

American

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Clinton Praises U.N. Action to Send Peacekeepers to Abyei

By Merle David Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton praised swift passage of a critical U.N. resolution that approves the deployment of approximately 4,200 Ethiopian peacekeepers to the Abyei region of Sudan.

“Abyei has been a source of regional tension for many years, as the world witnessed last month May when Sudanese Armed Forces forcibly took control of the region, resulting in widespread displacement and looting,” Clinton said in a prepared statement June 27.

“The approval of this force is a critical step in implementing the June 20 agreement signed by the parties, whereby the Sudanese Armed Forces will withdraw from the Abyei area along with any Sudan People’s Liberation Army forces there,” Clinton added.

Under the agreement, an Ethiopian armored brigade will deploy as the U.N. Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to enforce the withdrawal of northern and southern Sudan armies and maintain security throughout the Abyei region for an initial six-month period, according to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1990. The resolution was unanimously approved by the 15-member council June 27 in New York.

The peacekeepers are responsible for protecting civilians in the Abyei region and preventing incursions into the region “by unauthorized elements,” and act as a buffer between the northern and southern armies, the resolution said. The region, which produces some oil, is claimed by both northern and southern Sudan.

On July 9, southern Sudan separates from northern Sudan and becomes an independent nation. There has been nearly three decades of civil strife and conflict between the two regions, which ended through a series of agreements and referendums.

“We urge the Sudanese government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement to make good on their commitments to withdraw forces from Abyei and use the talks facilitated by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel to reach mutual agreement on the future status of Abyei,” Clinton said.

Ambassador Susan Rice, the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations, issued a statement from New York, saying, “We are pleased that the council acted swiftly — and unanimously — to adopt this resolution, which will contribute to ensuring that the

agreement both parties reached can be implemented immediately and effectively.”

Rice added that the strong peacekeeping presence is an essential part of the security arrangements to demilitarize Abyei and create conditions for a permanent political settlement.

Clinton also said that the United States remains concerned about the ongoing crisis in the Southern Kordofan region. Tens of thousands of people have been driven from their homes because of the civil strife, and there are reports of serious human rights abuses, including ethnic and political violence targeting individuals.

“Also of concern is the troubling detention of Sudanese local staff members of the U.N. Mission in Sudan by Sudanese authorities last week as they were being evacuated from the airport in Kadugli,” Clinton said. Two staff members have been released, but five remain in the custody of Sudanese military officials.

Clinton called on the Sudanese government to release them immediately and cease any harassment and intimidation of U.N. personnel in Southern Kordofan.

Rice added that “the government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement–North must agree immediately to a ceasefire in Southern Kordofan and end restrictions on humanitarian access and U.N. movements.”

Egypt Open for Business, Says U.S. Diplomat

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States stands ready to support Egypt as the country liberalizes its political system and opens its economy following a political revolution earlier this year, says Assistant Secretary of State Jose Fernandez.

“This is a moment of tremendous opportunity for Egypt,” the assistant secretary of state for economic, energy and business affairs said during a roundtable discussion with business leaders in Washington June 28. “Egypt is indeed open for business.”

Fernandez said the world has “seen the Arab Spring take flight,” and that it is now up to the international community to help sustain the movement by supporting countries in transition. He said developing and strengthening Egypt’s private sector could play a significant role in determining the future of the Middle East and North Africa. “A prosperous Egypt, supported by economic growth and a strong private sector, will be an anchor of stability for the region,” he said.

Fernandez said Egypt's political revolution, which began January 25 and helped spark similar calls for change across the region, caused the country to take notice of the potential of its people.

"The government of Egypt and the international community must not underestimate the value of this human resource — a people that not only stand ready to work hard and innovate to grow their country, but who in fact demand the right to do it," he said.

But despite the country's advantages, Fernandez said, some constraints to growth remain.

"The challenge is to undertake reforms to shed the legacies of the past that have stunted private sector growth — including making it easier to start a business, to invest, to settle disputes and even to just be an employee, and to do so in an environment of budget deficits, a mismatch between the education system and employment opportunities and a history of reliance on state-led solutions," he said.

To combat these challenges, Fernandez said, the United States is working to strengthen the Egyptian private sector in four ways.

First, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation will create a 10-year loan guarantee facility in Egypt, providing up to \$700 million in loans to small- and medium-sized enterprises and supporting more than 50,000 jobs. The U.S. Agency for International Development plans to leverage existing partner microfinance networks, expertise and infrastructure to help start new businesses and increase trade with Egypt.

And the State Department's Global Entrepreneurship Program will help create angel investor networks by providing seed funding and support. Finally, to engage multilateral partners in Egypt's private sector development, the Treasury and State departments are working to support the country's request to reorient the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development "so that it can play the same role today in supporting democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa that it played two decades ago in Central and Eastern Europe."

And while much attention is focused on supporting Egypt's private sector, Fernandez said, U.S. leaders recognize the Egyptian government's vital role in creating a financial climate that is "welcoming and empowering for business." He said the United States is working to forge partnerships to ensure country ownership of the development process.

"Untapped Potential" for Expanded U.S.-India Trade, Geithner Says

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama hopes to see India become one of the top 10 U.S. trading partners, and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said there is "vast untapped potential" in the economic relationship between the two countries. Geithner urged India to make economic and financial reforms to attract more investment.

In a June 28 statement released at the conclusion of his meetings with Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee at the 2011 U.S.-India Economic and Financial Partnership in Washington, Geithner said India's economic growth is good for the United States and American growth also benefits India.

"We aren't just watching India's rise as an economic power, we support it. We encourage it. And we want to help advance it," he said.

Between 2000 and 2010, India's exports to the United States grew by nearly 180 percent, while U.S. exports to India increased more than four times, he said. The decade also saw India rise from being the 25th-largest trading partner of the United States to its 12th-largest. Between 2005 and 2009, the combined bilateral U.S.-India foreign direct investment also grew by nearly 165 percent.

Both countries are benefiting from the increase in economic ties. Geithner said that when President Obama visited India in November 2010, he learned how "American-manufactured solar cells are helping move Indian cell towers off diesel generators and how a drug discovery technology invented and manufactured in the U.S. is helping find new cures in India for deadly illnesses, including dengue."

But Geithner urged the Indian government to make more financial and economic reforms that will increase investment and offer long-term benefits.

"American companies still face barriers in India in sectors such as banking, insurance, manufacturing, multibrand retail and infrastructure. Easing those barriers, which are limiting economic growth and job creation in both our countries, would be an important step toward integrating our economies," he said.

"The Indian government recognizes that to realize its aspirations of strong growth, it will need to attract sufficient investment, both from abroad and domestically. India will need to advance pending economic and financial reforms to make this possible," Geithner said.

Geithner and Finance Minister Mukherjee signed a joint statement June 28 in which they said India and the United States share both a vision and a commitment to “expanding economic opportunities for our citizens through greater trade and investment.”

In the statement, the United States said it is committed to maintaining and enhancing its competitiveness in the global economy, and pledged to make investments in the necessary technology, skills and infrastructure. India said it will take steps to “marshal private and public savings” to meet the infrastructure needs of its rapidly growing economy.

Both countries pledged to “work together to expand trade and investment links between our two economies, and to develop and strengthen our financial systems,” as well as cooperate in the Group of 20 leading industrialized and developing nations forum on “an effective mutual assessment process to bring about strong, sustained, and balanced global growth.”

The statement said that during the upcoming year, the United States and India also plan to have deeper engagement over macroeconomic challenges such as growth, unemployment, inflation and commodity prices, as well as financial sector reforms and infrastructure finance strategies.

Women’s World Cup Teams Include Many U.S. Professionals

By Mark Trainer
Staff Writer

Washington — Members of the American team in Germany for the sixth FIFA Women’s World Cup are seeing some very familiar faces among the competition.

In addition to the 20 women playing for the United States, 16 players currently competing professionally on American teams will play for seven other national teams, among them Australia, Brazil, Japan, New Zealand and Sweden.

Twenty more players competing on World Cup teams have played in recent years for Women’s Professional Soccer, the sport’s top-level professional league in the United States. One of the game’s most prominent players, Marta Vieira da Silva — simply “Marta” to fans of soccer (called football in most of the world) — competes professionally on the Western New York Flash team. But in the World Cup, she’s playing for Brazil.

Similarly, her teammate on Western New York Flash, Caroline Seger, is representing her home country of Sweden at the competition in Germany. England’s team

includes five competitors from American teams, three of whom play for Sky Blue FC and two who play for the Boston Breakers.

It’s not an uncommon phenomenon in U.S. professional sports such as basketball, baseball and soccer. But what makes players leave their home countries to come play in America?

“This is a chance for them to play at the top of their game against international stars every year,” said Anne-Marie Eileraas, chief executive officer of the league. “We’re encouraged by the German and English professional leagues and the level of play there — in France and throughout Europe. But we think we really offer something special in that there are so many international stars who play, and you can really test yourself against the best in the world. Without a professional league, the typical player would really gear up for the Olympics or the World Cup if they’re on a qualifying team and each of those is a once-every-four-years kind of thing.”

The benefits that women’s soccer in America offers players from other countries are matched, according to Eileraas, by what those players bring to the sport in the United States.

“Players from particular countries galvanize others from those countries in the local communities. Last year when Marta was playing in California we’d go to games and there’d be contingents in the crowd waving Brazilian flags who were totally energized by the fact that they could see someone from their own country lighting up the field and the scoreboard. I think that happens throughout the league.”

But having players from around the world benefits the American game as well. “Even more than that,” Eileraas said, “it brings an international style of play into stadiums. The American style of play has evolved and advanced so much, but there’s still more to learn. A player like Marta comes in and just has that magical touch with the ball. And even if you know nothing about soccer you know you’re seeing something unique and special.”

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recently launched the Women’s World Cup Initiative to coincide with the 2011 competition. The initiative sends current and retired professional athletes abroad and increases already existing sports exchange programs with other countries. Clinton said she hoped that “we’ll encourage even more people to get behind women and girls in sports and to give young women a chance to compete on the playing field, to discharge that incredible energy that they want to put into being the best they can be.”

Eileraas says the players competing on the American team are optimistic about their chances this year, but notes that the level of competition has risen since America's last Women's World Cup victory in 1999. "They're hungry to win again. I think that they're going to be competing against a very sophisticated set of teams who have high skill levels and the fitness to match. And that means they have to be literally at the top of their game."

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