S. citizens are prohibited from conducting financial or commercial transactions with the designated individuals, and any assets they hold that are under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen, according to OFAC.

“Laurent Gbagbo continues to demonstrate wanton disregard for the will and well-being of the people of Côte

d’Ivoire,” OFAC Director Adam Szubin said. “Today’s designations will isolate him and his inner circle from the world’s financial system and underscore the desire of the international community that he step down.”

Gbagbo’s refusal to accept the result of the runoff election, which was announced by the Independent Election Commission (CEI) and certified by the special representative of the United Nations secretary-general, has created a crisis in Côte d’Ivoire, Szubin said. As a signatory to the 2005 Pretoria Agreement, Gbagbo had pledged to ensure free, fair and transparent elections in Côte d’Ivoire with U.N. participation, a commitment that was reaffirmed in the 2007 Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

“His refusal to accept the CEI’s election results — which have been endorsed by the U.N. Security Council, the African Union, the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States — and relinquish his authority undermines the implementation of these political agreements and threatens the peace and reconciliation process in Côte d’Ivoire,” the Treasury Department said in an announcement.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement that the “citizens of Côte d’Ivoire expressed their will in elections on November 28, electing Alassane Ouattara the new president with 54 percent of the vote. The results were widely declared by accredited, credible international observers to be free and fair.”

“Gbagbo’s efforts to remain in power threaten years of reconciliation and peace-building efforts on behalf of the Ivoirian people,” the State Department said.

The Treasury Department said Desire Tagro has acted as Laurent Gbagbo’s chief of staff since the November election, and he was designated for threatening the peace and national reconciliation process in Côte d’Ivoire and for acting for or on behalf of Gbagbo. Pascal Affi N’Guessan, chairman of the Ivorian Popular Front, a political party founded by Laurent Gbagbo in 1982, has been acting as Gbagbo’s campaign spokesman during the 2010 election season and its aftermath, and Alcide Ilahiri Djedje, previously Côte d’Ivoire’s permanent representative to the United Nations, was selected as Gbagbo’s minister of foreign affairs, Treasury said.

“Tagro, N’Guessan, and Djedje have all served as official representatives of Gbagbo since his refusal to stand down and have resisted international calls for a democratic transfer of power,” the Treasury Department said.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice told reporters in New York January 6 that the United States, the European Union and others have taken steps to block

the designated Ivorians' ability to travel and move resources and assets.

"We think that kind of pressure is warranted given the continued refusal to accept and act on the will of the Ivorian people," Rice said. "And certainly in the case of the U.N. we have a sanctions regime, they exist on Côte d'Ivoire, and to the extent that this remains stalled, I think we are obliged to look at whether it needs to be augmented and invigorated."

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