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Nations Depend on Each Other for Nuclear Safety, Secretary Clinton Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed strong U.S. support for the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) action plan on nuclear safety, saying nuclear power is vital to meeting the world's energy needs, but it carries "special risks and dangers" and requires all countries to adhere to the highest safety standards.

Speaking September 22 at a high-level meeting on nuclear safety at the United Nations in New York, Clinton said that "because a nuclear accident in one country can quickly become a transnational crisis, we are all vested in ensuring each other's success."

The IAEA's action plan offers ways to strengthen and expand the agency's peer review programs, which allows countries to monitor the safety of each other's nuclear plants. Clinton said the United States will continue to support peer review scheduling missions in the United States as well as contribute its own senior experts to participate in missions elsewhere in the world.

The action plan will also "improve emergency response training, enhance transparency and cooperation, and strengthen nuclear safety infrastructures around the world," she said.

Each country must be responsible for ensuring that its nuclear reactors meet "the highest, most up-to-date standards of safety," Clinton said, and the IAEA's standards "should be continually reviewed and revised as we learn more and detect new risks."

The secretary said the fear of nuclear contamination "casts a long shadow," and the disaster that befell Japan's Fukushima nuclear reactor in March brought that concern to the world's attention.

"This crisis, if the world needed one, is a very stark reminder that nuclear power requires comprehensive security precautions," and "[n]one of us is immune," Clinton said, recalling the 1979 partial core meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania, and the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine.

"On each of these occasions, the IAEA and nuclear regulatory bodies have moved to determine what went wrong and to try to prevent it from happening again. But it's imperative that every nuclear country be prepared for scenarios that include multiple severe hazards and prioritizes public safety," she said.

In the aftermath of the Fukushima accident, President Obama ordered a comprehensive safety review of all 104 active nuclear power plants in the United States, and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has completed near-term inspections and made recommendations for improving the regulatory framework and safety procedures.

"As we design and construct next-generation nuclear power plants, we must integrate the lessons that we are still learning from Japan," Clinton said.

Clinton also called on all countries with nuclear reactors to adhere to the IAEA's 1994 Convention on Nuclear Safety, which she said is still "our best instrument for promoting international safety standards."

With the world's growing energy needs, nuclear energy is "not an option that we simply can take off the table," she said, but "it is an option that carries special risks and dangers."

The secretary said international unity is needed to improve nuclear safety practices, and it is an issue that outweighs any existing political differences.

"We have to work together. We owe it to ourselves and we owe it to future generations," she said.

A senior State Department official who asked not to be identified told reporters September 21 that the IAEA's action plan continues to call for a voluntary peer review process, rather than making those reviews a requirement.

"Establishing a mandatory requirement for member-states to submit to regular IAEA peer reviews would require the negotiation of a binding international agreement among member-states that most likely would take several years to come to fruition and no guarantee that all member-states would join in," the official said.

The United States is "very much open" to exploring a longer-term approach that could include legally binding reviews, but it has agreed to continue its support for a voluntary process, the official said.

"We believe that these are important voluntary peer reviews that can happen and that will add to the data and the knowledge that we have and the kind of cooperation that we think we need to have," the official said.

Secretary Clinton Sees World in a New Era: The Age of Participation

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — At a time when mobile phones and text messages have become the tools of political change, U.S.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the world has entered a new era: the age of participation.

"Through technology, the voices of everyone can be now, at least registered, if not heard," said Clinton in remarks at a September 22 event in New York City, where she attended the meeting of the U.N. General Assembly September 19–23. "And the challenge, not only for government, but for businesses and for NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], is to figure out how to be responsive, to help catalyze, unleash [and] channel the kind of participatory eagerness that is there."

Clinton spoke to an invited audience participating in the Clinton Global Initiative annual meeting, a yearly discussion about global issues and ways to address them, hosted by former President Bill Clinton and attended by world leaders in government, politics, technology, the arts and other fields. Secretary Clinton described the age of participation in an onstage interview conducted by her daughter, Chelsea Clinton.

The street revolutions that swept across North Africa and through the Middle East in 2011 exemplify the activity of this new era, Clinton said. The momentum for change came from the people themselves, but Clinton also underscored the importance of the international community's reaction to the street revolution in Libya. When Libya's Muammar Qadhafi responded to street protests with threats to hunt down and destroy the instigators, the Arab League went to the United Nations, seeking an intervention. NATO and Arab League nations responded with a commitment to provide cover for the protesters from the air, and Clinton called that decision "one of the most historically significant developments" during this period of change in the region.

To protect citizens, "it was both NATO members, European and Canadian, along with Arab, who were flying missions, who were there in the midst of the fight," Clinton said.

Clinton said she makes no claims to being able to predict what the future might bring to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya after this tumultuous year. "But what I do know is that we've made the right decision to support the aspirations of people and to do so in a way that recognizes and respects their right to have a government," based in democracy, participation and the creation of opportunity for the public good.

OUTREACH IN OTHER REGIONS

Partnership with other nations has been a priority for the Obama administration in other regions also, Clinton said. When the Obama presidency began in 2009, some international affairs experts predicted a U.S. drift away from the Asia-Pacific region, but the secretary of state said neither she nor the president were willing to let that happen. Both she and Obama made separate trips there in the early months of the administration.

"We've worked very hard to make clear that the United States is both a Pacific and an Atlantic power," Clinton said, adding that it is important to ensure that the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region is maintained.

Similarly, Clinton said she wanted to clarify U.S. interests in the Arctic, so she stepped up U.S. participation in the Arctic Council, which is the small group of nations holding territory on the Arctic Circle. "With global warming, the Arctic is going to be open for transit much more during the year that it ever has been before," Clinton said, and the United States must participate in the council if it is to have a voice in discussions about permissible activities in an ecologically sensitive area.

Responding to a question from daughter Chelsea, the secretary of state identified issues that she considers to be high priority, even though they may not have been at the forefront for this audience in New York City. Clinton named food security, health and disease surveillance capabilities worldwide and women's participation in government and public life.

"We don't have enough food, and a lot of what we have is not nutritious enough to keep kids healthy," she said. The administration is working to improve that situation with its Feed the Future initiative, which aspires to increase the accessibility of staple foods, improve trade and transport routes and harness science and technology to assist populations that now suffer food insecurity every few years.

Regarding disease surveillance, the United States signed an agreement with the World Health Organization September 19 to advance the capabilities of developing nations in responding to serious health threats, particularly contagious diseases, which have the capability to travel as rapidly around the world as jets. The agreement will help all nations detect, report and respond to infectious diseases quickly and accurately.

Women Still Have Limited Role in News Media

By Jeff Baron | Staff Writer

Washington — A worldwide study finds that the hands that shape news coverage are overwhelmingly male.

The largest-ever study of women's roles in the news media finds some countries in which women are well represented among professionals who cover the news and among their editors, managers and company board members. In most countries, though, men in journalism

outnumber women by a more than 2-to-1 ratio, and the difference is even greater among upper managers.

The two-year study commissioned by the International Women's Media Foundation found that women are outnumbered by a nearly 3-to-1 ratio in the news industry's top positions.

"The news agenda does not sort of spring full-blown from thin air," said Liza Gross, the foundation's executive director. "It is determined by the people who make decisions in the newsroom. And if you don't have women at the table making these decisions, the news agenda will look very different from the way it would look if you had equity in the newsroom."

Women occupy slightly more than one-fourth of the seats on media governing boards (26 percent) and upper-management jobs (27 percent). Still, those numbers show progress from a 1995 study, which showed women in only 12 percent of top management positions.

The new study looked at more than 500 companies that run newspapers and television and radio stations in 59 countries. Researchers guaranteed the companies anonymity, but said they constituted a representative sample in each country studied.

The results show substantial regional differences. Women have had relative success in Eastern Europe's news media, for example, with 33 percent of the seats on governing boards, 41 percent of senior management jobs and 56 percent of senior-level professional jobs. History provides two explanations for women's access, said Carolyn M. Byerly, a Howard University professor and the author of the report: The communist system mandated equal rights and blocked freedom of the press, thus making the news media less appealing to men and easier for women to enter.

The region with the greatest gender differences in newsroom jobs was Asia and Oceania, where women represented 22 percent of governing positions, 13 percent of senior management and 32 percent of senior professionals.

The differences were substantial from country to country as well — even neighboring countries. In Kenya, women in news organizations held far fewer positions in governance, senior management and senior professional levels than those in Uganda, where nearly half of the journalists in the companies studied were women.

The researchers documented pay differentials between men and women and found "glass ceilings" that Byerly said prevent female newsroom executives from reaching top management positions: "Women simply stop at the junior and senior management level," she said. But she added that in about a quarter of the countries studied, women have "relative parity" in newsrooms, sometimes even at the top levels.

Byerly said factors influencing women's access to power in the news media include national laws and company policies against sexual discrimination, as well as policies on child care and maternity leave.

Mónica Villamizar, a reporter for the news network Al-Jazeera English and a member of a panel assembled by the International Women's Media Foundation for the report's release, said a news organization dominated by men will overlook some important stories. In her experience, for example, "women [reporters] are very important in war zones because we have more access to victims who are also women, who will not necessarily speak to men in the same way or open up."

Shirley M. Carswell, deputy managing editor of the Washington Post, said that in a weak economy, news organizations may lose talented women because companies cut back on the training and staff development that many women need for management positions.

In Brief: U.S. Embassy Reopens in a Free Libya

The American flag flies once again over the newly reopened U.S. Embassy in post-Qadhafi Libya.

At ceremonies held in Tripoli September 22, U.S. Ambassador to Libya Gene Cretz told Libyans: "The American people hail your success and will be your steadfast partner in building a new Libya." He added: "Our partnership will encompass economic cooperation, educational and cultural exchanges, technology sharing, and training and assistance for the nation's civil society — shared interests that include, and extend beyond, our common security."

In overthrowing the regime of Muammar Qadhafi, the Libyan people won their freedom through "great sacrifice, steely determination and unity of purpose," Cretz said. "Your actions and success to overthrow the chains of dictatorship and repression and establish a system that provides freedoms and rights for all citizens is an inspiration to people around the world."

President Obama, speaking at the United Nations General Assembly earlier that day, said Libyans are "writing a new chapter in the life of their nation. After four decades of darkness, they can walk the streets, free from a tyrant."

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