

American

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Secretary Clinton Says Women Are Key to 21st-Century Economic Growth

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says increasing women’s participation in the economy will be a critical source of growth for countries around the world in the 21st century.

“When we liberate the economic potential of women, we elevate the economic performance of communities, nations and the world,” Clinton said in remarks September 16.

In her keynote address to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum’s Women and the Economy Summit in San Francisco, Clinton praised the group for preparing a declaration to affirm its commitment to “improving women’s access to capital and markets, to building women’s capacities and skills, and to supporting the rise of women leaders in the public and private sectors.”

Clinton said women are already making valuable contributions to economies across the globe.

“There is no doubt that the increasing numbers of women in the economy, and the rising productivity gains from improving the distribution of their talents and skills, has helped fuel significant growth everywhere,” the secretary said, adding that nations making stronger efforts to include women are “dramatically outperforming those that have not.”

She said that in APEC member economies, which together represent more than half of the total global economic output, more than 60 percent of women are part of the formal workforce.

“They’re opening stores, they’re running businesses, they’re harvesting crops, they’re assembling electronics and designing software,” Clinton said, noting that the increase in the employment of women in developed economies during the past decade has added more to global growth than China has. She said that harnessing the potential of women is the only way to harness the full potential of the global economy.

But many women still face legal and social restrictions that limit their professional potential, the secretary said.

In some countries, she said, women are confined to the lowest rungs on the job ladder, confronted with a glass ceiling that keeps them from attaining the most senior positions. In other places, women are subject to different taxes than men, denied access to credit and even prohibited from opening bank accounts or signing

contracts without a male guardian.

Clinton said these barriers, fueled by what she called outdated laws, customs and values, deny their countries a chance at greater prosperity.

“The declaration we will adopt here today can begin to close that gender gap by making it possible for more women to unleash their potential as workers, entrepreneurs and business leaders,” Clinton said.

The secretary said the declaration will include a commitment to giving women access to capital so they can turn their ideas into small- and medium-sized businesses that will in turn be a source of growth and job creation. She said it will also urge APEC member economies to examine and reform their legal and regulatory systems so women can benefit from a full range of financial services. Finally, Clinton said, the declaration seeks to improve women’s access to markets and to information, such as trade opportunities and technical assistance programs.

The summit participants were expected to adopt the declaration following Clinton’s remarks. The group included senior private- and public-sector leaders for a dialogue on fostering women’s economic empowerment among APEC members.

President Obama will host APEC leaders for their annual summit, to convene November 12–13 in Honolulu.

U.S., Australian Ties Promoting Asian Stability and Growth

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington – The 60-year-old alliance between Australia and the United States has helped to provide stability in the Asia-Pacific region, which in turn has fueled economic growth and prosperity, and the two countries announced they are updating their cooperation to address the 21st-century threats posed to governments and businesses by cyberattacks.

In remarks with Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd and Australian Defense Minister Stephen Smith in San Francisco September 15, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States and Australia “are committed to working together to seize the opportunities of a fast-changing Asia-Pacific region,” and their bilateral military relationship is “deepening and becoming even more consequential.”

The two countries share a wide range of interests, values and vision, “from maritime cooperation to joint development projects to building stronger ties with India

to promote democracy and prosperity in the Pacific Islands," she said.

Foreign Minister Rudd said the strategic presence of the United States in the region has provided "the underpinnings" of the dynamic economic growth seen recently in East and South Asia by providing stability to the region, and he said that stability is still needed for the region's long-term prosperity.

"This region will be the center of gravity for global economic growth, for global security for the half century to come. And it is in our combined interest, therefore, to ensure that this Pacific century is indeed a Pacific century," Rudd said.

A senior Obama administration official who asked not to be identified told reporters September 15 that the United States and Australia want to engage India as a Pacific partner, acknowledge Indonesia's increasing importance and maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

This demonstrates that "not only does the U.S.-Australian relationship punch far beyond and above its weight, we are working together in a global context now that reflects the fact that the United States and Australia really appreciate and understand ... the stake that we have in a variety of areas," the official said.

U.S. officials are also interested in Australia's insights into Chinese political developments as China prepares for its 2012 party congress.

"Our discussion is across the board, understanding what's transpiring in China, what motivates Chinese foreign policy and how best to work with like-minded countries on a shared objective, which is to see China as a strong, stable, secure, contributing partner to the Asia-Pacific region," the official said.

In a joint statement September 15, both countries cited the growing role of cyberspace in ensuring national security, as well as economic well-being, and pledged to expand their defense cooperation to include cybersecurity.

"In the event of a cyber attack that threatens the territorial integrity, political independence or security of either of our nations, Australia and the United States would consult together and determine appropriate options to address the threat," the joint statement said.

Rudd said cyberspace cooperation is an important dimension reflecting the realities of the 21st century. "One cyberattack can cripple an economy for hours and days on end," he said, which in turn can affect neighboring countries and global markets.

"Like terrorism, it's a battleground that is fought unconventionally, often without a known enemy. That is why it is critical that this become a formal part of our alliance deliberations and committed cooperation in the event of such attack in the future," he said.

U.S. Defense Secretary Panetta said the joint statement sends "a very strong signal" about their commitment against cyberattacks.

"This is the battlefield of the future, and our ability to work together is extremely important to the challenge of being able to counter this very significant emerging threat," he said.

Australian Defense Minister Smith said a cyberattack on either country could now invoke the 1951 treaty that established their military alliance. "This tells us that the treaty, which we have both respected over that 60-year period, is a living document that moves with the times, as it did 10 years and one day ago," following the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, he said.

SHARED CONCERNS OVER BURMA

Turning to Burma, Secretary Clinton said there have been "welcome gestures" from the Burmese government in its treatment of its people, but she said the country also continues to suppress universal rights.

"We have serious question and concerns ... from Burma's treatment of ethnic minorities and more than 2,000 prisoners to its relations with North Korea," she said and noted that on September 13 Burma had added 10 years to a prison sentence being served by a 21-year-old journalist.

"We welcome the fact that the Burmese government has launched a dialogue with [opposition leader] Aung San Suu Kyi and begun to speak of the need for important reforms," Clinton said, but she urged the government to "follow its words and commitments with concrete actions that lead to genuine reform, national reconciliation and respect for human rights."

Rudd said he told Burmese officials recently that they must "deal with the state of democratic conditions within their own country and the absolute imperative of the release of prisoners of conscience and other political prisoners in that country" if they want to have a comprehensive engagement with the rest of the world community.

Like the United States, Australia is proceeding cautiously in its approach to Burma, and Rudd called on Burmese officials to take "concrete steps to manifest to the world at large that they are serious about that country becoming a

democracy without the threat of imprisonment for those ... who pose, in the regime's view, a threat to them."

Chicago Talks Advance Trans-Pacific Trade Pact

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — The United States has made important progress on advancing a series of economic goals with its Asia-Pacific allies in the latest round of Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, according to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk.

"This has been a productive round with progress made toward the goal of concluding an ambitious, 21st-century agreement that will enhance trade and investment among the TPP partner countries and support economic growth and development and support the creation and retention of jobs," Kirk's office said in a press release on the conclusion of the latest round of talks September 15.

The agreement seeks to open trade in the Asia-Pacific area to support new jobs, strengthen regional relations and eventually create a free-trade area. It also sets modern trade standards, including ensuring worker rights and protecting the environment.

The eighth round of negotiations in Chicago consisted of 10 days of "intensive and fruitful talks," the representative's office said. Progress was made in negotiating legal texts for new standards in customs, telecommunications and overcoming technical barriers to trade. The group also took steps toward agreement on new standards for government procurement, regulatory coherence, competitiveness, development, intellectual property and investment.

The USTR said these detailed negotiations require agreements by each country on trade for roughly 11,000 tariff lines, as well as investment in all service sectors and reciprocal access to each other's government procurement markets.

During the meeting, Kirk introduced a new strategic initiative from his office, called Trade Enhancing Access to Medicines (TEAM). In a September 12 statement, the USTR said the initiative is designed to promote trade and reduce obstacles to access in both innovative and generic medicines, "while supporting the innovation that is vital to developing new medicines and achieving other medical breakthroughs."

Kirk proposed the initiative, which he said will help to provide greater access to medicines for people throughout the Asia-Pacific region through tariff cuts, intellectual property provisions and a series of other measures to boost widespread availability of both innovative and generic medicines.

Negotiators at the meeting represented each of the nine partner countries: Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam and the United States. The talks also included more than 250 members from the private sector. On September 10, 57 groups representing business, labor, academia groups and the public made individual presentations to negotiators.

USAID Works for Global Health and Social Good at U.N. Assembly

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — The U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) convenes a special session on noncommunicable diseases September 19–20, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will be there as a global leader in efforts to improve health, health services and health systems in developing countries.

While international efforts in the health arena in the past have focused largely on infectious diseases, this special session is called in recognition of the fact that noncommunicable diseases, often caused by poor lifestyle choices, are the leading cause of death worldwide. Sixty-three percent of annual deaths are caused by noncommunicable diseases, which include cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and respiratory disease.

The session will focus on ways to build stronger partnerships between medical professionals in the developed and developing world as a path toward improving overall health and the survival and treatment rates for noncommunicable diseases, which are also a significant cause of premature death in the developing world.

USAID is the leading agency in many of the U.S. programs designed to expand and improve health care systems, education and skills in the developing world, working most recently as implementer of the Global Health Initiative (GHI), announced by the Obama administration in 2009. USAID is involved in bilateral and regional health improvement efforts in more than 100 nations, and the GHI is a more than \$5 billion effort to expand and improve those programs.

In a report to Congress earlier this year, the USAID administrator, Dr. Rajiv Shah, explained how supporting global health is a U.S. foreign policy imperative. "The well-being of people around the world is not just an important end in itself but is strongly linked to the security and prosperity of families, communities and societies," Shah wrote in the introduction to the report.

U.S. policy in this area is also rooted in the belief that the security and prosperity of societies contribute to stable

populations, which, in turn “reduce pressure on economies and the environment and reduce the risk of humanitarian crises,” according to USAID documents.

Improving the quality, availability and use of essential health services is part of USAID’s international commitment to global health. American Schools and Hospitals Abroad is a grant program supporting those goals by expanding medical opportunities in developing countries. The grants are awarded to private, nonprofit universities and secondary schools, libraries and medical centers. These become centers where American practices in medicine and education are presented, and mutual understanding and exchange can flourish.

The Social Good Summit is an event taking place on the sidelines of the UNGA session in New York City, and Shah will be among many leaders and celebrities from a wide variety of fields taking part.

“The Social Good Summit unites a dynamic community of global leaders to discuss a big idea: the power of innovative thinking and technology to solve our greatest challenges,” according to the summit home page.

The four-day Social Good Summit is sponsored by Mashable, an online news site covering digital culture and technology; 92Y, a New York City cultural and community center; and the U.N. Foundation, a U.S.-based group working in support of the United Nations.

Other prominent people involved in the Social Good Summit include actress Geena Davis, popular singer Mandy Moore, and Nobel Peace Prize winners Elie Wiesel and Muhammad Yunus.

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