

American

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Statement by President Obama on the Lunar New Year

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
February 2, 2011

Statement by the President on the Lunar New Year

I send my best wishes to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and all who celebrate the Lunar New Year across the United States and around the world.

As people of all cultures and faiths welcome in the new year, let all of us celebrate our families and our ancestors, and enjoy the company of our loved ones. Across America, in large cities and in small towns, many will mark this occasion with festive celebrations. Many Americans of Asian descent will carry on the rich traditions of their heritage, reminding us again that America's strength comes from the richness of our cultures and the diversity of our people.

I wish all who celebrate the new year peace, prosperity and good health.

Summary of President Obama's Call to Yemeni President Saleh

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
February 3, 2011

Readout of President's Call with President Saleh of Yemen

President Obama called President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen on February 2 to welcome the significant reform measures that President Saleh had announced earlier that day, and to stress that President Saleh now needs to follow-up his pledge with concrete actions. President Obama asked that Yemeni security forces show restraint and refrain from violence against Yemeni demonstrators who are exercising their right to free association, assembly, and speech. The President also told President Saleh that it is imperative that Yemen take forceful action against Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to protect innocent lives in Yemen as well as abroad. Finally, President Obama expressed concern over the release of Abd-Ilah al-Shai, who had been sentenced to five years in prison for his association with AQAP. President Saleh thanked the President for U.S. support and committed to continuing and strengthening relations with the United States.

Summary of Clinton's Call to Egyptian Vice President

U.S. Department of State
Office of the Spokesman
Washington, DC
February 2, 2011

Media Note

Secretary Clinton's Call to Egyptian Vice President Omar Soliman

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called Egyptian Vice President Omar Soliman today to convey that today's violence was a shocking development after many days of consistently peaceful demonstrations. The Secretary urged that the Government of Egypt hold accountable those who were responsible for violent acts. Secretary Clinton also underscored the important role that the Egyptian Armed Forces have played in exercising restraint in the face of peaceful demonstrations and expressed concern that all parties recommit themselves to using only peaceful means of assembly.

Noting Vice President Soliman's call for a broad dialogue with representatives of Egypt's opposition parties, the Secretary expressed hope that both the government and the opposition would seize the opportunity, starting immediately, for serious, meaningful negotiations about Egypt's transition to a more open, pluralistic, and democratic government. Lastly, the Secretary noted that the United States remains committed to working in partnership with Egypt in helping to achieve the aspirations of the Egyptian people.

U.S. Condemns Attacks on Press and Peaceful Protesters in Egypt

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration condemns the harassment of journalists covering the unrest in Egypt as well as violent attacks against civilians, and it urges Egyptian government officials and opposition groups to immediately come together in serious negotiations for a political transition that will be credible to the Egyptian people.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton condemned the attacks on reporters in remarks February 3. "This is a violation of international norms that guarantee freedom of the press. And it is unacceptable under any circumstances," she said.

She also condemned the violence against "peaceful demonstrators, human rights activists, foreigners and diplomats," saying that the freedoms of assembly,

expression and the press “are pillars of an open and inclusive society.” Governments, she said, must demonstrate their adherence to these rights “especially in times of crisis.”

The Egyptian government, including the army, has a clear responsibility to “protect those threatened and to hold accountable those responsible for these attacks,” she said. Clinton urged the government and a “broad and credible representation of Egypt’s opposition, civil society and political factions” to immediately begin negotiations that will lead to a peaceful and orderly political transition.

“The Egyptian people expect a meaningful process that yields concrete changes,” Clinton said.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said February 3 that the United States has assembled a list of journalists who have been reported as having been detained or subject to violence or other harassment. The Obama administration has communicated both to the Egyptian government in Cairo and the Egyptian Embassy in Washington its grave concern over the treatment of journalists, and is making inquiries within the country, he said.

The attacks on journalists are “part of a concerted effort” and “do not seem to be random events,” Crowley said. He also said that the attacks on anti-government protesters in Cairo’s Tahrir Square by armed supporters of President Hosni Mubarak on February 2 have been traced to “elements ... close to the government or the ruling party,” but he added, “I don’t know that we have a sense of how far up the chain [of command] it went.”

Crowley said U.S. officials are concerned about the prospect of violence on February 4, when Egypt’s weekend will begin and the number of protesters on the streets is expected to rise.

Vice President Omar Suleiman has met with some opposition members, but Crowley said those meetings were not broad enough or credible enough “to meet the clear aspirations of the Egyptian people.”

“The longer this goes on without concrete action that the people of Egypt can see, the greater danger of ongoing confrontations and violence,” Crowley said. “This is why we continue to encourage the government and the opposition ... [to] come together now, have a broad-based effort, move forward, so that people can see that change is coming and, in fact, that change is occurring.”

Crowley said the United States is sharing its perspective with the Egyptian government, and it remains in daily conduct with the Egyptian military as well as members of the opposition. But he also repeated that it is not up to the

United States or any other foreign power to “dictate” who will govern Egypt. The decision on how long President Mubarak remains in power is “an Egyptian decision,” he said.

“This is not about us. It’s about the relationship between the Egyptian people and the Egyptian government,” he said.

U.S. foreign relationships “are guided first and foremost by national interests, our interests and the interests of other countries. They’re not based on particular personalities.” At the same time, Crowley said, U.S. officials enjoy close working relationships with non-U.S. leaders.

He added that the United States does not have any information that would suggest that the protests “are being managed or directed by foreign elements.”

The government and opposition need to come together now, he said, since it will take time to prepare the country for credible elections, with many in the Egyptian opposition lacking experience in political campaigning. Therefore, the process needs to start now, Crowley said.

Egypt is facing challenges and decisions on the presidential election, the country’s parliament and other concerns. “There are lots of decisions to be made. But the sooner that they demonstrate progress to the Egyptian people, the better,” Crowley said.

Secretaries Clinton, Gates Lead U.S. Delegation to Munich Conference

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates will meet with more than 350 top-level decisionmakers from across the globe at the 47th Munich Security Conference February 4–6.

Clinton and Gates are expected to make major speeches on security issues such as limiting theater nuclear warheads and will quite likely include remarks on events unfolding in Egypt. National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon is also attending the annual security conference.

On February 5, Clinton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will exchange instruments of ratification for the New START treaty, according to State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley. Once the exchange occurs, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty enters into force.

The treaty reduces the two nations’ nuclear arsenals to 1,550 nuclear warheads each in seven years. The United States and Russia hold 95 percent of the nuclear weapons

in the world.

The treaty was signed April 8, 2010, by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Prague. It is a centerpiece of Obama's foreign policy program and reflects his broader world view. He was awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to foster arms control and nuclear nonproliferation worldwide.

"This is the most significant arms control agreement in nearly two decades," Obama said after the U.S. Senate voted in favor of the treaty. "And it will make us safer."

The U.S. Senate approved ratification December 22 and Russia's parliament gave its final approval in January. Obama signed ratification documents February 2.

In a prepared statement February 1, Crowley said that "a responsible partnership between the world's two largest nuclear powers to limit our nuclear arsenals while maintaining strategic stability is imperative to promoting global security. With New START, the United States and Russia have reached another milestone in our bilateral relationship and continue the momentum Presidents Obama and Medvedev created with the 'reset' nearly two years ago."

NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES

Delegates attending the three-day security conference are expected to discuss a range of international security challenges, from the economic crisis to cyberwar. Much of the agenda will focus on cybersecurity, disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation, and the economic crisis and its security implications.

Conference chairman Wolfgang Ischinger said in late January that this year's conference of international policymakers is a milestone on the way to a new and comprehensive Euro-Atlantic security community.

"I have high hopes for us to be able to show that the course has been set towards cooperation and the use of new opportunities so that we may design a coherent and even more comprehensive security community based on the results of the [2010] Lisbon NATO summit," Ischinger said in a news interview January 21.

The security conference was founded in 1962 as the Wehrkunde Conference by German publisher Ewald-Heinrich von Kleist-Schmenzin, who was succeeded in 1999 by Horst Teltschik, the former vice-head of the German Chancellery. Ischinger, a German diplomat, became chairman in 2009.

Pakistani Mangoes Set to Sweeten U.S. Markets

By Carrie Loewenthal Massey
Special Correspondent

New York — Americans are in for a treat.

In spring 2011, Pakistan will send stateside the world's sweetest mango — validated by universal scientific sweetness measurements — sure to delight even the most discerning of palates.

Unique not only in their high sucrose to water ratio, but also in their smooth, low-pulp flesh and strong, pleasant aroma, Pakistani mangoes will make their first trip to the United States in May or June.

This initial export marks a milestone in an ongoing joint project with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Pakistani farmers and mango growers to expand Pakistan's mango industry.

"Pakistani mangoes are a symbol of Pakistani pride, so to export those is a symbol of Pakistan reaching out to the world," said Zachary Orend, USAID economic growth adviser in Pakistan, in an interview with *America.gov*. Pakistan produces the third-largest crop of mangoes in the world, growing more than 1.5 million tons annually. Pakistan's mango exports reached their highest levels ever in 2010, according to a U.S. Embassy Islamabad press release.

The USDA works with Pakistan's Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock to obtain U.S. market access for the mangoes, Orend said, while USAID helps Pakistani farmers build on-farm mango processing centers. Farms with these infrastructures can remove fungus from the fruit and wash, sort, grade and chill it. As of January 15, four farms had received this equipment, and 11 more farms in Sindh and Punjab will have it by March 31. Each of the farms, all of which are medium to large in size, contributes 50 percent of the investment costs of the processing infrastructure.

Wajahat Gardezi manages one of the farms receiving the new equipment. His 350-acre (142-hectare) orchard, called Mumtaz Agri Farms, in the Kabirwala Tehsil of District Khanewal, will hire 30 people to operate the new production line and anticipates a surge in productivity as a result of the new machinery.

"The USAID-supported mango processing facility will help increase the fruit's shelf life for better survival during sea transfers and market displays," Gardezi said in a USAID profile. "Pakistani mangoes are going places."

With 15 on-farm systems in place by spring, the Pakistani

farmers can preserve large portions of their harvest, which begins in May and goes through September. USAID hopes the on-farm systems will help meet Pakistan's ultimate goal of increasing its mango industry revenues from \$30 million to \$60 million over three years.

"The trick is to encourage more investing. We're supporting the 15 [farm systems], but if we get to 200 or 300, we'll have a huge industry," Orend said. "Pakistan can sell as many mangoes as they can successfully treat, chill and ship," he added.

BUILDING A U.S. MANGO MARKET

Currently, Pakistan exports less than 5 percent of its mango crop, and the exported mangoes go mostly to wholesale markets, according to a USAID fact sheet. A 2010 test shipment to the United States proved Pakistani mangoes have a promising audience among the Pakistani-American community, USAID said. There are 700,000 Pakistani Americans in the United States, in such cities as New York, Houston and Chicago, as well as in northern and southern California, according to the American Pakistan Foundation.

The first Pakistani mangoes will arrive by air at an irradiation treatment center in Iowa. After treatment, the produce will be shipped to cities with large Pakistani-American populations. USDA and USAID hope to establish weekly air shipments of a little more than one ton of mangoes, Orend said.

Ultimately, the United States would like to coordinate sea shipments of the mangoes because that allows for much larger exports than air shipments accommodate, and sea shipments cost less, which helps reduce the price a customer will pay for a mango. While the USDA works on logistics, which include transferring irradiation facilities to a portside location, USAID is helping Pakistani farmers qualify for certification in Global Good Agricultural Practice (GlobalG.A.P.) production standards. Europe accepts GlobalG.A.P. certification and can receive mangoes from the 20 farms that have already received it.

"The money [for Pakistan] is in getting sea shipments in volume to Europe and eventually the U.S.," Orend said.

MORE ECONOMIC BENEFITS

USAID's mango program aims to spur far-reaching economic gains for Pakistani farmers. The 15 farms set to have their processing infrastructures in place by spring will act "as centers of clusters of mango producers," pulling in the farms around them in order to produce the volume of fruit needed to fill the large sea shipping containers, said Orend. A 40-foot (12.2-meter) refrigerated

sea container holds 16 tons of fruit.

Gardezi hopes to inspire his neighboring Pakistani farmers to join him to form a mango cluster. He sees banding together as crucial to economic growth, and he is proud to be at the forefront of the new fruit handling practices, according to USAID.

"There is an overall atmosphere of change and other farmers are now following in our footsteps," he said in the USAID profile.

The on-farm systems give the farmers the ability to grade their fruit, which also increases its economic value.

"When you grade produce, you can sell it at higher prices, so there are better earnings for participating farmers. They can also fetch higher prices on the local market," Orend said. "This ties into our larger policy project, which is trying to improve the way the Pakistani fruits and vegetables are marketed and sold."

When mango season ends, the farms can use the new blast chillers and cold storage spaces to keep tomatoes, cucumbers and other fruits and vegetables fresh for longer periods of time.

In addition to working with the mango infrastructure systems, USAID has trained close to 1,500 farmers from smaller farms in helpful pre- and post-harvest practices. As a result, these farmers have increased their per hectare productivity by as much as 15 percent, according to USAID. In the aftermath of the 2010 floods that devastated and destroyed crops across Pakistan, USAID also taught 350 mango growers how to minimize flood damage to their orchards.

USAID has also worked to identify other products that add export value to Pakistan's mango crop. Dried sliced mangos, confectionary and cereal products, preserves, mango-seed oil for cosmetics, mango-kernel oil products and animal feed all have potential on the market, according to USAID's fact sheet. In 2010, a sample consignment of 1,500 kilograms of dried mangoes went to major U.S. retailers, including Whole Foods and Costco, for product feedback.

USAID's work on the mango project is part of several efforts focused on building Pakistan's business sector. The United States has partnered with Chemonics, a development consulting company based in Washington, and dedicated nearly \$90 million to the mango project, which runs from May 2009 to May 2013.

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