

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## U.S. Strengthens Ties with Burma as It Continues Reforms

26 April 2012

Washington — The United States is taking significant steps to enhance ties with Burma as the country continues on a path toward historic political, economic and human rights reforms, according to Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell.

“Following the formation of a new government in March 2011, positive changes have emerged, ranging from the release of political prisoners to new legislation expanding the rights of political and civic association, and a nascent process toward cease-fires with several ethnic armed groups,” Campbell said in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific April 25.

“The Burmese government has engaged with the United States in candid and constructive exchanges, leading toward concrete progress on our core concerns over the past nine months,” he said, adding that in both words and actions, Burmese officials “have demonstrated increasing signs of interest in political, economic and social development and national reconciliation.”

Campbell said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has been actively involved in Burma’s reform process, as demonstrated during her historic visit to Burma in December 2011. She met with government officials, including President Thein Sein and opposition democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as a variety of civil society and ethnic minority representatives.

Following her trip, Clinton appointed Ambassador Derek Mitchell as the first U.S. special representative and policy coordinator for Burma. Mitchell has traveled to Burma on a nearly monthly basis, engaging officials in Naypyidaw and consulting with key leaders of civil society to further catalyze concrete action. The U.S. government also announced plans to exchange ambassadors with Burma as it continues to reform.

Campbell said that while much work remains, Burma has made progress in a number of key areas.

The assistant secretary commended the Burmese government’s pursuit of laws to protect the freedoms of association and assembly, as well as to eliminate all forms of forced labor by 2015.

He also welcomed the relaxation of media censorship, including eased restrictions on television and the Internet. He said the Burmese government has started to host its first press conferences and has recently provided access for foreign journalists.

The assistant secretary said Burma is also proceeding with a strong program of economic reforms, including “needed reforms related to the exchange rate, trade policy, monetary policy and fiscal policy.”

He praised the release of more than 250 political prisoners in January, and called for the release of the several hundred prisoners of conscience who remain behind bars.

Campbell said the United States has responded to reforms with a strategy of matching action for action, and will continue that policy. He said plans remain in place to continue U.S. and global support for Burma, including financial aid to alleviate poverty throughout the country, as it works to create a more democratic and peaceful future.

“There is a great store of good will within the international community to re-engage Burma, rebuild its capacity and reconnect with the Burmese people, should the reform process continue,” Campbell said. “Though the challenges that lie ahead are daunting, the efforts of the resilient and diverse people of Burma are as inspiring as ever.”

## Obama Waives U.S. Congressional Restriction on Palestinian Aid

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 26 April 2012

Washington — President Obama waived the U.S. Congress' restriction on providing funds to the Palestinian Authority, informing U.S. lawmakers in an April 25 memorandum that “it is important to the national security interests of the United States” to release the funding.

According to annual U.S. foreign operations appropriations laws, congressionally approved funds for the West Bank and Gaza Strip cannot be given directly to the Palestinian Authority (PA) unless the president submits a waiver to Congress citing national security interests.

Susan Rice, U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations, said April 23 that the United States had recently met with representatives of Russia, the United Nations,

and the European Union, collectively known as “the Quartet,” and had discussed the importance of fostering continued international support for the PA’s institution-building efforts.

“In order to realize a future where Palestinians live in a sovereign state of their own, we must vigorously support the difficult steps needed to build the institutions and capacities of a future Palestinian state,” Rice said.

“The United States echoes the Quartet’s call for continued international support for institution-building by the Palestinian Authority, including for contributions toward the \$1.1 billion required to meet the Palestinian Authority’s 2012 recurrent financing requirements,” she said. “This funding is essential to preserve and build on the Palestinian Authority’s institutional gains and to expand economic opportunities for the Palestinian people.”

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters April 11 that the Obama administration believes the funding of Palestinian institutions is important not only so they can provide services to the Palestinian people, but also because “it’s very important to empower moderate politicians within the Palestinian political system and to have them be able to deliver services to the Palestinian people as a way of deterring radicalism.”

Nuland said the Obama administration had informed Congress on April 10 that it intended to move the remainder of its economic and military support funds to the PA that had been allocated for the 2012 fiscal year, which ends in September. She said the amount was approximately \$80 million.

Nuland said the \$1.1 billion needed to meet the PA’s 2012 funding requirements “incorporates the amount that the U.S. had pledged and that the U.S. is now sending,” and she urged all donors in the international community to “also deliver the money that they have pledged.”

According to an April 4 report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the U.S. government has committed more than \$4 billion in assistance to the Palestinians since the establishment of limited Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the mid-1990s.

U.S. assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip has averaged more than \$600 million annually since 2008, including more than \$200 million in direct budgetary

assistance and more than \$100 million in nonlethal security assistance for the PA in the West Bank, according to CRS. The report added that the United States is also the largest single-state donor to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

### **Bernanke: Moderate U.S. Growth Supports New Jobs**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 26 April 2012

Washington – Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke says the U.S. economy is continuing to expand moderately, providing critical support for ongoing improvements in the labor market.

Bernanke addressed reporters following an April 25 meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee, the central bank’s policymaking arm.

“Most committee participants expect economic growth to remain moderate over coming quarters and then to pick up gradually,” the chairman said. The U.S. economic recovery faces head winds including weakness in the housing sector and strains in global financial markets.

Bernanke said labor market conditions have improved in recent months, with the unemployment rate having fallen nearly a percentage point since August.

“However, at 8.2 percent, the unemployment rate remains elevated,” Bernanke said, adding that the committee anticipates the unemployment rate will decline gradually during the next several years to reflect the moderate pace of economic growth.

Specifically, participants’ projections for the unemployment rate ranged from 7.8 percent to 8 percent for October to December this year, dropping to between 6.7 percent and 7.4 percent over the same quarter in 2014.

The committee said inflation has picked up somewhat in recent months, mainly reflecting higher gasoline prices. But Bernanke said the committee expects that effect to be temporary, with participants projecting inflation rates of between 1.9 percent and 2 percent for 2012 and dropping to 1.7 percent to 2 percent for 2014.

He said the committee, which includes five board members and 12 reserve bank presidents, decided to maintain a highly accommodative policy to foster continued growth while retaining price stability.

This policy includes keeping the federal funds rate, or the rate banks are charged for overnight loans, between 0 and 0.25 percent. The committee said economic conditions are likely to warrant continued low levels at least until late 2014.

The policymakers also agreed to continue to extend the average maturity of the Federal Reserve's security holdings.

Additionally, they maintained a goal for inflation of no more than 2 percent. A higher inflation rate would reduce the public's ability to make accurate long-term economic and financial decisions, Bernanke said, while a lower rate would elevate the risk of falling into deflation. He said the target should help foster price stability and control long-term interest rates, enhancing the committee's ability to promote maximum employment.

Bernanke spoke following the annual International Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington. He said those talks, which brought together finance ministers and economic leaders from around the world, focused largely on strategies to support the global economic recovery.

The chairman said the Federal Reserve Board will continue to monitor economic conditions and carefully adjust its policies as needed.

### **U.S. Partners with Asian, Near Eastern Countries to Save Wildlife**

26 April 2012

Washington — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is partnering through its Wildlife Without Borders program with 15 countries in South and Southeast Asia and the Near East to conserve tigers, elephants, rhinos, orangutans, gibbons, marine turtles, amphibians and other endangered animals.

U.S. funding of \$4.6 million in 2011 has leveraged \$6.1 million in matching funds for these conservation projects.

"Wildlife populations in South and Southeast Asia and the Near East are suffering from habitat destruction, poaching and conflict between wildlife and people. This area — habitat for the 40 surviving Javan rhinos and critical populations of tigers and orangutans — is crucial to the success of our conservation efforts," said Teiko Saito, USFWS assistant director for international affairs.

Fifty-three USFWS grantees are working throughout South and Southeast Asia and the Near East, including Indonesia, India, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

- In Cambodia, the Wildlife Alliance is expanding its successful Kouprey Express environmental education project, emphasizing elephant conservation to disadvantaged students in protected areas around the Cardamom Mountains.
- In Thailand, the World Wildlife Fund is conducting outreach and improving sanctuary management for a globally significant population of pileated gibbons.
- In Indonesia, the State University of Papua is engaging local communities in a recovery program for the largest remaining Western Pacific leatherback sea turtle nesting population.
- In Malaysia, the Wildlife Conservation Society is improving law enforcement efforts for tigers in the Endau-Rompin landscape to protect habitat corridors.

Of the \$4.6 million awarded to these 15 countries in 2011, \$1.53 million supports 29 projects through the Wildlife Without Borders Asian Elephant Conservation Fund; \$1.53 million supports 26 tiger and four rhinoceros projects through the Wildlife Without Borders Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund; and an additional \$1 million supports 20 orangutan and gibbon conservation projects funded by the Wildlife Without Borders Great Ape Conservation Fund.

The Wildlife Without Borders Marine Turtle Conservation Fund, Critically Endangered Animals Program and Amphibians in Decline Program also provided \$220,000, \$260,000 and \$50,000, respectively, to 20 projects to conserve animals such as the Siamese crocodile, the Indian bustard, the Bali starling, the flare-horned markhor, the white-backed vulture, the snow leopard and the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey, as well as the olive ridley, leatherback and hawksbill sea turtle.

Funding for wildlife conservation projects through three Wildlife Without Borders subprograms — Species, Regional, Global — provides a \$15.5 million suite of grants across the globe.

*For more information on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Without Borders program, including detailed summaries of 2011 grant projects from South and Southeast*

Asia, the Near East and other regions, visit the [USFWS international website](#).

### **U.S. Focuses on Grass-Roots Partnerships with Youth**

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 24 April 2012

Washington — The United States is focusing on “grass-roots partnerships” with young people around the world, making youth issues part of its foreign policy, says Ronan Farrow, special adviser on global youth issues to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Farrow, who is just 24 himself, is the director of the State Department’s Office of Global Youth Issues, which Clinton created with the goal of empowering young people as economic and civic actors.

Speaking with journalists at the U.S. Foreign Press Center in New York City on April 23, Farrow said U.S. embassies around the world are developing youth councils with local young people who offer their insights into the effects of U.S. foreign policy on their communities. These councils exist in some 40 countries, he said, and perform constructive work by providing the embassies with formal policy recommendations.

“All around the world, we’ve been making a concerted effort to stand by young people,” Farrow said. “That conversation is not always easy. We don’t walk into communities and expect young people everywhere to trust and agree with the United States. ... But I think that we have made strides towards bringing young people to the table and giving them a serious role in our policy process.”

These councils, he said, also encourage youth to find solutions to problems within their own homelands. A newly established U.S. Embassy council in Latvia, for example, included two young members who, using a small U.S. grant, started an e-petition system that is now used by 20 percent of Latvians. Under Latvian law, Farrow said, anyone who develops an idea, launches a petition and wins a certain number of votes can see that idea passed into law.

The U.S. government, Farrow said, invests \$100 million each year to engage the world’s youth through a variety of programs ranging from health care to education to job training. In addition to funding those programs, Farrow said, the Obama administration is “innovating to make sure that young people are in the driver’s seat as we undertake all of that programming.”

The young, Farrow said, are often champions of human rights, economic change and entrepreneurship. He said in the last year the world has seen the power of young people as a positive force for change with the unseating of repressive regimes.

Farrow also noted that worldwide, people under 30 years old are three times more likely to be unemployed. Frustrated youth are targets for extremists. “Not having a job,” he said, “not having a way to make one’s voice heard peacefully, can boil over into chaos, where we see young people as a destabilizing force rather than one for positive change.”

### **U.S. Government Targets Computer-Using Abusers in Iran, Syria**

24 April 2012

Washington — President Obama issued an executive order April 23 that targets people in Iran and Syria using information technology to commit human rights abuses.

The order places sanctions on people involved in computer or network disruption or who are engaged in monitoring that enables human rights abuses by the government of Iran or Syria, the U.S. Treasury Department said in an April 23 press release. The sanctions block any assets they may have in the United States and prohibit U.S. people from engaging in any transactions with them.

Sanctions were imposed on the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate (GID) and its director, Ali Mamluk; Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Iran’s Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), the Iranian Internet service provider Datak Telecom, and the Syrian communications firm Syriatel.

### **Ali Mamluk and the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate**

Ali Mamluk, through the GID, has overseen a communications program directed at opposition groups. The program included both technological and analytical support from Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security. Mamluk worked with the Iranians to provide technology and training to Syria, including Internet monitoring technology. Mamluk has also requested Iranian training on social media monitoring and other cyber tools for the GID.

The GID has been implicated in serious human rights abuses in Syria, including arbitrary arrests, mistreatment of detainees and the death of detainees while in GID custody. In one example from July 2011, GID officers

arrested and beat surrendered oppositionists after a firefight at a school in Bukamal, Syria. The bodies of the prisoners were later disposed of; some of them had bullet wounds and appeared to have been mutilated with holes drilled into their arms, legs and shoulders.

The GID and Mamluk were originally sanctioned with an executive order in April 2011.

### **Syriatel**

The Syrian government has directed Syriatel to sever network connectivity in areas where attacks were planned and it also records mobile phone conversations on behalf of the Syrian government. Syriatel controls approximately 55 percent of Syria's mobile phone market.

Syriatel was previously sanctioned in August 2011.

### **Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security**

The ministry has sought to identify members of opposition groups and monitor their activities by obtaining their passwords. Ministry agents have been responsible for the beatings, sexual abuse, prolonged interrogations and coerced confessions of prisoners since the June 2009 elections in Iran.

The ministry was previously sanctioned in February 2012.

### **Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

The IRGC's Guard Cyber Defense Command includes a special department called the Center for Inspecting Organized Crimes (CIOC). The CIOC focuses on ensuring the regime's vision of cyber security. The CIOC has openly admitted that it would forcefully suppress anyone seeking to carry out "cultural operations" against the Islamic Republic via the Internet and that it monitors Persian-language sites for what it deems to be aberrations.

The CIOC has taken an active role in identifying and arresting protesters involved in the 2009 post-election unrest, particularly people active in cyberspace.

The Iranian regime has identified and arrested many bloggers and activists through the use of advanced monitoring systems, and the CIOC inspects forwarded emails to identify people critical of the regime. The IRGC's cyber police focus on filtering websites in Iran, monitoring the email and online activity of individuals on a watch list, and observing the content of Internet traffic and information posted on web blogs. Individuals on the watch list included known political opponents and reformists, among others.

Individuals arrested by the IRGC have been subjected to severe mental and physical abuse in a ward of Evin Prison controlled by the IRGC.

The Department of the Treasury previously sanctioned the IRGC in June 2011 and in October 2007.

### **Iran's Law Enforcement Forces**

Following the 2009 post-election protests, during which opposition activists used the Internet and social media to document police crackdowns, the Iranian regime identified and arrested many bloggers and activists through the use of advanced monitoring systems. In January 2012, the LEF issued new regulations requiring owners of Internet cafes to install closed-circuit television cameras and to register the identity and contact details of users before allowing them to use their computers. Given the LEF's history of serious human rights abuses, its efforts to monitor the Iranian public can reasonably be assumed to enable human rights abuses by the Iranian government.

The Department of the Treasury previously sanctioned the LEF in June 2011.

### **Datak Telecom**

The Iranian Internet service provider Datak Telecom has collaborated with the Iranian government to provide information on individuals trying to circumvent the government's blocks on Internet content, allowing for their monitoring, tracking and targeting by the government. Datak regularly collaborated with the government to test surveillance techniques.

Over the last two years, Datak provided ongoing technical surveillance on Iran-based users of a popular commercial email service. Datak undertook plans to carry out this type of attack on a larger scale, to potentially include surveillance of millions of Iranian users.

Datak has also demonstrated planning to purchase equipment used to intercept Internet and voice communications.

### **Clinton: Promoting Human Rights Is Challenging but Essential**

24 April 2012

Washington — Despite the challenges of promoting human rights and democracy around the world and overcoming cultural differences that can present obstacles to that effort, the importance of democratic values and universal human rights is "absolutely paramount" to U.S. foreign policy, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told students at Syracuse University in New York.

Speaking April 23 at the university's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Clinton said she sometimes feels that U.S. officials are criticized for "not being as vocal or strident as some in the advocacy community would like on some of these issues." But in her diplomatic work, she said, "I'm trying to save lives and I'm trying to change attitudes," and "trying to do that simultaneously is sometimes quite challenging."

Part of the reason the conversation is difficult is that for some it is the first time they are having it, she said.

From the U.S. perspective, "we can either have a conversation and try to convince people to move in a certain direction, to provide greater protection for human rights, or we can lecture at them, we can call them names, we can preach, and the lives of the people who are being discriminated against will not change," she said.

For example, Clinton said, it can be difficult to explain what democracy is when the concept "can mean different things to different people."

"If you've never lived it, you have no idea how it affects you. You don't have the sort of years and years of perfecting our union that we've gone through" in the United States, she said, and democracy requires much more than simply having elections.

"We have to constantly be urging more openness, more respect for minorities, independent judiciary, protection of the free press, the kinds of pillars of democracy that over many, many years we have learned are essential for the institutionalization of a democratic system," she said.

#### AMERICA CRITICIZES ITS OWN HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES TOO

The State Department issues an annual Human Rights Report detailing practices and conditions around the world, but Clinton said she introduced the requirement that "we need to judge ourselves" and look at human rights conditions inside the United States as well.

"Otherwise, people are not going to pay attention. They'll say, well, there go the Americans again, criticizing everybody else, but what about Guantanamo and what about this and what about that?" she said.

Despite the great U.S. commitment to democracy and human rights, "we make mistakes, we fall short of our own standards, and we have to constantly be asking ourselves what we can do better and how we should behave. And that's important for us, first and foremost, but it's also important if we're going to have credibility when we speak to the Arab Spring or other countries that are trying to formulate democracies," Clinton said.

The secretary also discussed her conversations concerning women's empowerment and the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community, especially in countries whose culture of human rights standards differs greatly from that of the United States.

"Honestly ... in a lot of places, it's just not understood," she said. With regard to women, Clinton said she has heard her counterparts tell her they take good care of their female citizens. "We don't let them out of the house, so that they never get into trouble. We don't let them drive cars, so that they can never be taken advantage of. So we are protecting the human rights of our women," she recalled hearing.

In some places, the LGBT community faces open discrimination or even violence, and Clinton said she is first told, "We don't have any of those here," followed by, "If we did, we would not want to have them and would want to get rid of them as quickly as possible."

The secretary says she has telephoned leaders when, for example, a legislator in their country has introduced a bill calling for LGBT people to face the death penalty.

"That's really a terrible idea," she said she has told them, and in reply heard, "Well, we don't have any of them. They've been imported from the West – and we don't need them."

"I said, 'Well, all right. Let's start at something very basic. Why do you have to kill them?'" Clinton said, and heard, "Well, maybe you're right about that. We won't impose the death penalty, but they may have to go to prison."

Clinton said those are the kinds of challenging discussions she has when she is talking about human rights with foreign leaders.

"It's not that people get up in the morning and say, 'I'm against human rights.' It's that from where they come, on women or LGBT or minority groups, you say, 'You don't treat that minority group very well,'" and it is "a very difficult conversation because it's just not been one that people have had up until now," she said.

#### "Massive Scale-Up" on Malaria Reduces Child Deaths

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 24 April 2012

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will recognize World Malaria Day April 25 by presenting the U.S. Congress with a report documenting substantial progress in reducing deaths from malaria as a result of increased investment by the United States and others in the global anti-malaria campaign.

“Mortality in children under 5 years of age has fallen dramatically across sub-Saharan Africa in association with a massive scale-up of malaria control efforts,” according to the Sixth Annual Report to Congress on the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI), a U.S. program begun in 2006.

The program targeted 15 high-risk countries in sub-Saharan Africa with malaria control efforts such as insecticide-treated mosquito bed nets, indoor residual spraying, improved diagnostic tests and malaria medications.

Nationwide household surveys conducted in most of the targeted countries show significant turnarounds in the mortality rate from all causes of death in children under 5. Rwanda showed the most significant progress, with a 50 percent decline in the number of child deaths. Senegal was next with a 40 percent reduction.

Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia also reported fewer malaria-related deaths of small children.

Children are of special concern because they have less chance of surviving the disease. Malaria is caused by the Plasmodium parasite, which is transmitted via the bites of infected mosquitoes. In 2010, 90 percent of all malaria deaths occurred in Africa, mostly among children under 5 years of age.

The expansion of malaria prevention through the PMI and other global partnerships has reached tens of millions of people living in regions where the parasite thrives. USAID’s report to Congress presents these results:

- PMI spraying programs protected more than 28 million people in 2011.
- PMI has procured more than 59 million bed nets and distributed more than 31 million since 2006.
- More than 92 million anti-malarial treatments have been distributed in the program’s six years.

In 2011 PMI entered new territory, implementing malaria control activities in Guinea and Zimbabwe, while expanding programs in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nineteen African countries are targeted by the PMI program, as well as the Greater Mekong region, including Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Yunnan, China.

“Malaria prevention and control is a major focus of U.S. government foreign assistance objectives,” according to the PMI report to Congress. President George W. Bush boosted the U.S. commitment to fighting this infectious disease with a five-year, \$1.27 billion funding increase starting in 2006. The U.S. Congress increased the

investment with another five-year, \$5 billion funding commitment in 2008.

USAID provides further funding for malaria programs in Burkina Faso, Burundi and South Sudan, and in the Amazon Malaria Initiative, provides malaria support in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname.

Commemoration of World Malaria Day on April 25 recognizes the date in 2000 when 44 African leaders met in Nigeria and committed their countries to cutting malaria-related deaths in half by 2010. “In the decade since, increased funding and control efforts have led to a scale-up of effective malaria interventions, resulting in decreased malaria morbidity and mortality in many countries,” according to the World Health Organization’s materials about the occasion.

In 2010, an estimated 216 million cases of malaria and 655,000 deaths were recorded worldwide, WHO reports, a 17 percent decrease in malaria incidence and 25 percent reduction in global malaria mortality since 2000.

On World Malaria Day 2012, WHO promotes the theme “Sustain Gains, Save Lives: Invest in Malaria,” emphasizing the need to consolidate the gains made against the disease and the need for sustained support for malaria interventions.

The PMI report to Congress strikes a similar chord. “The gains are fragile, and the global malaria partnership must remain vigilant to potential threats,” it says. Those threats include the potential for increasing resistance to malaria drugs, and resistance to the insecticides that have been effective in eliminating mosquitoes.

The PMI is part of a larger global health strategy, based on the finding that U.S. health is intertwined with world health. The Obama administration’s Global Health Initiative is engaged in a wide array of programs and investments in health issues in approximately 80 countries worldwide, building partnerships with other governments to improve health for citizens and the capacity of their governments to operate health programs. The Global Health Initiative aims to make substantial progress in reducing the burden of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, at the same time improving maternal and child health, global nutrition and family planning.

### **Global Financial Leaders Double IMF Lending Power**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 23 April 2012

Washington – Members of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), led by the G20 advanced and emerging market economies, pledged to boost the global fund’s lending capacity by more than \$430 billion during the

annual IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings April 19–22 in Washington.

“This effort, together with the national and regional structural, fiscal and monetary actions that have been put in place in the past months, shows the commitment of the international community to safeguard global financial stability and put the global economic recovery on sounder footing,” said a joint statement by the G20 and the IMF’s policy-setting International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC).

The pledges, which will nearly double the fund’s resources, came in response to a call for more financial firepower by IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde. Speaking to the hundreds of finance and economic leaders gathered for the start of the Washington meetings April 19, Lagarde said the global economy has entered a “timid” recovery but still faces high risks. She said the IMF requires additional resources to promote global economic stability and to contain any further financial crises.

“This broad-based response to our request for additional resources will help strengthen global economic and financial stability in the interests of all our members,” Lagarde said in an April 20 statement.

Lagarde said the pledges signal “the strong resolve of the international community to secure global financial stability,” and that the money will be made available for crisis prevention and resolution.

The funds “will be drawn only if they are needed and, if drawn, will be refunded with interest,” Lagarde added.

She said the money will be available for the whole membership of the IMF, and not earmarked for any particular region.

Speaking to the IMFC meeting April 21, U.S. Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner said the United States welcomed the decision to add to IMF resources and “continues to support the smooth functioning of international financial markets” as the largest contributor to the IMF and the World Bank.

He said the groups’ annual meetings focused largely on the global economic recovery. The outlook has improved, and progress is being made to reduce global imbalances.

“The positive tone of recent data suggests the economy is gradually healing and getting stronger, but the financial crisis put our economy in a deep hole and it will take time to fully repair the damage and to restore economic security,” Geithner said, noting that unemployment rates

are still high, the housing market continues to be weak and growth remains slow.

He said the United States will continue to work with its international partners to support the recovery.

In addressing the IMF and World Bank’s joint development committee, Geithner said the World Bank is an “indispensable partner for the United States” in leveraging resources to provide concrete results. He announced an increase in U.S. funding for the World Bank that will “help immunize 200 million children, extend health care services to more than 30 million people, give access to improved water sources to 80 million people, help build 50,000 miles of roads and train and recruit more than 2 million teachers.”

Calling the World Bank an effective tool for combating global development challenges, Geithner said talks during the meetings covered improving food security, ensuring gender equality, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth around the world.

The economic and financial leaders are scheduled to meet again in October for the IMF and World Bank Fall Meetings in Tokyo.

### **USAID Launches Child Survival Campaign**

23 April 2012

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a campaign April 23 to end preventable child death under the slogan “Every Child Deserves a Fifth Birthday.”

U.S. assistance to the developing world has long served the same goal through programs to improve child nutrition, maternal health, immunizations and related needs. The “Fifth Birthday” initiative will bring together the knowledge and experience of previous efforts to focus on a singular goal.

“For the first time, we have the tools and the knowledge to change child mortality,” said USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah as he outlined the campaign to an audience at the Kaiser Family Foundation, a prominent nongovernmental organization working extensively on global health issues.

Those tools are compact and simple, and Shah offered a demonstration, pulling various articles from an average-sized backpack as he spoke: a high-nutrition sweet potato; a super-nutritious protein bar; medications to prevent mother-to-child-transmission of HIV/AIDS, diarrhea and dehydration; a vaccine kit and an insecticide-treated bed

net to prevent bites from mosquitoes carrying the malaria parasite.

This assortment of supplies costs about \$30, Shah said. The difficult part is delivering these potentially life-saving articles to the isolated villages of the developing world where the greatest numbers of child deaths occur.

An estimated 7 million children die each year from preventable causes. Six million of them are lost to parents in the developing world, “a massive inequity” between the developed and the developing world, Shah said.

Supply chains to deliver these low-cost remedies for preventable disease to the areas are not reliable, if they exist at all, Shah said. The United States, other donors and organizations committed to the survival of children should adopt several new tactics to address that goal.

Every Child Deserves a Fifth Birthday will take greater care to articulate the goal, Shah said, to identify the regions where the need is greatest and governments also demonstrate their support for the goal.

The new campaign will adopt a “crystal clear road map for action,” Shah said, which specifies what must be delivered to a given community to save young lives and what all the partners involved must bring to the effort. Supporters of the campaign will identify how progress and success of the endeavor are to be measured.

Agencies involved in child-survival programs in the past have met what Shah called “core bottlenecks” in their efforts to deliver the backpack items to certain regions. Agencies must “take the commodity challenges seriously,” Shah said, to improve the flow of these health supplies to the children who may not survive without them.

Information technologies are a key tool in the effort, Shah said. Technological devices that have become routine in the developed world can be genuine game-changers in a developing world situation. A mobile phone or an electronic reading device put to use in a rural clinic can significantly increase the capabilities of the facility, Shah said, as it establishes a communication line with knowledge centers that can provide advice to solve a village health problem.

USAID is taking up this new health goal when cuts in government budgets and U.S. foreign assistance programs loom in the not-too-distant future. Shah said the United States is spending about \$2.5 billion annually on a variety of children’s health and nutrition programs, and the Fifth Birthday campaign requires that greater value be squeezed from that investment.

“Efforts in this field that save money save children’s lives,” Shah said, inviting new ideas for greater efficiency in global health activities.

The religious and philanthropic organizations working to improve global health frequently come to the cause with a belief in a moral imperative and an ethical obligation to reduce suffering and help the poor. Shah reminded his audience that these activities serve another end: They are the basis of a sound economic and national security strategy.

The more children survive early childhood to be educated and raised to become productive and contributing citizens of their country, the greater the stability of that country. Greater still is a country’s opportunity to become a member of the world community and a participant in the global economy, Shah said, echoing remarks made in the past by both President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

“The big enabler will be the countries themselves,” said USAID Assistant Administrator Ariel Pablos-Méndez. Also speaking at the Kaiser Foundation event, Méndez said many developing-world countries are in periods of economic expansion, allowing them to increase their national investments in better public health programs like never before.

A broad coalition of partners including U.N. agencies and other nongovernmental organizations are also supporting the campaign. The governments of the United States, India and Ethiopia, collaborating with UNICEF, will hold a Child Survival Call to Action meeting in Washington in June to mobilize resources and actions in the campaign.

More information about the campaign is available at [5thBDay.usaid.gov](http://5thBDay.usaid.gov).

### **USAID Joins Global Water and Sanitation Partnership**

23 April 2012

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has joined an international partnership of governments, donors, civil society organizations and development partners working to achieve sustainable sanitation and drinking water worldwide.

USAID and the U.S. Department of State are committing a total of \$1 million to the World Bank’s Water and Sanitation Program. The investment will support the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)-led National Planning for Results Initiative, which promotes national planning efforts related to sanitation and water. The economic

gains from investing in sanitation and water are estimated at \$170 billion per year, USAID said.

“The United States government considers sanitation and water and our related partnering activities to be a critical component of our overall international development assistance effort,” USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said during remarks at the SWA High Level Meeting. “We look forward to maximizing the potential of this partnership, which brings together such a range of tools, experience and approaches. Working together, we can not only reach full coverage, but we can also do it in the most effective, efficient and collaborative way.”

Established in 2010, SWA's biennial High Level Meeting brings together ministers of finance from developing countries, ministers of development cooperation from donor countries and high-level representatives from development banks and other donor institutions.

In March, the United Nations announced that the Millennium Development Goal for a 50 percent reduction in the number of people living without access to safe drinking water had been achieved in 2010 – five years ahead of schedule. Even with that target met, more than 780 million people – particularly those in fragile states and poor communities – still live without access to safe water, USAID says.

Progress in sanitation has been slower, according to USAID. Today, 2.5 billion people still lack access to improved sanitation, and it is unlikely that the Millennium Development Goal target for sanitation will be met by 2015.

### **President Obama's Earth Day 2012 Proclamation**

20 April 2012

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
April 20, 2012

EARTH DAY, 2012

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

On April 22, 1970, millions of Americans came together to celebrate the first Earth Day. Students, teachers, activists, elected officials, and countless others challenged our Nation to confront our most urgent environmental issues and rallied around a single message: the success of future generations depends upon how we act today. As we commemorate Earth Day this year, we reflect on the challenges that remain before us and recommit to the

spirit of togetherness and shared responsibility that galvanized a movement 42 years ago.

America rose to meet the call to action in the months and years that followed the first Earth Day. We passed the Clean Air, Clean Water, Endangered Species, and Marine Mammal Protection Acts; founded the Environmental Protection Agency; and ignited a spirit of stewardship that has driven progress for over four decades. Today, our air and water are cleaner, pollution has been greatly reduced, and Americans everywhere are living in a healthier environment.

While we have made remarkable progress in protecting our health and our natural heritage, we know our work is not yet finished. Last July, my Administration proposed the toughest fuel economy standards in our Nation's history -- standards that will save families money at the pump, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and significantly reduce our dependence on oil. In December, we finalized the first-ever national standards to limit mercury and other toxic emissions from power plants, helping safeguard the health of millions. We have taken action to protect and restore our Nation's precious ecosystems, from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes. And we continue to make landmark investments in batteries, biofuels, and renewable energy that are unlocking American innovation and ensuring our Nation stays on the cutting edge. Our country is on the path to economic recovery and renewal, and moving forward, my Administration will continue to fight for a healthy environment every step of the way.

As we work to leave our children a safe, sustainable future, we must also equip them with the tools they need to take on tomorrow's environmental challenges. Supporting environmental literacy and a strong foundation in science, technology, engineering, and math for every student will help ensure our youth have the skills and knowledge to advance our clean energy economy. Last year, we launched the Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools recognition award to encourage more schools to pursue sustainability, foster health and wellness, and integrate environmental literacy into the curriculum. In the days ahead, we look forward to awarding the first Green Ribbons and recognizing the accomplishments of green schools across our country.

Forty-two years ago, a generation rallied together to protect the earth we would inherit. As we reflect on that historic day of activism and stewardship, let us embrace our commitment to the generations yet to come by leaving them a safe, clean world on which to make their mark.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority

vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 22, 2012, as Earth Day. I encourage all Americans to participate in programs and activities that will protect our environment and contribute to a healthy, sustainable future.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand twelve, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

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(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)