

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama’s Meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi.....	1
Secretary Clinton Hosts Global Leaders for Infrastructure Talks	1
U.S. Lifts Sanctions on Burmese President, Parliament Speaker.....	1
Panetta Takes Questions From Chinese Cadets.....	2
U.S. Imposes Sanctions Related to Syria Violence	3
U.S. Provides \$1 Million in Additional WTO Trade Support.....	4
World Food Day Unites People in Fight Against Hunger	4
Secretary Clinton Honors Aung San Suu Kyi’s “Courage and Moral Leadership”	5
U.S., Partners Make Progress On Asia-Pacific Trade Deal	6
U.S. Says “Small Minority” Behind Mideast Protests	6
U.S. Labor Dept. Urges Women to Go for the Green.....	7

President Obama's Meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi

20 September 2012

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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Readout of the President's Meeting with Burmese Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi

President Obama met today with Burmese Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and expressed his admiration for her courage, determination and personal sacrifice in championing democracy and human rights over the years. The President welcomed Burma's democratic transition and the recent progress made by Aung San Suu Kyi, as leader of the National League for Democracy Party, working together with President Thein Sein. The President reaffirmed the determination of the United States to support their sustained efforts to promote political and economic reforms and to ensure full protection of the fundamental rights of the Burmese people. The President expressed his conviction that the ongoing process of reconciliation and reform offers the people of that nation the opportunity to take charge of their destiny and to shape a more peaceful, free, and prosperous future.

Secretary Clinton Hosts Global Leaders for Infrastructure Talks

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 20 September 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton hosted the Global Infrastructure Conference in Washington, a one-day high-level gathering bringing together international government and business leaders to develop sustainable solutions for meeting the world's fast-growing infrastructure needs.

"From Asia to South America, people are moving from rural areas into urban areas, earning more money, buying more cars, more televisions, more refrigerators, surfing the Web [and] joining the middle class," Clinton told the conference September 20. "The world has never seen so many people ascend economically so quickly."

The secretary said that while this upward mobility is "great news" for the international community, it requires global leaders to respond to growing demands on infrastructure and natural resources.

"To meet the needs of future generations, we have to start to build differently," she said. "We need to make our infrastructure smarter, more sustainable and more efficient."

She said building this infrastructure will be expensive, with global construction spending expected to grow from roughly \$6 trillion a year today to nearly \$9 trillion a year by 2020.

"That's why we've come together today — to develop ideas and partnerships to make sure the world is prepared to meet this historic shift," Clinton said.

The secretary addressed executives from nearly 90 U.S. companies as well as senior government officials from Colombia, India, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates.

She was joined at the conference by Deputy Secretary of State Thomas Nides and Under Secretary of State Robert Hormats, along with representatives from the departments of Commerce, Transportation and the Treasury and leaders from the Export-Import Bank of the United States, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency.

"How we in the world manage this unprecedented growth will determine what our economies, societies and all of us will look like in the years to come," Clinton told the group. "It's a great challenge as well as a great opportunity to build a cleaner, healthier, more prosperous future together, and we are excited by what it can mean in improving the quality of life and the opportunities for hundreds of millions of people throughout the world."

This is the second in the global business conference series the State Department has launched to support the commitment of President Obama and Secretary Clinton to strengthen the economy through greater international cooperation.

In November, Clinton will host a similar event focused on energy sector partnerships. And in January 2013, leaders from around the world will travel throughout the United States as part of an International Visitor Leadership Program that will focus on tackling infrastructure challenges.

The secretary said these meetings will provide a chance for global leaders to create new partnerships both inside and outside the government to discuss best practices and to cooperatively tackle existing and emerging challenges.

U.S. Lifts Sanctions on Burmese President, Parliament Speaker

20 September 2012

Washington — The U.S. Treasury Department has lifted U.S. sanctions against Burmese President Thein Sein and Lower House of Parliament Speaker Thura Shwe Mann.

The action allows them access to once-blocked property and assets. It also lifts the ban on transactions with them involving U.S. people. It acknowledges their efforts on behalf of reform and supports U.S. national security and foreign policy goals, the Treasury Department said in a September 19 release.

“Thein Sein and Thura Shwe Mann have taken concrete steps to promote political reforms and human rights, and to move Burma away from repression and dictatorship toward democracy and freedom, warranting today’s delisting action,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury David S. Cohen.

Since Thein Sein took office as president of Burma in 2011, he has maintained a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), granted amnesty to hundreds of political prisoners, and overseen elections in which Suu Kyi and other NLD members won seats in Parliament, the Treasury said.

Thura Shwe Mann has supported Thein Sein’s reforms, the Treasury said. Under his leadership, the Burmese Parliament has passed bills granting the release of political prisoners and a law, in consultation with the International Labour Organization, to allow for organized labor and the formation of unions.

U.S. sanctions against senior government officials responsible for repressive policies in Burma had been imposed in part to signal disapproval and to motivate such officials to abandon such policies and support political reform and human rights, the Treasury said.

Panetta Takes Questions From Chinese Cadets

By Karen Parrish | American Forces Press Service | 20 September 2012

This article was originally posted September 20 to the Department of Defense website.

Beijing — Two very different military traditions briefly converged here September 19 when Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, following a speech at the People’s Liberation Army’s Armored Forces Engineering Academy, opened the floor to questions from cadets and officers in the audience.

As the audience waited for Panetta’s arrival — his schedule had been pushed back when his earlier meeting with Vice President Xi Jinping went longer than planned — the trim, green-uniformed young men sat quietly in rows of auditorium seating rising sharply from floor level to perhaps three stories in height. When Panetta appeared, walking down the steps from the top of the auditorium toward the stage, they broke into sustained

applause.

The young Chinese soldiers peppered Panetta, the first U.S. defense secretary ever to visit the academy, with questions on topics ranging from how the two nations’ forces can work more closely to Taiwan arms sales to his impressions of the Chinese military.

To the first question, Panetta said he believes two nations’ militaries can work together in several ways. He added that senior leader interaction is the best lead-in to such cooperation, and is “very effective at improving relations.”

“There is nothing better to produce cooperation than the ability to openly communicate with one another on an equal basis,” he said.

Secondly, he said, increasing joint training exercises between U.S. and Chinese armies, navies and air forces could improve the capabilities of both nations’ forces. “It gives us lessons about how we can improve in our operations,” the secretary added, noting that as Pacific powers, both the United States and China share concerns about terrorism, nuclear proliferation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, countering piracy and other issues.

The two militaries’ ability to work together against terrorism is critical to the future, Panetta said, while cooperating to help people stricken by disaster “would be a tremendous symbol to the world of how two major powers can work together to help bring relief.”

On the question of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, Panetta said the issue was discussed during his meetings with Chinese leaders here this week.

Joint communiqués issued in 1972, 1979 and 1982 outline policy agreements between the United States and China and include both countries’ agreement to a “one-China” policy. In the third communiqué, the United States agreed to a gradual reduction of arms sales to Taiwan.

“Let me make clear that the United States has a one-China policy, pursuant to the communiqués ... and that we do not support an independent Taiwan,” Panetta said.

At the same time, he added, the United States supports better relations between China and Taiwan.

“Frankly, we have been encouraged by recent developments between China and Taiwan that indicate there is a willingness on both sides to engage in efforts to improve that relationship,” he said.

Panetta said the United States does have a commitment to

assist Taiwan, as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979.

“Our belief is that this assistance, in some ways, provides better confidence and security on their part to be able to engage [with China] in those kinds of negotiations and discussions. ... Our goal is to try to improve the relationship between China and Taiwan ... to prevent any kind of conflict in the future,” the secretary told the cadets and officers.

Another question sought Panetta’s impressions of China’s military, and the man in charge of the nearly 3 million active and reserve U.S service members seemed to warm to the topic.

“In order to have an effective military, you have to have good discipline and good order, and you have to have good leadership,” he said. “The one thing I am impressed by when I see the Chinese military is the level of discipline ... within the force. That’s extremely important.”

Many officers who work with him in the Pentagon have a lot of combat experience, the secretary noted. He added they would say “the most important thing, if you are in battle, is having that discipline – to be able to respond to orders, to do what you have to do ... to achieve victory.”

Strong leaders also are vital to military mission accomplishment, he said.

“That means good officers, good [noncommissioned officers], good soldiers ... good people at every level, who can take control of those they are responsible for,” he said.

Just like China, he added, the United States has great weapons, ships, aircraft and technology.

“But none of that would be worth anything without good men and women who are willing to serve their country. ... From what I have seen, you have that good discipline and order,” Panetta said.

U.S. Imposes Sanctions Related to Syria Violence

19 September 2012

Washington – The U.S. Department of the Treasury on September 19 imposed sanctions against entities that support the Assad regime’s efforts to procure arms and communications equipment that contribute to the regime’s violence against the Syrian people.

Syria's Army Supply Bureau and Belarus-based Belvneshpromservice are being designated under Executive Order (E.O.) 13382, which targets the assets of proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and

their supporters. The Department of the Treasury also is identifying the Army Supply Bureau as being part of the government of Syria under E.O. 13582. The U.S. Department of State on September 19 also designated the director of Syria’s Scientific Studies Research Center (SSRC), Amr Armanazi, under E.O. 13382.

In addition to these actions, the Treasury Department is identifying 117 aircraft operated by Iran Air, Mahan Air or Yas Air. Iran Air was previously designated for supporting the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Mahan Air and Yas Air were designated for supporting the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps–Qods Force (IRGC-QF).

The latest designations will make it easier for interested parties to keep track of this blocked property, and more difficult for Iran to use deceptive practices to try to evade sanctions, Treasury said.

“Today’s actions seek to disrupt the flow of weapons and communications equipment to the Syrian regime and help prevent their use against the Syrian people,” said Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen. “The identification of Iranian aircraft also further highlights Iran’s ongoing effort to support the Assad regime’s WMD programs and crackdown against the Syrian people.”

SYRIA’S ARMY SUPPLY BUREAU

Syria’s Army Supply Bureau, an element of the Syrian Ministry of Defense involved in conventional military and missile-related procurement, is being identified as an entity belonging to the government of Syria as well as designated under E.O. 13382 for providing support for Iran Electronics Industries (IEI). In March 2012, IEI prepared to send two large shipments of communications equipment, including VHF/UHF jammers, to Syria’s Army Supply Bureau. In August 2012, the international press reported on the suspected use of jamming equipment by the Syrian government against Syrian anti-government fighters at an army checkpoint at the entrance to Aleppo.

BELVNESPROMSERVICE (BVPS)

Belarus' state-owned Belvneshpromservice (BVPS) is being designated for providing services to Syria’s Army Supply Bureau. In March 2011, Syria’s Army Supply Bureau prepared to receive possible fuses for general purpose aerial bombs from BVPS. Aerial bombs were used by the Syrian military as recently as July 2012 in an aerial bombardment of Aleppo as part of a coordinated assault by government forces to intimidate opposition forces.

AMR ARMANAZI

The State Department is designating Scientific Studies Research Center Director Amr Armanazi under E.O. 13382. The SSRC is the Syrian government agency responsible for developing and producing nonconventional weapons and the missiles to deliver them. The SSRC also has a public civilian research function; however, its activities focus on the development of biological weapons, chemical weapons and missiles. During his tenure, Armanazi oversaw a facility that was involved in the production of sarin nerve agent.

AIRCRAFT OPERATED BY IRAN AIR, MAHAN AIR, YAS AIR

The Treasury Department is also identifying as blocked property 117 aircraft operated by Iran Air, Mahan Air and Yas Air. In the summer of 2012, Iran used Iran Air and Mahan Air flights between Tehran and Damascus to send military and crowd control equipment to the Syrian regime.

Iran has used deceptive measures when shipping such items to Syria. For example, a Turkish inspection in March 2011 of a Yas Air flight bound for Syria – which listed “auto spare parts” on its cargo manifest – found weapons, including Kalashnikov AK-47 assault rifles, machine guns, nearly 8,000 rounds of ammunition, and an assortment of mortar shells.

The recently enacted Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 provides sanctions for foreign financial institutions that facilitate transactions or provide financial services to persons whose property is blocked in connection with Iran’s support for the proliferation of WMD or for international terrorism. As a result, foreign financial institutions that engage in significant transactions with Syria’s Army Supply Bureau, BVPS, Iran Air, Mahan Air or Yas Air, including any of 117 aircraft operated by any of these airlines, risk losing access to the U.S. banking system.

U.S. Provides \$1 Million in Additional WTO Trade Support

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 19 September 2012

Washington – The United States will contribute \$1 million to the World Trade Organization for trade-related technical assistance to developing countries, according to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk.

Kirk, who announced the new contribution September 18, said the money will help developing nations improve their ability to analyze issues, assess their interests and participate effectively in the World Trade Organization.

“This contribution reflects our commitment to work with developing countries as partners and to ensure that developing countries can participate effectively in all the activities of the WTO,” Kirk said. “We continue to believe that, working through the WTO, we can help these countries further their development goals and improve the well-being of their people by opening markets and creating meaningful new opportunities for farmers, manufacturers and service providers.”

Kirk said the United States also has pledged \$150,000 to support developing countries’ participation in the WTO Trade Facilitation negotiations, which come in response to countries’ requests to update the WTO assessment of their trade abilities.

“The elimination of unnecessary red tape and modernization of customs procedures that will result from trade facilitation improvements has the potential to deliver significant development gains, and we remain committed to working with our developing countries partners to make these gains achievable,” he said in a September 18 statement.

The new contributions, which have been approved by Congress, are part of a broad U.S. effort to build trade capacity around the world.

Overall U.S. support for trade-capacity building since the Doha Round of negotiations began in 2001 has surpassed \$13 billion, including more than \$2.6 billion in trade facilitation assistance for developing and least-developed countries.

The United States remains committed to continuing to support countries around the world working toward greater participation in global trade.

World Food Day Unites People in Fight Against Hunger

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 19 September 2012

Washington – Cooperative enterprises that produce and market food bring higher yields, better quality products and greater profits to many farmers than if they worked alone, says the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

To acknowledge the role cooperatives play in the goal of global food security, the FAO has made the theme for World Food Day 2012 “Agricultural cooperatives – key to feeding the world.” FAO in 1979 proclaimed October 16 as World Food Day to raise international awareness and understanding of approaches to ending hunger. Every year since 1981, World Food Day has been observed by people in more than 100 countries.

FAO defines a cooperative as an association of members who come together to form a jointly owned, democratically controlled enterprise that satisfies its members' needs while pursuing profit and sustainability.

Cooperatives are a positive economic model in emerging economies, according to international cooperative leader Land O'Lakes, based in Minneapolis.

Globally, more than 1 billion people are members of cooperatives. Around the world cooperatives provide more than 100 million jobs and generate \$1.1 trillion in value. If the 300 largest cooperatives were a national economy, the economy would be the world's 10th largest, according to FAO.

Smallholder farmers, or farmers with few resources, will provide much of the extra food needed to feed the more than 9 billion people who will live in the world by 2050. One means to achieve that is by investing in farm cooperatives, producer organizations and other rural institutions, FAO says.

Research shows that while smallholder farmers acting alone have not benefited when food prices rise, those acting collectively in strong producer organizations and cooperatives can better take advantage of market opportunities while being able to cope with the negative effects of food crises.

Cooperative member services include coordinated access to credit, natural resources, information, technology and training, and farm supplies such as seeds, fertilizers and farm machinery. By building smallholders' skills, cooperatives help them innovate and adapt to changing markets. Cooperatives also offer members the emotional security that many find in being part of a member organization.

In 2001, 15 agribusiness operators, with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development, founded Agrostoc Input Supply Cooperative in Moldova. Its goal was to combine members' purchasing power and give farm stores the ability to deal directly with producers and first-tier distributors.

As a result, store and customer costs went down, profits went up and the stores' inventories expanded. And as a profitable business was established, farmers gained access to the quality and cost-effective supplies they needed to improve their operations.

The cooperative grew to more than 100 members, and sales increased from \$500,000 in 2002 to \$13.5 million in 2010.

Cooperatives also help members negotiate fair

commercial conditions and look for allies with management or marketing experience. In Thailand, the company Swift Co. Ltd. contracted with farmers' groups to grow predetermined types and quantities of fruit. The company removed middlemen by guaranteeing a fixed price for each type of fruit, to be renegotiated annually. It built collection stations in the middle of every growing area so the fruit could be collected fresh every day. Procedures for weighing and grading fruit became transparent.

"Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility," said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Secretary Clinton Honors Aung San Suu Kyi's "Courage and Moral Leadership"

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 18 September 2012

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomed Burmese opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to Washington and affirmed that the United States is committed to standing with the Burmese government and the Burmese people to support the progress they have made toward greater freedom.

Suu Kyi "has represented the struggle for freedom and democracy, for human rights and opportunity, not only in her own country but ... around the world," Clinton said September 18 at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, where Suu Kyi was presented with the Asia Society's Global Vision Award.

Suu Kyi, the chairwoman of Burma's National League for Democracy, was recently elected to her country's Parliament after enduring "years of house arrest and persecution," but her "courage and moral leadership never wavered," Clinton said.

Now, with President Thein Sein and a new government that includes members of Burma's opposition, she is working to drive Burma's recent wave of reforms forward, Clinton said.

"Hundreds of prisoners of conscience have been released over the past year, including some just this week. Opposition political parties have been legalized, and their members have won seats in Parliament. Restrictions on the press and on freedom of assembly have eased," Clinton said.

In addition, new laws are expanding the rights of workers, including allowing labor unions and outlawing forced labor, and the government and some of Burma's ethnic groups have been able to reach fragile cease-fires

after years of armed conflict, she said.

The Obama administration has sent the first U.S. ambassador to Burma since 1990 and has taken steps to ease economic sanctions and to “pave the way for American companies to invest in the country in a way that advances, rather than undermines, continued reforms,” the secretary said.

Much work lies ahead, and the process of reform needs to continue, Clinton said, including the release of the remaining political prisoners, national reconciliation among ethnic and religious groups, strengthening the rule of law and transparency, and ending Burmese military contacts with North Korea.

The United States “is committed to standing with the government and the people of Burma to support this progress that has begun,” she said.

Suu Kyi said the Burmese people are “not yet at the end of our struggle, but we are getting there,” with more hurdles to cross in their long struggle for democracy.

“What we have to do in the future is not just to build democracy in Burma, but to rebuild our nation in a democratic mold. And in this, we look to help from our friends who understand and who appreciate the value of democracy and democratic values,” she said.

The Burmese people “don't need to cling to sanctions,” she said. “Our people need to be responsible for their own destiny ... not rely on external pressure.”

She thanked the United States for standing firmly with Burma’s democratic forces from the beginning of their struggle.

“When people are in a difficult situation, we need friends. We need friends who are strong and who are committed. The United States is committed to democratic values and proved to be a good friend to all of us who struggled for democracy,” Suu Kyi said.

U.S., Partners Make Progress On Asia-Pacific Trade Deal

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 17 September 2012

Washington — The United States and its fellow Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) members made significant progress toward concluding a comprehensive regional trade agreement during the latest round of negotiations, according to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk.

A statement from Kirk’s office said that during the September 6-15 round of talks in Leesburg, Virginia, negotiators from the nine partnership countries

successfully advanced efforts to reach agreement on the texts of all 29 chapters of the deal.

“The teams were pleased with progress made on a wide range of chapters, including market access, customs, rules of origin, telecommunications, government procurement and others,” the statement said. It added that negotiators continue to move forward in developing market-opening commitments to ease the trade of industrial goods, agriculture, textiles, services and investment and government procurement.

“Along with this progress, the nine countries also reported a continued focus on other important issues, from intellectual property rights to labor and environment and other topics that address core issues faced by manufacturers, service providers, farmers, ranchers and workers in the 21st century,” the statement said.

Joining government representatives during the Leesburg round were more than 250 stakeholders representing 93 groups from civil society, business, labor and regional development organizations. The stakeholders spoke one-on-one and in small groups to negotiators during the September 9 Direct Stakeholder Engagement Forum, and many gave presentations on their views regarding key negotiating issues. The United States and its partners have worked to include stakeholders in each round of negotiations in order to gain a broad range of input from the public and develop a stronger agreement.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership aims to enhance trade in the Asia-Pacific in order to create jobs, boost competitiveness, promote economic growth and advance development throughout the region.

The partnership includes Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam. Mexico and Canada have been invited into negotiations and are scheduled to formally join the partnership once current members approve the additions through their own domestic procedures, actions that are expected to occur in early October.

The 14th round of negotiations followed the TPP leaders’ meeting and trade ministers’ forum in Vladivostok, Russia, earlier in September. The next round of talks is scheduled to take place in Auckland, New Zealand, December 3-12.

U.S. Says “Small Minority” Behind Mideast Protests

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 17 September 2012

Washington — Pending the final results of an investigation, the Obama administration believes the attack that killed four American diplomats in Libya on

September 11 grew out of a spontaneous protest in Benghazi that a handful of well-armed extremists were able to exploit and escalate.

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice spoke on several U.S. television talk shows September 16 and condemned the “disgusting and reprehensible” anti-Muslim video that has sparked protests, and said the violence that has accompanied those protests is “a completely unacceptable response” to the film.

Speaking on CNN, Rice said the mobs outside U.S. and other Western facilities in several Muslim-majority countries are a “small minority” of the population, and the Obama administration will continue to stand with the vast majority of people who want freedom and a better future and who understand that the United States supports their long-term aspirations.

“Just as the people of these countries are not going to allow their lives to be hijacked by a dictator, they’re not going to allow an extremist mob to hijack their future and their freedom,” Rice said.

“The fact is ... this is a turbulent time. It’s a time of dramatic change. It’s a change that the United States has backed because we understand that when democracy takes root, when human rights and people’s freedom of expression can be manifested, it may lead to turbulence in the short term, but over the long term, that is in the interest of the United States,” she said.

Rice added that despite the incident in Benghazi that killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other U.S. diplomats, the United States is “extremely popular” in Libya. “The outpouring of sympathy and support for Ambassador Stevens and his colleagues from the government, from people is evidence of that,” she said.

Speaking on ABC, Rice said the expressions of condolence and solidarity are “much more a reflection of sentiment towards the United States than a small handful of heavily armed mobsters.”

She also said the Libyan government has “gone out of its way” to increase security for U.S. diplomats, and that leaders from Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world have “come out and made very plain that there’s no excuse for this violence.”

Rice said the United States will be working with Libyan authorities to bring those responsible for the deaths of the American delegates to justice.

Speaking on CBS, she said an investigation team led by the FBI is en route to the country.

“They’re not on the ground yet, but they have already begun looking at all sorts of evidence of various sorts already available to them and to us. And they will get on the ground and continue the investigation,” she said.

U.S. Labor Dept. Urges Women to Go for the Green

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 14 September 2012

Washington — “Green” jobs are where the money is, and American women are being advised to pursue them.

The Women’s Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor is urging women to break out of “traditionally female occupations” that have historically paid less than jobs held largely by men and pursue well-paying jobs in green industries.

Green jobs can be broadly defined as jobs that restore, protect or conserve the natural environment, and they can be found across a broad range of industries and occupations.

For example, construction carpenter is a green occupation projected to have 325,400 job openings from 2008 to 2018, according to the Department of Labor. Ninety-eight percent of U.S. carpenters are men, the Women’s Bureau notes, and they earned a median wage of \$18.98 an hour in 2009. In contrast, preschool teachers, 98 percent of whom are women, earned just \$11.80 an hour.

But what if working with a hammer, nails and lumber doesn’t appeal to a woman? There are plenty of other types of well-paying green jobs to choose from, and many don’t require university degrees, according to the Women’s Bureau. These include coordinators for recycling programs and auditors who assess the energy efficiency of homes and commercial buildings.

On the upper end of the educational-requirement spectrum is environmental engineer, which is projected to be among the fastest-growing occupations from 2008 to 2018, with an expected 31 percent job growth rate. Environmental engineers, who typically need a bachelor’s degree, marshal skills in engineering, soil science, biology and chemistry to develop solutions to environmental problems. They are involved in efforts to improve recycling, waste disposal, public health, and control of water and air pollution. The median wage for environmental engineers in the United States is \$37.04 an hour or \$77,040 a year, the Department of Labor says.

According to the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, 3.1 million jobs in the United States in 2010 were associated with the production of green goods and services. That represents just 2.4 percent of total employment in 2010. Although that seems like a modest number, the U.S. Department of Commerce, in a study

put out in April 2010, said the green economy is “in a position to grow quickly.”

As the public becomes more aware of the necessity of preserving the environment, consumer demand for green products and services is increasing, the Commerce Department report says. Moreover, high energy prices create financial incentives for firms to develop more energy-efficient products and services. According to the Labor Department, many businesses are adopting a “triple bottom line” philosophy that emphasizes ecological and social values as well as economic gain.

WILL GREEN JOBS HELP THE WORLD’S WOMEN?

The International Labour Office (ILO) at the United Nations is also promoting green jobs. The 21st century, the ILO says, is facing two defining challenges. The first is to avert climate change and the deterioration of national resources that threaten to degrade life for present and future generations. The second is to deliver decent work for the estimated 1.3 billion people living in poverty around the world and provide job opportunities for the 500 million young adults who will be entering the labor market over the next decade.

Impoverished women around the world are especially hard hit by degradation in climate and natural resources because so many are involved in farming, the ILO says. In Africa, for example, women constitute 70 percent to 80 percent of workers in agriculture. Agriculture, still one of the largest employers in the world with 1.3 billion workers, is especially affected by climate change, water use, pollution and deforestation. Increased access to information on the best ways to marshal resources could improve their lives, ILO reports say.

Global efforts to tackle environmental problems have provided green jobs for some 2.3 million people and could provide jobs to some 20 million more by 2030, according to the ILO. How many of these jobs will go to women remains to be seen. In a report presented to the European Parliament's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee in early 2012, the ILO noted that an expanding green economy does not automatically provide more opportunities for women.

According to the ILO report, the obstacles many of the world's women face in getting jobs in the green economy are mostly the same as in the “brown economy”: lack of access to formal education, finances and involvement in decisionmaking in the formal economy. Even so, programs in place to address gender inequality overall will serve to foster gender equality in green industries, the ILO says.

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