

American

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President Obama, Czech Leader Talk Security, Economic, Nuclear Cooperation

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and Czech Prime Minister Petr Nečas, in a White House meeting, discussed enhancing U.S.-Czech Republic security, economic and commercial ties and supporting democracy, open government and human rights around the world.

The October 27 meeting also highlighted energy and civil nuclear cooperation in particular, according to the White House.

“We confirmed our support for safe and secure nuclear power, and agreed that nuclear power is not only important for ensuring energy security, but also for reaching our goals on reducing carbon emissions,” the two leaders said in a joint statement following their meeting.

Obama and Nečas said their countries have a strong history of cooperation on nuclear security issues. A White House fact sheet said the two nations aim to build on that history by creating a civil nuclear cooperation center in Prague “to facilitate and coordinate joint work.”

“The center will build on current collaboration in the nuclear field,” the White House said in a fact sheet on civil nuclear cooperation. “In addition to working on nuclear energy activities, experts from both countries will continue to collaborate on nuclear security issues such as material control and accounting, physical protection and other safeguards.”

The White House also announced a series of exchanges between scientists from universities, research laboratories and secondary schools to promote continued cooperation in the nuclear energy field.

The two leaders also talked about their joint security efforts in Afghanistan, reviewed plans for the upcoming NATO summit in Chicago and discussed the new U.S.-Czech Republic Reciprocal Defense Procurement Agreement. Obama and Nečas said they intend to negotiate and sign the deal in the coming months to “facilitate trade in defense items and further strengthen bilateral commercial relations.”

Additionally, they discussed working together to support democracy, open government and human rights as countries across the Middle East and North Africa work toward political transitions. They also talked about the Czech Republic’s intent, announced in September, to join the 47-member Open Government Partnership.

The White House statement called the Czech Republic a “strong defender of human rights and democracy promotion worldwide,” and said the country has demonstrated its commitment to the Open Government Partnership by developing a domestic action plan and working within the organization to advance its values in the region and around the world. The United States and the Czech Republic are exploring the establishment of an Open Government and Democracy Center in Prague “to facilitate bilateral and regional cooperation,” the White House said.

Following the prime minister’s visit, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton congratulated the Czech people on the anniversary of their country’s independence October 28.

“On this special day,” Clinton said, “I send my deepest congratulations to all Czechs and look forward to finding new ways to strengthen this already close relationship as we continue to promote our shared values around the world.”

President Obama: A Firewall to Stop Europe’s Crisis Spreading

The following op-ed by President Obama was published in the Financial Times on October 28. There are no republication restrictions.

A Firewall To Stop Europe’s Crisis Spreading

By Barack Obama

When leaders of the largest economies meet next week in France, our citizens will be watching for the same sense of common purpose that allowed us to rescue the global economy two years ago from a financial crisis that was sparked by years of irresponsibility.

Because of the co-ordinated action the G20 took then, the global economy began to grow again. Emerging economies rebounded. In the US, we’ve had 19 straight months of private sector job growth and added more than 2.5m private sector jobs.

Still, progress has not come fast enough and today the global recovery remains fragile. Around the world, hundreds of millions of people are unemployed. Disruptions in oil supplies, the tragic earthquake in Japan, and Europe’s financial crisis have contributed to the slowdown. Emerging economies have begun to slow. Global demand is weakening.

Our challenge is clear. We must stay focused on the strong, sustainable and balanced growth that boosts global demand and creates jobs and opportunity for our people. This requires action in several areas.

First, as the world's largest economy, the US will continue to lead. The single most effective thing we can do to get the global economy growing faster is to get the US economy growing faster. That's why my highest priority is putting Americans back to work. It's why I've proposed the American Jobs Act, which independent economists have said would create nearly 2m jobs, boost demand and increase US economic growth. It's why I signed landmark trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama to create jobs, keep us on track to double our exports and preserve American competitiveness.

At the same time, we're building on the nearly \$1,000bn in spending cuts agreed this summer. I've put forward a comprehensive and balanced plan to substantially reduce our deficit over the next few years in a way that does not hamper the current recovery and that lays the foundation for future growth.

Second, the crisis in Europe must be resolved as quickly as possible. This week, our European allies made important progress on a strategy to restore confidence in European financial markets, laying a critical foundation on which to build.

Given the scope of the challenge and the threat to the global economy, it is important for all of us that this strategy be implemented successfully - including building a credible firewall that prevents the crisis from spreading, strengthening European banks, charting a sustainable path for Greece and tackling the structural issues at the heart of the current crisis.

The European Union is America's single largest economic partner and a critical anchor of the global economy. I am confident that Europe has the financial and economic capacity to meet this challenge, and the US will continue to support our European partners as they work to resolve this crisis.

Third, each nation must do its part to ensure that global growth is balanced and sustainable so we avoid slipping into old imbalances. For some countries, this means confronting their own fiscal challenges. For countries with large surpluses, it means taking additional steps to support growth. For export-oriented economies, it means working to boost domestic demand. A critical tool for accelerating that shift is greater flexibility in exchange rates, including exchange rates that are market-driven.

Avoiding old imbalances also means moving ahead with financial reforms that can help prevent another financial crisis. In the US, we're implementing the strongest reforms since the Great Depression. Across the G20, we need to make sure banks maintain the capital they need to withstand shocks, and there needs to be greater oversight and transparency to avoid excessive risks, especially with

regard to derivatives.

Finally, the G20 nations must deepen co-operation on the range of global challenges that affect our shared prosperity. We need to move ahead with our commitment to phase out subsidies for fossil fuels and transition to 21st-century clean-energy economies. As we promote the development that gives nations a path out of poverty, we can focus on the infrastructure, finance and good governance that unleash growth. Even as we work to save lives from the drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, we need to continue investing in the food security and agricultural productivity that make future famines less likely and communities more self-sufficient.

When we met in London two years ago, we knew that putting the global economy on the path to recovery would be neither easy nor quick. But together, we forged a response that pulled the global economy back from the brink of catastrophe. That's the leadership we've demonstrated before. That's the leadership we need now - to sustain economic recovery and put people back to work, in our own countries and around the world.

U.S., South Korean Defense Chiefs Cite Strategic Progress

By Karen Parrish | Armed Forces Press Service

The following article was originally posted on October 28 to the Department of Defense website.

Seoul, South Korea — The United States and South Korea are taking additional steps to advance their military cooperation into a strategic alliance of bilateral, global scope, both nations' defense leaders said today.

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta and his counterpart, South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin, held a joint news conference at the South Korean defense ministry building here following the 43rd Security Consultative Meeting executive session. The meeting is an annual gathering of U.S. and South Korean military and foreign affairs officials.

"Our talks focused on a number of issues critical to strengthening and transforming the alliance, which remains vital to the interest of both of our nations and a cornerstone of stability in Northeast Asia," Panetta said.

The secretary said the two nations will "ensure a strong and effective alliance deterrence posture, including the United States' nuclear umbrella," to ensure North Korea never underestimates the alliance's will and capability to respond decisively to aggression.

The South Korean defense minister said the two nations are cooperating closely in matters of defense policy and in

provocation response planning.

Both defense chiefs responded to the question of what they would have to see North Korea do with its nuclear program to bring it into compliance with the international community.

Panetta said denuclearization is an important area for North Korea to address if it wants to improve relations with the alliance.

“It’s no secret that denuclearization means that they have to stop testing, they have to stop developing weapons, they have to stop enriching [uranium] in violation of international rules and requirements,” the secretary said. “They have to allow [inspections]. It’s all of those areas that would have to be addressed, and ... are in the process of being discussed with the North Koreans.”

Speaking through an interpreter, Kim said a strong alliance force posture has proven to be an effective deterrent against further provocations such as North Korea’s 2010 sinking of the South Korean vessel the *Choenan* and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island later that year.

Kim added it will only be possible to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula once North Korea itself feels the need to stop provocative behavior.

“Only then, I believe, will we be able to meet our objectives,” the minister added. “Obviously this will take some changes in policy from the North Korean perspective. What we must do is to prepare ourselves with a robust defense posture that will respond very strongly if North Korea ever conducts additional provocations.”

A joint communiqué issued after today’s meeting stated areas of enhanced cooperation between the United States and South Korea include establishing an ongoing defense policy dialogue, increased combined military exercises on the peninsula, and closer cooperation in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and similar efforts.

The two nations also will strengthen cooperation in the space and cyberspace domains and work to increase resilience of critical infrastructure, the communiqué stated.

Panetta and Kim both said cyber attacks are the battlefield of the future, and they intend to expand the scope of their cooperation in that domain to effectively respond to new and emerging threats.

Both defense chiefs also said they are on track with the strategic plan that calls for moving U.S. troops from Seoul

to different facilities at Camp Humphreys, and to transfer operational wartime control to South Korean command. The nations have agreed to complete both actions by the end of 2015.

Panetta -- along with Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Army Gen. James D. Thurman, commander of U.S. Forces Korea -- also attended meetings earlier this week with Kim, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan.

U.S. and North Korean delegations met earlier this week in Geneva, but according to State Department officials, those meetings resulted in no agreements, and significant issues remain.

APEC Is Incubator of Trade Policy Ideas

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington – The top U.S. trade official says that the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders in Honolulu is crucial to developing effective and ambitious approaches to emerging trade challenges.

“It’s the place where we work on a wide scale – across 21 Asia-Pacific economies,” U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said October 26 before a major business group.

The 19th annual APEC leaders’ meeting is being held in Honolulu November 12-13 and is being hosted by the United States. The forum is composed of 21 member economies in the Asia-Pacific region, and is often called an “incubator” of trade policy ideas because of its role in the development of innovative trade concepts that reflect and respond to the realities of international business and commerce, USTR says.

“We’re putting great focus on the Asia-Pacific because that’s where the world’s most dynamic economies are expanding rapidly and creating significant opportunities to increase U.S. exports and jobs,” Kirk said during his speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Kirk said he will head to Honolulu to meet with APEC trade ministers before President Obama and other leaders arrive. “We hope to reach agreement on key issues so that we may present the leaders with concrete and meaningful outcomes in three priority areas: promoting green growth; strengthening regional economic integration and expanding trade; and advancing regulatory cooperation and convergence,” Kirk added.

The specific APEC focus on these challenges stems from Asia-Pacific exporters who are increasingly telling the APEC economies that current trade rules have not kept

pace with the rapidly evolving realities of 21st-century commerce, Kirk said. "Many of you have asked us to address nontariff barriers and industrial policies that distort trade and inhibit competition," he added.

Kirk cited as examples clean energy and digital information technology, which current trade rules do not cover sufficiently.

The United States, as host to the APEC Forum this year, is focusing attention on three priority policy initiatives, Kirk said:

- First, the United States is seeking to address tariff and nontariff barriers to environmental goods and services. These steps will promote trade in environmental goods and services, and they will lower the cost of using this commerce.
- Second, the United States is asking economies to adopt policies that will promote effective innovation by encouraging competition and open markets. "The evidence shows that when countries restrict foreign competition in new technologies, they actually stifle innovation," Kirk said.
- And third, the United States is asking the APEC economies to take specific steps to improve the quality of regulatory systems and align regulatory approaches more closely. These actions will boost productivity and promote job creation, he added.

U.S. Officials Support Businesswomen Worldwide

By Susan Milligan | Special Correspondent

Washington — Ambassador Melanne Verveer takes her mission for global women's rights to Paris, where an international team will discuss how empowering female business owners can improve economies around the world.

The October 31 session will precede the upcoming G20 Summit in Cannes and will focus on identifying and overcoming barriers women face in developing small and medium-sized enterprises. At the "Growing Economies Through Women's Entrepreneurship" meeting in Paris, attendees will hear results of a study exploring those barriers, most of which are rooted in poor access to finance.

At the same Paris event, the U.S. Agency for International Development is set to announce a \$10 million grant to launch and evaluate pilot programs to foster female-run businesses.

"By investing in women's economic participation, we believe that all of us engaged in this are investing for the future," said Verveer, ambassador-at-large for global women's issues. "Gender equality is smart economics."

USAID Deputy Administrator Donald Steinberg added, "Providing women the financial and legal tools and training to succeed economically and supporting programs that enhance their political and civil leadership is the surest way to unlock the power of women to build secure societies and create sustainable growth."

Advancing women's rights is a laudable goal on its own, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in a speech in September at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Women and the Economy Summit in San Francisco, a run-up event to November's APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in Honolulu. But studies show that increasing women's participation in business improves economies as a whole, she added, a goal that is critical during the worldwide economic downturn.

"To make it real, to achieve the economic expansion we all seek, we need to unlock a vital source of growth that can power our economies in the decades to come. And that vital source of growth is women," Clinton said at the San Francisco conference, where she chaired the first high-level policy dialogue on women and the economy. "With economic models straining in every corner of the world, none of us can afford to perpetuate the barriers facing women in the workforce."

Verveer said on October 28 that in the Asia-Pacific region, for example, upward of \$40-plus billion a year is "shortchanged in the region because the potential of women isn't tapped." Verveer cited a United Nations study. While women are a key part of the agricultural sector, constituting a majority of small farmers in some countries, they are not given the same access to financing as men, she said.

If women's access to such resources as seed, fertilizer, extension training programs and decisionmaking seats could be equalized, "it would enhance productivity, agricultural productivity, by a significant percentage," Verveer said.

The ambassador has been on a world tour to promote women's entrepreneurship, recently returning from a meeting in Zagreb to hear the struggles of businesswomen in Southeast Europe. November 1, Verveer will be in New York, where the World Economic Forum will release its annual Gender Gap Report.

At the upcoming APEC summit in Hawaii, chief executive officers from large corporations around the world will discuss their role in empowering women, either by training female entrepreneurs or contracting with women-run businesses, Verveer said.

"Now, why is this important? Because women are better than men, or men are better than women? Hardly. It has

to do with tapping the talents that are available," Verveer said, noting that businesses with female designers and marketing executives, for example, are well-poised to reach female consumers.

"I think there is a misunderstanding that when one gains, the other loses, when this is a case of win-win," Verveer said. "And if we looked at it as win-win and looked at those areas where greater growth could and should be taking place, I think we'd see beneficial outcomes."

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