

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

November 30, 2012

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Secretary Clinton Praises Strength of U.S.-European Relations

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

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States and its European partners are more closely aligned on a wide range of global security and economic issues than ever before.

“What we have achieved in the last four years is a record we must keep building on because there are even more consequential and, in many ways, more difficult challenges that lie ahead,” Clinton said during a November 29 speech on U.S.-European relations at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based public policy research center.

Clinton said, during a wide-ranging discussion, that she will make her 38th trip to Europe in the coming week to meet with senior Czech officials in Prague to discuss energy independence and to promote human rights and democracy. She also plans to meet with NATO allies in Brussels to discuss a broad range of security issues.

The secretary also will meet with European Union officials in Brussels to discuss energy security. She then travels to Dublin to join colleagues from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to review progress in advancing security, democracy and human rights across Europe and Eurasia.

Clinton said the strength of U.S.-European relations over the last four years is reflected in cooperative efforts to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan, end the crisis in Libya, prevent Iran’s nuclear weapons development program and bolster joint strategic defenses.

The trans-Atlantic partnership, Clinton said, has reached a critical moment where decisions will have to be made about shared economic interests and how well they can thrive together in the coming years. “Perhaps the most important questions in the years ahead will be whether we invest as much energy into our economic relationship as we have put into our security relationship,” she said.

Clinton told the Brookings conference that a comprehensive U.S.-European Union trade agreement would improve prosperity and security on both sides of the Atlantic. “If we work at it, and if we get this right, an agreement that opens markets and liberalizes trade would shore up our global competitiveness for the next century, creating jobs and generating hundreds of billions of dollars for our economies,” she said.

She acknowledged that there is considerable work to do,

including addressing long-standing barriers to trade and market access. U.S. trade with Europe totaled more than \$485 billion in goods in the first nine months of 2012, and U.S. exports of goods to Europe through September totaled \$200 billion, according to the U.S. Commerce Department.

A trade working group led by U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht has been studying a trade proposal for the past year and are expected to make a formal recommendation to launch trade negotiations in a report to be released in December 2012 or January 2013, according to news reports.

But to strengthen economic ties between the United States and Europe requires both sides to build stronger economic foundations at home, Clinton said. For the United States, it means making tough choices, and investing in greater competitiveness to set a platform for stronger economic growth, she said. For Europe, Clinton encouraged European leaders to “move toward policies that promote credible and sustainable growth and create jobs.”

U.S. Economy Continues Recovery with 13 Quarters of GDP Growth

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 29 November 2012

Washington — The U.S. economy expanded at an annual rate of 2.7 percent from July to September, according to a new report from the Commerce Department.

The latest figures from the department’s Bureau of Economic Analysis revised third-quarter growth up 0.7 percent from the 2.0 percent found in its advance estimate issued in October. The November 29 release, based on more complete source data than was available for the previous estimate, showed gross domestic product (GDP) up significantly from 1.3 percent growth in the second quarter.

The report, which calculates both monthly and quarterly the output of goods and services produced by the United States, attributed third-quarter gains to several sectors.

“The increase in real GDP in the third quarter primarily reflected positive contributions from personal consumption expenditures, private inventory investment, federal government spending, residential fixed investment and exports,” the report said.

It added that this growth was partly offset by negative contributions from nonresidential fixed investment and state and local government spending. Imports, which are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, increased slightly.

The report said the acceleration in GDP growth in the

third quarter largely reflected upturns in private inventory investment and in federal government spending, a deceleration in imports, an acceleration in residential fixed investment and a smaller decrease in state and local government spending. It showed this acceleration was partly offset by a downturn in nonresidential fixed investment and deceleration in exports and personal consumption expenditures.

The third quarter was the 13th consecutive quarter of economic growth.

U.S. economic activity significantly affects the economies of other nations. The U.S. GDP stood at \$15 trillion in 2011. Measured by purchasing power parity exchange rates (equalizing what people can buy with different currencies), that came to about 1.3 times the size of the second largest economy, that of China (whose population is more than four times that of the United States) and more than three times the GDP of third-ranked Japan. With just 4.5 percent of the world's population, the United States was responsible for 19 percent of total economic output.

The Commerce Department will release its next revision of third-quarter growth December 20.

U.S. Issues Road Map to an AIDS-Free Generation

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 29 November 2012

Washington — U.S. officials battling HIV/AIDS have a goal to bring an AIDS-free generation into the world. When that may happen remains unknown, but on November 29 Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton laid out a five-point plan on how to get there.

"HIV may well be with us into the future," said Clinton, to an audience gathered at State Department headquarters, "but the disease it causes need not be."

A widening distribution of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) that protect HIV-infected persons from developing full-blown AIDS makes an AIDS-free generation an achievable goal. An international campaign to increase accessibility to ARVs has been building for the last decade, and the lifesaving medicines now reach 8 million people, according to a survey released by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) November 20.

While 34 million people are still infected with the virus worldwide, an encouraging sign that the coordinated campaign has slowed the disease comes in UNAIDS statistics on new infections. They have plunged by dramatic percentages in many nations: down 58 percent in Malawi, 68 percent in Botswana and a remarkable 73 percent decline in new infections in Namibia.

"As we drive down the number of new infections," Clinton explained, "and drive up the number of people on treatment, eventually we will be able to treat more people than become infected every year. That will be the tipping point, and AIDS-free generation will be in our sight."

In a Washington speech a year ago, Clinton introduced the aspiration for an AIDS-free generation. In an 2012 announcement timed in recognition of World AIDS Day December 1, the secretary of state outlined a strategy to lead international efforts toward that goal.

UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé, who participated in the event, said the blueprint shows the world how the United States will support other countries "to start the endgame" of the epidemic.

First, treatment programs will continue to expand, according to the blueprint. Shortly after Clinton explained the plan November 29, President Obama released new figures indicating that U.S. investments now support treatment for 5 million people with AIDS, a gain of 3.3 million since 2008.

"As I pledged last year, we are on track to treat 6 million people by the end of 2013," Obama said in a statement issued by the White House.

The second step on a road to an AIDS-free generation, Clinton said, is, "We have to go where the virus is." Efforts to contain the pandemic must be extended to marginalized populations, which in many cases worldwide have been ignored by government officials or health care providers. These include intravenous drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men.

"When discrimination, stigma and other factors drive these groups into the shadows, the epidemic becomes that much harder to fight," Clinton said.

Efforts going forward must also focus more deliberately on women and girls, Clinton said, because their reduced social status in many countries makes them more vulnerable to infection and less able to protect themselves.

Cost-effectiveness is another important milestone toward achievement of an AIDS-free generation, and Clinton said the United States will press to extract full value from its investments in containing the pandemic.

Sidibé said, "Getting more out of every dollar spent will save more lives."

Promotion and commitment are also important, and the United States will rely on partner nations to exercise leadership in identifying their greatest problems in attempting to combat the disease. At the same time,

Clinton said, donor nations must fulfill commitments they make to provide assistance in the international campaign.

Finally, the scientific pursuit of medications and techniques to ease suffering for patients and advance treatments that providers can offer must continue full force, Clinton said.

"It is science that has brought us to this point," Clinton said. "It is science that will allow us to finish this job."

Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma represented the African Union (AU) Commission at the State Department event. A medical doctor and a former South African minister of health, Dlamini-Zuma said the AU will work with member nations to ensure they stay focused on delivering prevention and treatment services to their populations without discrimination or stigma.

The focus of the event was on a proscribed and focused plan to overcome the epidemic, but between the lines Dlamini-Zuma also read a larger message. The United States, other donor nations and the new blueprint demonstrate that humanity is "Indivisible," she said.

"What bothers a child and a woman in one corner of the world is felt by the women and children and men of this country," said Dlamini-Zuma. She also cited the strength and will of persons living with HIV who have shown their will to survive and to help other people.

The blueprint has been months in the making, and Clinton thanked the professionals of the AIDS community for their contributions to the plan and dedication to the cause.

USAID to Launch Higher Education Partnerships in Burma

28 November 2012

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is creating Higher Education Partnerships to support the U.S. commitment to Burma, furthering President Obama's call to "extend a hand" to Burma in its progress toward democracy.

USAID will build on its relationships with the U.S. university community and the private sector to mobilize institutional assets, funding, technology, innovations, expertise and training. These relationships will advance democratic rights, transparent governance, economic growth, food security, and the health and livelihoods of the people of Burma, USAID said in a November 27 press release.

During his visit to Burma on November 19, Obama announced the U.S.-Burma Partnership for Democracy,

Peace and Prosperity, a joint U.S.-Burma framework to lay the groundwork for a peaceful and prosperous future for Burma.

"We have been excited to see a growing interest among the U.S. higher education community to support democratic development in Burma," said Nisha Biswal, USAID's assistant administrator for Asia. "We look forward to collaborating with American universities and businesses in partnership with Burma's once-venerable universities to strengthen their capacity and advance social and economic development in the country."

Under the new Higher Education Partnerships, USAID seeks concept papers from a wide range of U.S. organizations with a strong interest in higher education and development in Burma. The agency expects to turn those concepts into education partnerships in Burma.

Secretary Clinton Leads Global Effort to Support Women in Business

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 28 November 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomed leaders from around the world to Washington for the second International Council on Women's Business Leadership meeting November 27.

In remarks during the meeting in the State Department's Benjamin Franklin Room, the secretary said the group is discussing "new ideas and concrete initiatives that will help more women take a leading role in business, move up the echelons of government and broaden the reach of civil society groups."

The ultimate goal of the council, Clinton said, is to develop a platform for putting forth policy recommendations, programs and activities that empower women and promote gender equality.

"We're looking at leadership and leadership development and working together to make sure that any woman who wishes to do so will have the opportunity to contribute to the economy and society where she lives," the secretary said.

The council, which held its inaugural meeting in January, is scheduled to convene at least once per year. Subcommittees and working groups meet throughout the year to address a host of specific challenges.

The council serves the U.S. government in an advisory capacity on major issues in international business and economic policy, including the effective integration of business interests and women's economic empowerment into foreign policy, the role and limits of international economic institutions from a gender-specific perspective,

and the State Department's role in promoting the role of women in a competitive global economy.

Clinton acts as the council's chairwoman. Serving as council vice chairs are Cherie Blair, founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, and Indra Nooyi, chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo Inc.

Council membership consists of representatives from around the world who are leaders in public and private-sector organizations and have an interest in the role of women in international business, economic policy development and global economic growth.

Kimberley Process Meeting May Redefine "Conflict Diamonds"

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 27 November 2012

Washington – Participants in an international group that certifies that rough-cut diamonds are free from conflict are expected to update the definition of "conflict diamond" during the group's four-day annual meeting in Washington.

Those participating in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme plenary meeting November 27–30 at the State Department also will decide on other actions to ensure that legitimate trade in diamonds continues, said Gillian Milovanovic, who represents the United States as the 2012 chair of the process. This is the first time the United States has served as chair.

"We need to do everything in our power to keep the [Kimberley Process] relevant and effective so that 'diamond' remains synonymous with love and commitment," Milovanovic said.

The Kimberley Process, or KP, was formed in 2003 when African diamond producers met in Kimberley, South Africa, to discuss ways to stop the trade in conflict diamonds. The process is open to countries willing to adopt legislation and institutions to certify that rough diamonds have not been associated with conflict and to prevent diamonds involved in conflict from entering legitimate trade. Representatives of industry and civil society serve as observers to the KP. Unlike the case in some international efforts, changes to the Kimberley Process must be adopted by consensus.

As of August 2012, the KP has 51 participants representing 77 countries. (The European Union and its member states count as a single participant.) Nearly all of the global production of rough diamonds comes from KP members.

Participants can only legally trade with other participants who have met the minimum requirements of the scheme.

International shipments of rough diamonds must be accompanied by a KP certificate guaranteeing that they are conflict-free.

Under the current definition, a "conflict diamond" is a rough diamond used by a rebel movement or its allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining a legitimate government.

In opening the meeting, Milovanovic cited progress made by the KP in 2012, beginning with a focus on the implementation and enforcement of legitimate diamond trade.

During 2012 the KP standardized a system of sharing with KP participants and the World Customs Organization fraudulent certificates that claimed a diamond was conflict-free. It also arranged for the World Customs Organization and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to hold a daylong seminar for customs officials during the plenary meeting.

The diamond industry also is working to firm up legitimate trade in diamonds, Jose Fernandez, U.S. assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs, said at the start of the meeting. "Industry is aware of the danger that conflict diamonds present and is taking action in its own way in order to complement the Kimberley Process," he said, citing the Responsible Jewelry Council, which has set up a voluntary chain-of-custody certification system covering ethical and environmental practices that "extends from the mine site to the family-owned retail boutique to the Fortune 500 megastore."

Milovanovic said the Kimberley Process gained significant financial support in 2012 from the World Diamond Center in Antwerp that allowed it to expand its website, which enhanced its transparency and communications with members, the media and the public. It added a development and assistance component to the site to match members requesting technical assistance with members able to provide the expertise, she said.

The KP also started a monthly technical assistance newsletter to expand the sharing of technical expertise. It worked with the U.S. Geological Survey to develop a tool kit for stakeholders such as diamond cutters and polishers to ensure that artisanal mining sites are not producing diamonds associated with violence, Milovanovic said.

"Integrating development into diamond production by artisanal and alluvial producers reduces the potential for conflict and has the possibility of improving lives for those who are at the very beginning of the supply chain," she said.

The KP expanded during 2012, adding Cameroon as a participant in August, she noted. In addition, Panama and Kazakhstan have hosted visits by KP experts as a step toward possible admission, Cambodia submitted required documentation and will be discussed at the plenary meeting, and Mali and Kenya are expected to join the KP within the near future, Milovanovic said.

“The KP’s actions affect the livelihoods of millions of people around the world,” Milovanovic said. “We need to do everything in our power to keep the KP relevant and effective so that ‘diamond’ remains synonymous with love and commitment. A robust diamond market continues to help millions of people pursue a better quality of life.”

Talks on Global Climate Change Open in Doha, Qatar

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 27 November 2012

Washington – The world’s top decisionmakers on climate are meeting in Doha, Qatar, over the next two weeks for the U.N. Climate Change Conference. The 18th Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework on Climate Change is expected to focus on strategies for accelerating actions to reduce greenhouse gases and to inhibit the increase of global temperatures.

Almost 200 governments are parties to the U.N. Framework Convention, which produced the 1997 Kyoto Protocol binding highly industrialized countries to greenhouse gas reductions. The United States is a party to the convention, but has not ratified the protocol out of concern that government-imposed emission reductions would act as a drag on the economy.

The United States still has remained active in the international movement to prevent severe climate change and has taken assertive action both domestically and internationally. The United States and leaders of other developed nations reached an accord in 2009 committing almost \$30 billion to help developing nations adapt to climate change and lessen its impact.

The World Bank reported research earlier this month that predicts the globe will warm by 4 degrees Celsius by the end of the century without action to forestall current trends. The research predicts “cataclysmic events” if that level of warming occurs, including inundation of low-lying, populated areas; disruptions in agricultural production and increases in disease.

The report, *Turn Down the Heat*, suggests that those adverse events will not occur if warming is capped at 2 degrees Celsius.

Developing nations are expected to face the most dire consequences, so industrialized nations made the 2009

commitment to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. “The United States has substantially increased its support to developing countries to address climate change” through the “fast-start finance” campaign, according to a November update from the State Department.

The United States has provided \$7.5 billion in assistance since the 2009 commitment to achieve “significant progress in several areas”:

- Increased support for clean energy financing.
- Increased contributions to multilateral climate funds.
- Programs launched to create initiatives for clean energy investments in developing nations.

The Clean Technology Fund is one such program, providing incentives for clean energy investments, such as renewable energy sources and increased efficiency in important sectors such as transport and agriculture. This effort has helped bring more solar power to the Middle East and North Africa and wind power to South Africa.

The United States also supports the multilateral UN-REDD program, devoted to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. The program works to help countries strengthen governance of forests and reduce the incentives that drive deforestation.

Deforestation through fires, destructive logging and conversion to farmland accounts for nearly 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, more than the entire global transportation sector, according to UN-REDD statistics.

Agricultural Development Gets Doubled U.S. Investment

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 26 November 2012

Washington – Through the Feed the Future initiative, U.S. government research investments in global food security more than doubled from \$50 million in 2008 to \$120 million in 2011, according a report released in October.

In addition, the 3-year-old Feed the Future has reached close to 9 million children through nutrition programs, helped nearly 2 million farmers adopt improved technologies and spurred private-sector partnerships in agriculture. It aims to reduce poverty and stunting in children under age 5 by 20 percent in its 19 focus countries by 2014, states the report *Boosting Harvests, Fighting Poverty* (PDF, 4MB), from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the lead agency for the initiative.

President Obama established Feed the Future in 2009 following a pledge of \$3.5 billion over three years to help

poor countries fight hunger through agricultural development. The initiative's focus countries were selected based on their level of need, their opportunity for partnerships and regional cooperation, their potential for agricultural growth, and their agricultural resources. Twelve of the countries are in Africa, four are in Asia, and three are in the Western Hemisphere.

The report shows increases in 2012 over 2011 in the number of rural households that benefited directly from U.S. support for agricultural development and in the number of people and organizations that applied new technology or management practices after receiving U.S. assistance. The value of agricultural or rural loans also increased, the report says.

The report states that by 2014, as many as 7 million children and women can improve their nutritional status as a result of U.S. investments in food security and coordination with other donors.

RESEARCH PARTNERS

The Feed the Future research strategy was jointly developed by USAID and the U.S. Department of Agriculture with experts from the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, which includes U.S. universities that specialize in agriculture.

The strategy has re-energized partnerships between U.S. universities and research institutes in the focus countries. For instance, a partnership between the University of California-Riverside and Burkina Faso's Environmental and Agricultural Research Institute developed drought-resistant cowpeas with the potential to increase yields of the crop in sub-Saharan Africa tenfold.

In another partnership, the University of Oregon is helping researchers in Cambodia and Vietnam develop an aquaculture management program to protect small fish in the Mekong River, a source of protein for people in the region.

The University of Florida and Michigan State University are working with the Brazilian Cooperation Agency and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Agency to help improve agricultural growth and nutrition in Mozambique.

PRIORITIZING WOMEN FARMERS

Another Feed the Future priority is promoting investments that empower women farmers. For example, it works to increase women's land rights in Tanzania and trains women to grow crops such as mangoes and cacao that can generate income and reduce hillside erosion in Haiti.

In February Feed the Future joined with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to launch the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. The index is the first tool to measure women's growing role in decisionmaking about farm production, their ownership of land, their leadership in their communities and their control of their incomes.

GOAL FOR 2022

In May 2012, the industrialized nations of the Group of 8, along with African countries and private-sector partners, launched the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition to lift 50 million people out of poverty in Africa by 2022 through inclusive and sustained agricultural growth. The private sector has committed \$3 billion to the new alliance.

"The whole purpose of development is to create the conditions where assistance is no longer needed, where people have the dignity and the pride of being self-sufficient," President Obama said at the Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security in Washington on May 18.

Shopping Online? Beware of Counterfeits and Criminals

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 26 November 2012

Washington — Shoppers around the world are making online purchases in increasing numbers, but buyers should beware of the corresponding increase in online criminals trying to take advantage of them.

For the first time, U.S. and European law enforcement agencies have partnered to coordinate the seizures of websites selling counterfeit and falsely labeled goods to the public, said John Morton, the director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Speaking in Washington November 26 on "Cyber Monday," when online shopping traditionally peaks in the United States, Morton warned that criminals are using the Internet to "defraud consumers on a grand scale," with many varieties of illegally produced counterfeit goods being presented as genuine on bogus websites.

These websites have sold "brand name" products to unsuspecting consumers, including clothes, shoes, jewelry, software, medicine, baby carriers and car safety air bags. In the process, they have not only defrauded the companies that produce the authentic goods by infringing on their intellectual property rights, but they have also cheated customers and potentially endangered them with substandard products, Morton said.

For the first time, ICE and Europol have partnered to

coordinate seizures of counterfeit websites operating in the United States and Europe. Morton reported that their operations have led to the seizure of 132 websites on both sides of the Atlantic in 2012.

The ICE director said the problem is a global one that affects everyone.

When intellectual property rights are violated, "jobs are lost, businesses are stolen and ultimately consumers are cheated," he said. Counterfeiters are only concerned with making money, and do not pay workers health care or pensions, nor do they pay taxes, he said.

Morton advised online shoppers to research the suppliers and sellers of products they are interested in, and to trust their instincts.

"You know what you're looking for. You know the product. You know when a site is likely legitimate. This is the best line of defense for you, so don't reason away your intuition," he said.

"If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is," he said.

Trouble signs include misspellings on the website, anonymous sellers and return addresses that appear suspicious, such as those located in a country where the legitimate company does not manufacture or purchase its products, he said.

"Literally anything that you can imagine these days is being counterfeited and sold," and it's a "very serious problem," Morton said.

"When people try to reduce it simply to the question of whether or not a teenager is downloading something off the Internet, that completely misses the mark. This is about counterfeit cancer medicine, counterfeit health care products. It's serious business," he said.

Morton said the United States would like to expand its coordinated action with more major U.S. law enforcement partners around the world, working through the World Customs Organization in Brussels.

"It's just good law enforcement, and counterfeiting and piracy isn't a United States problem. It affects us greatly, but it certainly affects Europe and Asia and Central and South America just as much," he said.

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