American

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U.S. Wants "Deeds Not Words" from Syria to End Violence

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 05 April 2012

Washington — Despite the Syrian government's public acceptance of U.N. envoy Kofi Annan's proposal for a cease-fire, its violent attacks against Syrians have intensified and the Obama administration remains unconvinced that Bashar al-Assad's regime is complying with the cease-fire deadline, set for April 10.

Speaking April 5 in New York, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice told reporters that the previous day had been "one of the more violent days of late" as Assad's security forces appeared to intensify their artillery bombardments of major Syrian population centers such as Homs and Idlib.

According to the human rights group Amnesty International, 232 Syrians have been killed in the week since the Assad regime publicly accepted Annan's peace plan March 27. The United Nations estimates that more than 9,000 have died since Syrians began protesting the Assad regime and demanding political and human rights reforms in March 2011.

A Turkish official told the Reuters News Agency April 5 that up to 900 more people had fled to Turkey from Syria on April 4, bringing the total number of Syrian refugees in Turkey to almost 21,000.

Rice said U.S. officials "have heard statements by the [Syrian] government that they intend to begin to take steps to meet their obligations under their agreement with the joint special envoy," but she said the Obama administration "will be looking at actions and deeds rather than their words."

State Department spokesman Mark Toner told reporters April 5 that the United States still has not seen press reports or heard from activists on the ground that Syrian forces are carrying out any troop withdrawals from civilian-populated city centers.

"It is clear that the Assad regime appears to be using this window to continue to carry out its horrible assault on the Syrian people, and in the event … that he does not comply by April 10, then we're going to be consulting with the [U.N.] Security Council on next steps," Toner said.

Annan's plan sets a deadline of April 10 for withdrawing troops and heavy weaponry from populated areas, to be followed within 48 hours by a halt to the fighting by both government forces and the Syrian opposition. It also calls for the government to allow access for humanitarian organizations and for the release of political detainees. Following the 48-hour cease-fire, the plan calls on all sides in the conflict to hold talks on a political solution.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told an informal meeting of the U.N. General Assembly April 5 that the situation on the ground in Syria "continues to deteriorate," with continued violence and assaults by Syrian forces in civilian areas.

"It is the responsibility now of the Syrian authorities to deliver on what they have promised, and to implement, fully and unconditionally, all the commitments they have given to Joint Special Envoy Annan," Ban said.

On April 5, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted a presidential statement that endorsed the April 10 deadline for a cease-fire and warned the Assad regime of "further steps" should it fail to meet it.

In the statement the council calls upon Syrian authorities "to implement urgently and visibly its commitments ... to a) cease troop movements toward population centers, b) cease all use of heavy weapons in such centers, and c) begin pull back of military concentrations in and around population centers," and to "fulfill these in their entirety by no later than 10 April 2012."

Modern Agricultural Production Continues to Increase Yields

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 05 April 2012

Washington — Since the 1980s, large-scale conventional crop farming has increasingly produced higher yields while using less fertilizer and water, and fewer chemical pesticides, says American political scientist Robert Paarlberg.

And that is good for the environment, he said. With conventional agriculture based on science, "the land footprint of agriculture is getting smaller," Paarlberg said at a March 15 discussion about "The Culture War Over Food and Farming" at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. He added that increased yields are needed to feed the world's growing population.

Paarlberg said conventional farming today is "dramatically different" from conventional farming in the 1960s. One big factor affecting higher yields was the commercial introduction in 1996 of disease- and insect-resistant seeds improved through biotechnology, also known as genetically modified seeds.

Biotech-modified maize, for instance, protects against infections from the corn borer insect without requiring the use of chemical spreads, he said. Resistant soybeans have

replaced multiple sprayings of toxic herbicides and pesticides. And because biotech crops resist insects and weeds, less mechanical tillage is needed, reducing the amount of diesel fuel exhaust going into the air and conserving soil.

The other more recent factor affecting conventional agriculture has been the use of global positioning systems (GPS) on farm machinery that "tell farmers exactly what part of the field needs to be watered and what part does not, what part is low on nitrogen and what part is not," Paarlberg said. That prevents excessive applications of fertilizer and reduces toxic runoff into streams. GPS-equipped tractors also allow farmers to insert fertilizer into the soil precisely where seeds have been planted. "Today, farm equipment is much more precise," Paarlberg said.

The benefits of biotech seeds and other modern farming techniques such as targeted irrigation are widespread. Between 1990 and 2004 in the 34 countries that belong to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the use of water for irrigation decreased 9 percent, excess nitrogen from overapplications of fertilizer decreased 17 percent, pesticide use went down 5 percent and greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture dropped 3 percent. Because tractors are applying fewer pesticides and fertilizer, agricultural energy use is increasing at only one-sixth the rate of energy use in other areas of the economy, Paarlberg said.

He noted that there is a "culture war" in Western countries over food and farming. Supporters of conventional agriculture include farmers and agribusinesses, while supporters of organic farming include restaurateurs. He said that while organic farming is winning in "the cultural marketplace," conventional agriculture wins in the commercial marketplace.

Paarlberg noted that organic yields are lower than those produced by conventional farming. Organic farming requires more labor to manage compost and animal manure and apply it throughout the growing season. That means higher production costs and higher food prices.

"There are some people willing to pay twice as much for agricultural commodities if they are organically grown, but not many who are willing to do it all the time," Paarlberg said. He called the organic marketplace a "niche" market. "The latest trend is … toward a global food system driven by a decline in transportation costs and the ability to flash-freeze fresh produce picked at its nutritional peak."

"Conventional agriculture keeps getting harder to compete with, thanks to strong and accelerating growth in total agricultural productivity," he said.

Paarlberg is a member of the Board of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the U.S. National Research Council and a consultant to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). He is a political science professor at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Secretary Clinton on Support for Burma's Democratic Reforms

04 April 2012

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Recognizing and Supporting Burma's Democratic Reforms
April 4, 2012

Treaty Room
Washington, D.C.

SECRETARY CLINTON: From the beginning of this Administration, we have pursued a policy of engagement to support human rights and reform in Burma. We knew that the challenges were great, but we also believed that a new approach was needed to support the aspirations of the people. And this week, the government and the people made further progress in advancing those aspirations.

The results of the April 1st parliamentary by-elections represents a dramatic demonstration of popular will that brings a new generation of reformers into government. This is an important step in the country's transformation, which in recent months has seen the unprecedented release of political prisoners, new legislation broadening the rights of political and civic association, and fledgling process in internal dialogue between the government and ethnic minority groups.

These elections and the progress that we have seen are precisely the kind of step that the President and I envisioned when we embarked on this historic opening. President Thein Sein and many of his colleagues inside the government helped launch their country on a historic new path. And while there is much to be done and significant tests lie ahead, we applaud the president and his colleagues for their leadership and courage, and we congratulate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for her election to the parliament as well as the election of many of her colleagues.

The United States is committed to taking steps alongside

the Burmese Government and people as they move down the road of reform and development. In light of the by-election and the other progress of recent months, we are consulting actively with the Congress as well as our allies and friends in Europe and Asia on our response to these recent developments. We are prepared to take steps toward: first, seeking agrement for a fully accredited ambassador in Rangoon in the coming days, followed by a formal announcement of our nominee; second, establishing an in-country USAID mission and supporting a normal country program for the United Nations Development Program; third, enabling private organizations in the United States to pursue a broad range of nonprofit activities from democracy building to health and education; fourth, facilitating travel to the United States for select government officials and parliamentarians; and fifth, beginning the process of a targeted easing of our ban on the export of U.S. financial services and investment as part of a broader effort to help accelerate economic modernization and political reform. Sanctions and prohibitions will stay in place on individuals and institutions that remain on the wrong side of these historic reform efforts.

Now, this reform process has a long way to go. The future is neither clear nor certain. But we will continue to monitor developments closely and meet, as I said when I was there, action with action. We will continue to seek improvements in human rights, including the unconditional release of all remaining political prisoners and the lifting of conditions on all those who have been released. We will continue our support for the development of a vibrant civil society, which we think will greatly add to the reform of the economy and society. We will continue to urge progress in national reconciliation, specifically with ethnic minority groups. And we will continue to press for the verifiable termination of the military relationship with North Korea.

Yet even as we urge these further steps, we fully recognize and embrace the progress that has taken place, and we will continue our policy of engagement that has encouraged these efforts. The leadership has shown real understanding and commitment to the future of their country. That development, we hope, will be sustainable and produce even more results.

As we have done over the last several months, the United States will stand with the reformers and the democrats, both inside the government and in the larger civil society, as they work together for that more hopeful future that is the right of every single person.

Thank you all very much.

NATO Must Transform to Have Global Mission, Secretary Clinton Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 04 April 2012

Washington — NATO is looking beyond the challenges of its founding in the Cold War struggle with Soviet Russia toward an alliance that works to ensure dignity and prosperity for people worldwide, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said April 3.

Speaking to the World Affairs Council 2012 NATO Conference in Norfolk, Virginia, Clinton said the alliance, formed in 1949, needs to transform itself so that it can continue to champion the principles of "democracy, liberty and the rule of law" around the world as part of what she termed "a battle for the future."

Across the planet, emerging powers are rising and technology is working to connect "more people in more places, and empowering them to influence global events and participate in the global economy like never before," she said, adding, "This is all occurring against the backdrop of a recovering economy from the worst recession in recent memory."

Ahead of the May 20–21 NATO summit, which will be held in Chicago, the secretary told members of the alliance that "the problems we face today are not limited to one ocean, and neither can our work be."

She cited the example of Libya and how NATO's work to protect Libyans from the regime of Muammar Qadhafi in 2011 was "a massive and complex undertaking," but added it is "no exaggeration to say that thousands of Libyans are alive today because of your work."

In Chicago, NATO members will recognize how their cooperation helped to defend "common values" in the Balkans, Afghanistan, the Middle East and North Africa, she said.

"We want to learn what worked and what didn't, and I do believe in evidenced-based planning. And what we see in NATO is a very impressive example of that. It's not only the planning that looks forward, but it's the lessons learned that help us look backward to make that forward planning even better," Clinton said.

NATO members will also discuss the next phase in the transition of security responsibility for Afghanistan to Afghan forces by 2014, and reductions in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Afghanistan from "a predominantly combat role to a supporting role" through training, advice and assistance in 2013, she said.

At the invitation of the Afghan government, some ISAF forces may remain after 2014, she said, but "we do not

seek permanent American military bases in Afghanistan or a presence that is considered a threat to the neighbors, which leads to instability that threatens the gains that have been made in Afghanistan."

Clinton said a stable Afghanistan is in the interests of both NATO and the United States, and the Obama administration remains committed to achieving it, as well as to supporting Afghan reconciliation efforts to end conflict there.

She called on Taliban rebels to "make unambiguous statements distancing themselves from international terrorism and committing to a peace process that includes all Afghans."

The secretary urged support for Afghanistan's economic development, saying projects like the New Silk Road Initiative that would create economic and transit connections between the country and its South and Central Asian neighbors "will bind together a region too long torn apart by conflict and division." Afghanistan's political future and the economic future of the entire region, Clinton said, are "inextricably linked" to Afghanistan's economic success.

"That is a lesson we have learned over and over all over the world: People need a realistic hope for a better life, a job and a chance to provide for their family," she said.

FORMER SECRETARY MARSHALL SAW THE NEED TO INVEST IN OTHERS

In earlier remarks in Lexington, Virginia, April 3, Clinton invoked the memory of former U.S. General and Secretary of State George Marshall, who had urged Americans to help rebuild Europe in the aftermath of World War II.

In Marshall's efforts was "a recognition that advancing our own interests depends on improving the conditions in which other human beings around the world live," she said.

In his farewell remarks on leaving military service, Marshall said, "Along with the great problem of maintaining the peace, we must solve the problem of the pittance of food, of clothing and coal and homes. Neither of these problems can be solved alone. They are directly related to one another," Clinton recalled.

Marshall looked at "a Europe shattered by war," and "knew that hunger and poverty would ultimately undermine our own prosperity and opportunity, that desperation and chaos would ultimately give rise to forces that would threaten us here at home," she said.

"Today, we can see the truth of those insights in so many ways. We see how some of the greatest threats to our security come from a lack of opportunity, the denial of human rights, a changing climate, strains on water, food, and energy," Clinton said.

Both research and experience suggest that about 40 percent of countries recovering from conflict "revert to violence within a decade," she said. "But when they grow their economies and raise people's income, the risk of violence drops substantially. And there is no better way of doing that than introducing free-market principles, encouraging entrepreneurship, creating conditions for men and women to see the results of their own labor in rising incomes and better opportunities for their children."

Clinton said Marshall understood that "in order for America to have peace and prosperity, we have to invest in that potential for others." Clinton called on all Americans to "channel our doubts and uncertainty into a call to be better and stronger."

U.S. Colleges Embrace Asian American Studies

By Louise Fenner | Staff Writer | 04 April 2012

Washington — Asian American Studies, an academic curriculum that looks at the experiences and contributions of the United States' fastest-growing racial group, is expanding to more and more U.S. campuses. The field is also evolving as the nation's Asian-American and Pacific Islander population becomes increasingly diverse.

"It's important to study the Asian-American population if you really want to understand what the United States is," said David Yoo, director of the nation's largest program, the Asian American Studies Center at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

"Different groups have come here and become part of American society and culture," he said. "If you don't understand Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, you are missing a very large piece of that."

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (alone or in combination with other races) make up nearly 6 percent of the U.S. population, and their numbers are growing faster than those of any other racial group. They constitute 7 percent of the U.S. college student population.

THE ROOTS OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Asian American Studies (AAS) was first instituted in San Francisco and Berkeley, California, in 1969 in response to student protests demanding a curriculum that was more inclusive of minorities. For the next two decades, the majority of programs were on the West Coast.

This changed in the late 1980s and 1990s in response to student activism in the East and Midwest. In 1987, Cornell University was the first Ivy League school to institute an Asian American Studies program, and two years later the University of Michigan became the first Midwestern school to do so. One of the first in the Southwest was Arizona State University in 1997.

There are also significant programs at Columbia University, Hunter College (City University of New York), New York University, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the University of Massachusetts–Boston, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Texas–Austin, according to the *Encyclopedia of Asian American Issues Today*.

The Association for Asian American Studies lists 32 stand-alone programs, 20 programs within other departments (such as ethnic studies or American studies), and 18 additional campuses that regularly offer Asian American Studies courses.

"The scope and diversity of these programs have expanded dramatically, in part reflecting the fact that since the Immigration Act of 1965 we've had a much more diverse Asian population," said Yoo.

Many programs offer courses focusing on local immigrant populations. The University of Minnesota Twin Cities, for example, has courses in Hmong history and culture. There are Filipino American Studies at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the University of Maryland. UCLA has an endowed academic chair focusing on U.S.-China relations and Chinese American Studies. South Asian Studies is offered to AAS majors at the University of Pennsylvania and Binghamton University in New York, among others.

The U.S. Department of Education funds nine South Asia national resource centers at universities across the country; these centers specialize in the study of South Asian languages and cultures.

Carolyn Chen, director of Asian American Studies at Northwestern University, said the program isn't just a service for Asian-American students: "We see it as contributing to the American narrative, to a larger story about who Americans are."

At the request of students, Chen is teaching a course on what it means to be a second-generation Asian American. Next year there will be courses on the Korean-American experience and the South-Asian experience, because "those are things students are telling us they want," she said. "These courses touch on larger issues of immigration and assimilation that are important for all Americans, not just Asian Americans."

Asians make up about 5 percent of the population in the Chicago area, but at Northwestern and many elite universities the percentage is far higher — 20 percent — said Chen. About 200 students are enrolled in Asian American Studies at Northwestern this quarter. Nearly 30 are working toward a minor, and others are taking classes out of curiosity or to meet other degree requirements.

Those who minor in Asian American Studies end up in a wide range of careers, said Chen. "They go to med school, become lawyers, become businesspeople, work in film, go into academia, work for nonprofits," said Chen. "They do everything and anything."

IMF Chief: U.S. Economy Strongly Linked to Global Recovery

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 03 April 2012

Washington — The global economic recovery requires the support of a strong U.S. economy, says International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde.

"The global economy is trying to emerge from the deepest and most painful economic crisis since the Great Depression," Lagarde said April 3. "At the same time, the world is growing smaller and more interconnected by the day, meaning that economic disruption in one country can touch people all across the globe."

In her address to the Associated Press annual meeting in Washington, Lagarde said the U.S. economy is particularly linked with Europe's.

"America has a large stake in how Europe fares," she said, adding that if the European economy falters, the American recovery "would be in jeopardy."

Lagarde said that while the global economy is looking better, the recovery is still fragile. She called on policymakers worldwide to boost growth through tailored monetary policy to support fiscal activity. She also encouraged U.S. leaders to work to ease the burden of household debt, which she said is holding back the country's recovery.

Noting that more than 200 million people globally, including nearly 13 million in the United States, are unemployed, she said creating new jobs must also be a key goal.

Alan Krueger, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, shared that opinion in remarks following the Labor Department's release of the February employment report.

While the U.S. economy added 227,000 new jobs during

the month, the unemployment rate remained unchanged from January at 8.3 percent, the March 9 report said. Krueger said that while the report signaled an improved job market and a stronger economy, creating new jobs must remain a top national priority to support the recovering economy.

In calling for stronger global cooperation to boost widespread economic recovery, Lagarde stressed the importance of the International Monetary Fund's mandate.

"The idea behind the IMF was simple: If countries worked together in the common interest and helped each other in times of need, then everyone would prosper together," she said. "If this idea was important in 1944 [when the IMF was founded], it is equally important today."

But she said that to continue to be effective, the fund needs more financial resources.

"The time has come to increase our firepower," she said. Lagarde called the IMF a good investment for all of its 187 member countries, including the United States, and said that no member country has ever lost money by contributing to IMF resources.

International Team Watches Sea Traffic from Space Station

03 April 2012

Washington — Research being conducted on the International Space Station (ISS) is on the way to developing technology for monitoring global shipping traffic.

Such a system, according to a press release from the European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA, could provide a new body of data for use in an array of activities: law enforcement, fishery control, maritime border control, marine environment monitoring, global security and search-and-rescue activities.

The very existence of the ISS owes itself to international scientific cooperation, and the collaborative effort to develop the Automatic Identification System (AIS) bears true to that tradition.

• The ESA is hosting the work in its research module on board the ISS. NASA and a U.S. astronaut conducted a 2009 spacewalk to install the antennae that the marine monitoring system requires.
• A volunteer-based educational organization, the Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation, built the antennae as part of its mission to engage amateurs in space research and communication.
• Astrium Gmbh, a European company specializing in space transportation and satellite systems and services, built a new class of space computer that integrates the data system.
• The Norwegian Defence Research Establishment built data-relay hardware and a receiver mounted inside ESA's Columbus research module, under the project name NORAIS.

The ship-traffic monitoring system starts with transponders that are required on international cargo and passenger ships. These transponders broadcast continually updated data about the ship, including the identity, position, course, speed, cargo and voyage information. Currently, this data is monitored and used by port authorities and coast guard forces, but there is no way to track transponder data from ships on the open seas. The transponders rely on VHF radio signals with a horizontal range of just 74 kilometers, so the data is only useful when a ship sails into port or encounters another ship at sea.

The specially designed hardware installed on the ISS module Columbus is able to track the transponder data and relay it back to Earth to the Columbus Control Center in Germany. From there, the data is relayed to the Norwegian User Support and Operations Centre in Trondheim, Norway.

NORAIS has been receiving data from Columbus, according to the ESA/NASA press release, in a near continuous flow that is very near real-time. Approximately 400,000 ship position reports are received daily from more than 22,000 individual ships, each of which has a unique Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI). In a monthlong summary compiled in October 2011, position reports exceeded 110 million messages, from more than 82,000 different MMSI numbers.

The diverse team working on the ship identification system is continuing to develop more sophisticated tools for transmitting and interpreting the data before making the tracking system widely available. Refinements of the system are especially necessary in high-traffic shipping lanes where signals might be lost or muddled.

White House on Elections in Burma

02 April 2012

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
April 2, 2012

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Elections in Burma

We congratulate the people of Burma on their participation in the electoral process, and Aung San Suu

Kyi and the National League for Democracy on their strong showing in the polls. This election is an important step in Burma's democratic transformation, and we hope it is an indication that the Government of Burma intends to continue along the path of greater openness, transparency, and reform.

Giving Girls a Voice

By Mary-Katherine Ream | Staff Writer | 02 April 2012

Washington — "You're going to be journalists, you're going to be out there, you're going to be fearless," said Therese Steiner.

Steiner, president and co-founder of GlobalGirl Media — a nonprofit organization that empowers girls from disadvantaged communities through journalism — was recounting her message from the first day of training. Steiner believes that by giving these underserved girls a voice, GlobalGirl also gives them hope for a better future.

"Having the camera in my hands made me feel like I was invincible — like I could do anything in this world," said Skye Smith, an 18-year-old GlobalGirl participant from Zimbabwe.

With help from a U.S. Consulate Johannesburg grant, GlobalGirl Media launched in Soweto, South Africa, in time for the 2010 World Cup. Co-founders Amie Williams and Meena Nanji selected 20 girls from Soweto and 10 from Los Angeles for GlobalGirl's inaugural class.

"It was basically a group of filmmakers and journalists who felt the women's voice and the girl's voice was really lacking in the global media," Steiner said.

To amplify those voices, the group of women established GlobalGirl Academy to teach girls the technical, mental and leadership skills of journalism. During the 10-day training, girls learn what makes a good story and how to tell that story. From the fundamentals of interviewing to the operation of cameras, the sessions provide girls the technical skills and knowledge to cultivate their own voice.

"The goal is for the girls to report on issues that matter to them from their perspective," Steiner said.

The program also exposes the girls to professional journalists from radio, print, television and the Web through regular exchanges. Through site visits and interviews, Steiner said, the girls gain not only a sense of journalism but also a source of inspiration.

GlobalGirl "for me, opened up a door of possibilities and opportunities," said Boithumelo Kgonyane, a graduate of the Soweto program.

GlobalGirl has opened another regional bureau in Morocco. The girls' reporting reflects their regional perspectives and concerns. In South Africa, the girls tackled topics ranging from HIV/AIDS to gender violence. In Morocco, they covered national elections and protests over marriage. In Los Angeles, the girls examined day labor and teenage pregnancy.

In the past two years, GlobalGirl has trained more than 80 journalists, including 10 HIV-positive girls in Soweto's 2011 class.

Tumi Mosadi, a project director for the Soweto bureau, started with GlobalGirl as a volunteer. She said she became a part of the program after witnessing GlobalGirl transform girls into "confident young women with skills, who have a future, who have hope, who have a voice."

GlobalGirl plans to open bureaus in Chicago and East London by the end of 2012. Hoping to establish a global network of empowered women, the organization wants to open more bureaus in the Middle East, North Africa, Russia and India.

NASA Offers Virtual View of Global Climate Change

By Lea Terhune | Staff Writer | 02 April 2012

Washington — NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, aims to satisfy the curiosity of anyone seeking a bird's-eye view of the Earth's transformation through decades of climate change and global warming.

Interactive tools developed by JPL, now available online, track environmental changes — like the impact that Greenland ice sheet melt may have on vulnerable coastlines around the world. For the admission price of a mouse click, the Climate Time Machine displays satellite imagery of the annual expansion and contraction of Arctic sea ice, viewed on a changing timeline from 1979 to 2010. The average global temperatures from 1840 to 2007 and the increase of carbon emissions between 2003 and 2009 may also be tracked.

The Climate Time Machine is one of several interactive tools accessible on NASA's Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet website. The tools visualize complex scientific data so it may be understood easily by nonscientists. Another tool, Eyes on the Earth 2.0, offers real-time imagery that shows the rotation of the Earth and the orbits of satellites that provide continuous image feeds giving scientists critical data. There is even a feature that allows 3D viewing.

Image galleries include State of Flux: Images of Change, which compares images of locations around the world to highlight changes over time periods ranging from days to

decades. Cities, extreme events, human impact, receding glaciers are all represented.

Rich in information and spectacular imagery, the Global Climate Change website informs and entertains, whether the topics are key indicators and effects of climate change or uncertainties in climate science. The website won the 2011 Webby Award for best science website and the Webby People's Voice Award in 2010. The Webby was instituted in 1996 by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences to honor excellence on the Internet.

For people on the go, NASA's new Earth Now app for iPhone and iPad features key data about the Earth obtained by satellites whose orbits are displayed on color maps projected over a 3D Earth model that turns at a touch. Regular updates reflect the most recent information on carbon emissions, weather and the effects of catastrophic fires, floods and volcanic eruptions, or the intensity of the Earth's gravity field and ozone levels. Additional facts are supplied in accompanying text. A month after its debut, it had 184,000 downloads, according to JPL Internet manager Randal Jackson, who said in an email interview, "The level of popularity has been a bit of a surprise."

Other apps include the popular Space Images. Aquarius tracks the Earth satellite that measures sea salinity; Cassini explores Saturn; GRAIL Mission offers lunar data; and Comet Quest is a challenging game. There are more to come. "We're nearing completion of an app called Satellite Hunter — a game that will allow you to search the sky with your smartphone and try to home in on all of NASA's Earth science satellites." Apart from competing on satellite capture, Jackson says, "we hope people will become aware of the diversity of NASA's Earth science missions and curious to learn about the purpose of those birds in their 'collection.'"

Education and accurate information sharing are chief goals. Jackson says traffic on NASA's Global Climate Change website has doubled in the past year and is increasing, "so maybe there is a growing public interest in this subject. We strive to provide the public with an engaging, unbiased, reliable and up-to-the minute source of data and information."

Secretary Clinton on Syria, Burma, Iran, Egypt

01 April 2012

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Press Availability
April 1, 2012
Istanbul, Turkey

SECRETARY CLINTON: Good afternoon, everyone. Today, the international community sent a clear and unified message that we will increase pressure on the Assad regime in Syria and assistance to the opposition. Nearly a week has gone by since the regime pledged to implement Kofi Annan's plan. But rather than pulling back, Assad's troops have launched new assaults. Rather than allowing access for humanitarian aid, they have tightened their siege. And rather than beginning a political transition, the regime has crushed dozens of peaceful protests. We can only conclude that Assad has decided to add to his long list of broken promises.

So today, we called for an immediate end to the killing in Syria, and we urged the Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan to set a timetable for next steps. The world will not waiver. Assad must go. And the Syrian people must be free to choose their own path forward.

Today, I also detailed measures that the United States is taking, along with international partners, to ratchet up the pressure on the regime. We will be providing greater humanitarian relief to people in need, and we will support the opposition as it works toward an inclusive democratic transition that preserves the integrity and institutions of the Syrian state. What does that include? It includes additional sanctions on senior regime officials, a new accountability clearinghouse to train Syrian citizens to document atrocities and abuses and to identify perpetrators, and more than $12 million in new humanitarian aid, bringing our total to nearly 25 million.

But the United States is also going beyond humanitarian aid and providing support to the civilian opposition, including (inaudible) and connect to the outside world. And we are discussing with other nations how best to expand this support.

We heard today from the Syrian National Congress about their efforts to unite a wide range of opposition groups around a common vision for a free, democratic, and pluralist Syria that protects the rights and dignity of all citizens. This is a homegrown Syrian vision, and it reflects the values and priorities of the Syrian people. It is

a roadmap for saving the state and its institutions from Assad's death spiral. And it is worthy of support from the international community and from Syrians of every background.

Now, turning this vision into reality will not be easy. We know that. But despite the dangers, the next step has to be to translate it into a political action plan that will win support among all of Syria's communities, that will help lead a national conversation about how to achieve the future that Syrians want and deserve. That's how the opposition will build momentum, strip away Assad's remaining support, and expose the regime's hypocrisy. Today, the international community reaffirmed our commitment to hasten the day that peace and freedom can come to Syria. It cannot come fast enough, and we grieve for every lost life.

Kofi Annan has given us a plan to begin resolving this crisis. Bashar al-Assad has, so far, refused to honor his pledge. There is no more time for excuses or delays. This is a moment of truth. And the United States is committed to this effort. We think the communique coming out of the meeting today is a very important document, and we commend it to all of you. It represents a considerable advance forward by the international community as represented by the more than 80 nations that attended here today.

The United States is confident that the people of Syria will take control of their own destiny. That's where we stand. There will be more to say from Kofi Annan in New York tomorrow, but I want to thank Prime Minister Erdogan and the foreign minister, my friend, and the people of Turkey, not only for hosting us, but for being such strong stalwarts in the fight on behalf of the Syrian people.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet both with the prime minister and the foreign minister. We not only discussed Syria; we discussed the full range of our other shared interests. And I commended Turkey's leadership throughout this crisis and its generosity to the Syrians who have fled across the border seeking refuge from the violence. We also discussed Iran and the threat it poses to regional and global security, and I was encouraged to hear Turkey's announcement that it will significantly reduce crude oil imports from Iran.

Before I take your questions, I'd like to say a few words about Burma. I've been following today's parliamentary bi-elections with great interest. While the results have not yet been announced, the United States congratulates the people who participated, many for the first time, in the campaign and election process. We are committed to supporting these reform efforts. Going forward, it will be critical for authorities to continue working toward an electoral system that meets international standards, that includes transparency, and expeditiously addresses concerns about intimidation and irregularities.

It is too early to know what the progress of recent months means and whether it will be sustained. There are no guarantees about what lies ahead for the people of Burma. But after a day spent responding to a brutal dictator in Syria who would rather destroy his own country than let it move toward freedom, it is heartening to be reminded that even the most repressive regimes can reform and even the most closed societies can open. Our hope for the people of Burma is the same as our hope for the people of Syria and for all people – peace, freedom, justice, and the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential.

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