

American

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Australia “Critical” to Advancing Trans-Pacific Partnership

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 15 November 2012

Washington — The U.S.-Australia alliance is focused on expanding trade and investment not only between both countries but also across the wider Asia-Pacific region, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

Speaking at Techport Australia in Adelaide November 15, Clinton said that in the modern world “power is increasingly measured and exercised in economic terms,” and that Australia is a “critical partner” in advancing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement.

“This TPP sets the gold standard in trade agreements to open free, transparent, fair trade, the kind of environment that has the rule of law and a level playing field. And when negotiated, this agreement will cover 40 percent of the world's total trade and build in strong protections for workers and the environment,” Clinton said.

Research has shown that respecting workers’ rights brings “positive long-term economic outcomes, better jobs with higher wages and safer working conditions,” she said.

The inclusion of all workers in the formal economy, including those who have been previously left out, will “help build a strong middle class, not only here in Australia or in our country, but across Asia,” she said.

“If we do this right, and that's what we're trying to do, then globalization, which is inevitable, can become a race to the top with rising standards of living and more broadly shared prosperity,” Clinton said.

Thanks to a bilateral free trade agreement, the secretary said, the United States is Australia’s third-largest trading partner and leading investor, with \$136 billion in direct and diverse investments by American companies and more than \$27 billion in U.S. exports to the country.

“It's fair to say that our economies are entwined, and we need to keep upping our game both bilaterally and with partners across the region through agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership,” she said.

Techport, a maritime industrial and military hub, showcases both the U.S.-Australian security relationship and their economic ties, where American defense companies are helping to modernize Australia’s armed forces and Australian defense manufacturers are, in turn, contributing to U.S. defense projects, she said.

“I just saw the turrets that are manufactured and then exported to the United States for us to be using in our

defense. We're also working with you and getting your help in our littoral combat ships. So this is a mutual partnership where we both look out for each other, and we both benefit,” Clinton said.

Beyond security and economic ties, the secretary said, the U.S.-Australia alliance is also “indispensable for our shared values.”

Australia is deepening its ties with its neighbors, and Clinton said those who say the country needs to choose between its emerging links with countries like China and its long-standing ties to the United States are offering “a false choice” that can lead only to negative results.

“We support Australia having strong, multifaceted ties with every nation in the Asia-Pacific, indeed in the world, including China just as we seek the same. And I have said repeatedly the Pacific is big enough for all of us,” she said.

U.S. Aid for Syria's Displaced Approaches \$200 Million

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 14 November 2012

Washington — The United States is providing almost \$200 million in emergency aid to address the humanitarian crisis stemming from the ongoing conflict in Syria.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced a \$30 million boost in assistance November 14, only days after a November 9 U.S. commitment for additional aid made during the Syrian Humanitarian Forum held in Geneva the week of November 4.

Flowing through the World Food Programme (WFP), U.S. funds are helping to provide food aid to 1.5 million people in Syria and refugees who have fled to neighboring countries to escape the violence that began in March 2011.

State Department documents indicate that the United States is the largest donor of food aid through WFP, but other governments and humanitarian organizations have also mobilized considerable resources to help displaced Syrians and Syrians who remain in the country, despite air attacks, shelling and street battles.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) now estimates that a total of 2.5 million Syrians need assistance, including those who have fled their homeland and those who remain.

In Turkey, 14 refugee camps now shelter more than 120,000 Syrians who have crossed the border to escape violence. The Turkish government set up the camps over a matter of weeks, and they were filled in days. Still more

camps are needed, according to UNHCR, which provided tents and camp infrastructure.

Other nations sharing borders with Syria are also providing shelter to refugees. Jordan received more than 4,000 new arrivals the week of November 4, pushing the total there to some 116,000, UNHCR says. More than 70 percent of those are outside camps.

The number of Syrian refugees in Iraq is now more than 50,000, including more than 42,000 in the Kurdistan region and thousands more in other governorates to the south.

U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria Radhouane Nouicer described the desperate plight of people who remain in the country. "Ordinary people are under siege, trapped, and aid agencies are often unable to reach them," he told donors, noting that "the Syrian people are probably the most effective aid organization, opening their homes to the displaced."

UNHCR has been able to get shipments of family aid packages distributed to some 295,000 people inside Syria, spokeswoman Melissa Fleming said at a Geneva briefing November 13. The emergency packages contain nonfood supplies such as blankets, clothing, cooking kits and jerry cans. These are supplies that will help meet basic needs during the coming winter.

"Unfortunately, recent deliveries have been very difficult," Fleming continued. "Last week, humanitarian operations were disrupted on at least two days in Damascus because of insecurity. Similar difficulties were experienced by staff working in Aleppo, and we are temporarily withdrawing staff from northeastern Hassakeh governorate," Fleming told journalists.

Insecurity over the past few weeks has also resulted in loss of aid supplies, including some 13,000 blankets destroyed in a Syrian Arab Red Crescent warehouse in Aleppo that was apparently hit by a shell. In addition, a truck carrying 600 blankets was hijacked on its way to Adra, outside Damascus.

Nevertheless, progress has been made, Fleming said, with mattresses, hygiene kits, education materials and cash assistance successfully delivered early in the week of November 11.

Humanitarian agencies estimate that 4 million people could need humanitarian assistance as a result of Syria's violence by early 2013.

The CIA World Factbook reports that the ongoing conflict has left a combined death toll of 30,000 through October, including Syrian government forces, opposition forces

and civilians.

California Puts a Price on Carbon

By Mary-Katherine Ream | Staff Writer |
14 November 2012

Washington — California is holding its first carbon emissions permit auction November 14. The auction is a critical component of the state's cap-and-trade program, a market-based initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by creating incentives for companies to limit their pollution.

"California's cap-and-trade program is the strongest and boldest move in the United States to protect public health and the environment from the clear and present danger of climate change," said Fred Krupp, president of the Environmental Defense Fund, an environmental advocacy organization that helped sponsor and pass the bill.

As part of the 2006 Global Warming Solutions Act — the state's broader policy to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions — the cap-and-trade program applies market mechanisms to reward companies for curtailing their pollution.

The state first establishes a limit, or "cap," on the amount of greenhouse gas companies can emit. Currently, the limit applies to 350 companies, including electric utilities, manufacturers, oil refineries and other major emitters.

To stay within this limit, companies must either cut their emission levels or obtain "allowances," a permit for every additional ton of greenhouse gas emitted. Companies can purchase these allowances at auction four times a year. Companies who stay below the cap can sell, or "trade," their allowances to other companies for a profit.

Incorporating best practices from other cap-and-trade systems in the United States and Europe, California's system provides free initial allowances to ease the transition, allows companies to store allowances for future use, and establishes an allowance reserve to keep the market price stable.

Each year, both the permissible level of emissions and the number of allowances drop to generate a gradual, but forceful, push toward substantially reduced emissions.

The cap-and-trade program is one of 70 measures included in the state's 2006 law aimed at cutting California's greenhouse emissions back to 1990 levels by 2020 — a 15 percent reduction.

But a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is not the program's only benefit. The state expects to generate at least \$1 billion from allowance auctions. The

revenue must be invested in ways that further the law's goals, however, such as in energy efficiency, natural resource conservation and renewable energy. A percentage of the proceeds must also benefit disadvantaged communities.

Not everyone is happy with the new program. The California Chamber of Commerce filed a lawsuit November 13 alleging the state had exceeded its authority by creating a revenue-generating program. Companies that operate California's 13 oil refineries are also opposed to the program, saying it could lead to the closure of more than half of their facilities.

Given the controversy, many eyes are on California. As it implements what has been called the most ambitious effort to control climate change, the state is serving as a model for the country.

"California's innovative policies can lead the way for the nationwide effort needed to curb emissions and reduce climate impacts across the globe," Krupp said.

Secretary Clinton Says Australia Is Gateway to Vibrant Trade, Energy Routes

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
13 November 2012

Washington — Australia is at a strategic juncture linking two great oceans — the Pacific and the Indian — that provide a gateway to the vibrant trade and energy routes that flow to the entire world, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

"It is no surprise that foreign investment is soaring, including more than \$100 billion from the United States, because, increasingly, these waters are at the heart of the global economy and a key focus of America's expanding engagement in the region, what we sometimes call our pivot to Asia," Clinton told a forum November 13 at the launch of the Perth USAsia Centre at the University of Western Australia.

Clinton, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Army General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, are in Perth to attend the annual Australia-United States Ministerial meeting with Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr and Australian Defense Minister Stephen Smith. While in Perth, Clinton also will meet with Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Saying that the United States has never actually left the Asia-Pacific region, Clinton told the university forum that the United States remains a Pacific power and is "here to stay." How the United States thinks about the Asia-Pacific and the Indo-Pacific regions is going to be crucial to the

future of Australia and the United States, she added.

The United States had made it a strategic priority to support India's Look East policy and to encourage New Delhi to play a larger role in Asian institutions and affairs, Clinton said. Clinton also said that the United States welcomes joint Australian-Indian naval exercises in the future and is eager to work together with the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, which Australia will chair in 2013. The United States has joined as a dialogue partner.

At the Australia-United States Ministerial meeting, the two nations will review implementation of the military agreements that Gillard and President Obama reached a year ago. Those agreements included a regular rotational deployment of U.S. Marines in Darwin and work toward improving the interoperability of the two navies, Clinton said.

"These steps will help both countries safeguard commerce and respond to natural disasters in the sea lanes connecting to Indian and Pacific Oceans," she added.

Clinton told the university forum that the opening of the Perth USAsia Centre gives added impetus to exploring how the United States and Australia can broaden and deepen commercial, cultural and personal relationships.

The United States also supports and encourages the peaceful rise of China and supports China's efforts to become a responsible stakeholder in the international community, Clinton told the forum. She added that the United States hopes "to see gradual but consistent opening up of a Chinese society and political system that will more closely give the Chinese people the opportunities that we in the United States and Australia are lucky to take for granted."

Clinton said the United States also enjoys strong relationships with Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines, and growing relations with Indonesia.

Clinton will next go to Adelaide, Australia, where she will meet with Australian business leaders as well as visit Techport Australia, Australia's largest and most advanced shipbuilding facility.

U.S. Elected to Another Term on U.N. Human Rights Council

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 13 November 2012

Washington — The United States will serve a second three-year term on the U.N. Human Rights Council, elected by the members of the U.N. General Assembly in a November 12 vote.

The council is a 47-nation panel in the U.N. system responsible for strengthening and promoting human rights and for decrying violations when they occur.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomed the re-election. "We pledge to continue to work closely with the international community to address urgent and serious human rights concerns worldwide and to strengthen the council," she said.

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice said she also looks forward to a sustained U.S. presence on the council. The vote, she said, "affirms that active U.S. leadership in the Human Rights Council and throughout the United Nations system will continue to pay real dividends for Americans and for the rest of the world."

The U.N. General Assembly created the Human Rights Council in 2006 to replace a similar body, the Commission on Human Rights, which was widely denounced for allowing the membership of nations with poor human rights records. Because of that history, the United States held back from membership in its first years, but sought election to the panel early in the Obama administration.

Rice said the United States has been proud to be part of "important progress" the council has made, specifically citing its position of condemning the atrocities in Syria and investigating alleged violations of international human rights law in Libya. She also praised the council's defense of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, and the "progressive positions on defamation of religion."

Rice also underscored what she characterized as "persistent shortcomings" of the council, notably "the council's excessive and unbalanced focus on Israel."

Clinton's statement noted the council's "disproportionate and biased focus on Israel."

The other states elected to the council for three-year terms are Argentina, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Ethiopia, Gabon, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Montenegro, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela. Members must be elected by an absolute majority of 97 votes among the 193-member General Assembly.

Council seats are allocated among five regions to maintain an equitable geographical distribution. The council seats are distributed as follows: Africa, 13; Asia, 13; Eastern Europe, 6; Latin America and the Caribbean, 8; and Western Europe, the United States and others, 7.

Human rights groups charge that some of the new

members have a tarnished record on human rights. Asked about those allegations during an appearance before reporters at the United Nations November 12, Rice said the practice of electing members from a competitive pool of states helps "in terms of ensuring that those worst abusers of human rights are not elected to the council."

Rice also pointed out that the United States continues its own global activities to monitor human rights, country by country, and publishes those findings and concerns annually. The latest edition is the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011, released in May 2012.

A fact sheet issued by the State Department November 12 provides a longer account of council accomplishments over the last three years, including support of a special rapporteur who is speaking out to defend citizens who have suffered human rights violations by the Iranian government, and the creation of an independent expert to pursue the commission of human rights violations in Côte d'Ivoire.

The 22nd regular session of the Human Rights Council will be held from February 25 to March 22, 2013, in Geneva.

President Obama to Make Historic Visit to Burma, Cambodia, Thailand

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
09 November 2012

Washington — President Obama will make historic visits to Burma, Cambodia and Thailand in November to underscore the U.S. reorientation and commitment to the Asia-Pacific region, and to strengthen regional security and economic relations.

The White House said that during the president's "interactions in the region he will discuss a broad range of issues including economic prosperity and job creation through increased trade and partnerships, energy and security cooperation, human rights, shared values and other issues of regional and global concern." The three-nation trip is November 17-20.

No American president has ever visited Burma or Cambodia. Obama will be only the fifth U.S. president to visit Thailand, which is one of the oldest U.S. allies in East Asia.

In Thailand, Obama will mark the 180th anniversary of U.S.-Thai diplomatic relations during meetings with Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, according to White House press secretary Jay Carney. Obama will "reaffirm the strength of our alliance," Carney said in a prepared statement.

President George W. Bush visited Thailand in 2003 and again in 2008, and Bill Clinton visited in 1996, Richard Nixon in 1969, and Lyndon Johnson in 1966 and again in 1967, according to the State Department's Office of the Historian.

"In Burma, the president will meet with President Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi and speak to civil society to encourage Burma's ongoing democratic transition," Carney said.

Sein became president in 2011. Aung San Suu Kyi, a member of Burma's parliament, previously met with Obama in September at the White House. Both Obama and Suu Kyi are recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In December 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton became the first secretary of state to visit Burma in 56 years. Burma has been transitioning to democracy from nearly five decades of military rule.

While in Cambodia, Obama will attend the 21st annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Phnom Penh and the seventh annual East Asia Summit.

At the same time, Clinton will travel to Perth and Adelaide, Australia; Singapore; Bangkok; Rangoon, Burma; and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, November 11-20, the State Department said November 9.

On November 11, Clinton travels to Perth to join U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr and Australian Defense Minister Stephen Smith for the annual Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) to discuss security cooperation and other regional and global issues, the State Department said.

In Perth, Clinton will meet with Prime Minister Julia Gillard. She will also visit the new Western Australia-United States & Asia Centre. Clinton will then travel to Adelaide and will meet with Australian business leaders as well as visit Techport Australia, Australia's largest and most advanced shipbuilding facility.

Clinton visits Singapore November 16-17 to meet with senior government officials, including Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Foreign Minister Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam, on a wide range of issues, the State Department said.

On November 17, Clinton travels to Bangkok, where she will join Obama and his delegation on November 18 for meetings with Prime Minister Yingluck and other senior Thai officials "to underscore our strong alliance and discuss shared priorities and regional issues in advance of the ASEAN East Asia Summit," the department statement

said.

Clinton accompanies Obama to Burma on November 19, and joins his meetings with Sein and Suu Kyi. Clinton will also accompany the president on his travel to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to attend the U.S.-ASEAN Leaders Meeting and the East Asia Summit, the State Department said.

The State Department also announced that Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro will travel to Australia, New Zealand and China November 9-16.

Secretary Clinton Names Three New U.S. Science Envoys

09 November 2012

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has announced the appointment of three new science envoys: Bernard Amadei, Susan Hockfield and Barbara Schaal.

In remarks at a State Department event November 8 on wildlife trafficking and conservation, Clinton said, "Building scientific partnerships is an important tool in addressing such global challenges."

Amadei holds the Mortenson Endowed Chair in Global Engineering and is a professor of civil engineering at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Having earned his doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley, his main research and teaching interests have focused on rock mechanics and engineering geology. Amadei is the founding president of Engineers Without Borders and is an elected member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering.

Hockfield served recently as president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she remains on the neuroscience faculty. She also serves as the Marie Curie Visiting Professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. She earned her doctorate at the Georgetown University School of Medicine and has focused her research on brain development and a specific form of brain cancer. Hockfield has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Schaal earned her doctorate in biology from Yale University and is the Mary-Dell Chilton Distinguished Professor at Washington University in St. Louis in the Department of Biology. She is recognized for her work in evolutionary biology, particularly for studies that use DNA sequences to understand evolutionary biology. She holds the distinction of being the first woman elected to the vice presidency of the National Academy of Sciences and is a member of the President's Council of Advisors on

Science and Technology.

The scientists will seek to deepen existing ties, foster new relationships with foreign counterparts and discuss potential areas of collaboration that will help address global challenges and realize shared goals, the State Department said in a November 8 press release. The science envoys travel in their capacity as private citizens and advise the White House, the State Department and the U.S. scientific community about the insights they gain from their travels and interactions. The Science Envoy program demonstrates the United States' continued commitment to science, technology and innovation as tools of diplomacy.

The three scientists are the third cohort of science envoys since the program's inception in 2009. Previous envoys have visited 19 countries, including Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.

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