

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

*A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy*

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January 18, 2013

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## U.S. Supports French and ECOWAS Intervention in Mali

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 17 January 2013

Washington – The United States supports military action by France and the 15-nation Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to take back northern Mali from armed Islamist rebels.

“We support what the French are doing,” said a senior State Department official, who asked not to be identified, January 16. “Their reasons for doing so are clear. It was to stop what appeared to be a major offensive by the rebels to move into the southern part of the country.”

“If the rebels had been successful in their efforts, it might have meant a collapse of the Malian government and a larger control of the Malian territory by Al-Qaida in the Maghreb and rebels and Islamists.”

The official said French forces have gone in at the request of the Malian government and ECOWAS and in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2085.

“This is primarily an African problem which has regional and international dimensions,” the official said. “We believe it’s important that the Africans themselves maintain a leadership role in recognition of where the problem is and how it could impact them most directly.”

The United States is prepared to assist by arranging to airlift French and ECOWAS troops to Mali and by providing them with pre-deployment training and equipment, the official said. The official made it clear that the U.S. actions will be only in support of France and ECOWAS, avoiding direct assistance to the Malian government, in accordance with U.S. law.

U.S. law bans all assistance except humanitarian aid to a country in which a democratically elected government is overthrown by the military, which happened to Mali in 2012.

The official said the stabilization of Mali requires three elements: breaking the grip of the rebels on northern Mali, notably the liberation of the cities of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal; negotiating a credible and durable solution to the political grievances of the people in northern Mali, particularly the Tuaregs; and establishing a road map and a timetable for the return of democracy to Mali.

The official said a restoration of democracy is critical because “you must have a credible government in order to prevent a recurrence of instability after stability has been restored.”

According to State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland, “It’s incumbent on the government to represent, work with, address the views of the entire population so that groups are not left vulnerable.”

She said when a military has grievances with an elected government, the answer is not to overthrow it. “It is to have a democratic discussion about how to improve the situation, how to broaden the approach that is being undertaken, to work through your parliament, to work with your leaders.”

## Somalia’s Fledgling Democracy Wins U.S. Recognition

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 17 January 2013

Washington – Somalia’s newly elected President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton exchanged diplomatic notes in Washington January 17, marking the first time the United States has recognized the Somali government in Mogadishu since the collapse of the Siad Barre government in 1991.

At a press briefing afterward, Clinton said: “There is still a long way to go and many challenges to confront, but we have seen a new foundation for a better future. ... For the first time in two decades, Somalia has an elected government.” Earlier the same day, President Obama met with Hassan Sheikh at the White House, a strong signal, Clinton said, of U.S. support for Somalia’s fledgling democracy.

The formal recognition of the elected Somali government enables new relationships not only with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other development partners in the U.S. government, but also opens up opportunities for the Somali government to receive assistance from international financial communities.

Somalis have endured years of civil strife, one of Africa’s longest civil wars and terrorist attacks from al-Shabaab, a terrorist offshoot of the militant Islamist group al-Qaida.

Clinton emphasized that the United States never gave up hope that Somalia would one day be able to enjoy democracy, peace and safety for its citizens.

Clinton said the United States will continue to fight terrorists who continue to threaten not only Somalia but the entire African region.

“Somalia’s transformation was achieved first and foremost by the people and leaders of Somalia, backed by strong African-led support,” Clinton said. “We also want to thank the African Union, which deserves a great deal of credit for Somalia’s success.” The United States, she said,

was proud to support this effort by providing \$650 million in assistance to the African Union mission in Somalia and more that \$130 million to Somalia's security forces. In addition, in the past two years the United States has given nearly \$360 million in emergency humanitarian assistance and more than \$45 million to help rebuild Somalia's economy. The United States has also provided more than \$200 million throughout the Horn of Africa for Somali refugee assistance.

Hassan Sheikh expressed Somalia's gratitude for the "unwavering" U.S. support provided to his country. "In the last 22 years that Somalia was in difficult times, the United States has always been the country that never left Somalia," he said.

"We are working for a Somalia that is at peace with itself and with its neighbors, where its citizens can go about their daily lives in safety," the Somali president said. "Instability, violent extremism and crime in Somalia are a threat not only to Somalia, but to the region and the world at large. We look to the future with hope, pride and optimism."

U.S. diplomatic officials have been traveling more frequently to Somalia, the secretary noted, and she added: "I do look forward to the day when we can re-establish a permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in Mogadishu."

"Today is a milestone," Clinton said. "It is not the end of the journey, but an important milestone to that end. We respect the sovereignty of Somalia, and as two sovereign nations we will continue to have an open, transparent dialogue about what more we can do to help the people of Somalia realize their own dreams."

### **Democracy Needs "Messy Interchange of Ideas," U.S. Official Says**

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 16 January 2013

Washington — Democracy is "a messy business" and it needs the "messy interchange of ideas" to thrive, says Thomas Perez, the U.S. Department of Justice's assistant attorney general for the Civil Rights Division.

Perez was in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, January 16 to attend a three-day conference on security, promoting national harmony and respecting human rights. The conference was organized by Malaysia's Attorney General's Chambers together with the Razak School of Government and the Malaysian Institute of Translation and Books.

According to Abdul Gani Patail, the attorney general of Malaysia, the goal of the conference was to create better awareness among the participants of the transformation of laws on security and fundamental rights.

In his remarks to the conference, Perez explained democracy as experienced in the United States and what freedom of speech is — and is not.

"Democracy can be a messy business," Perez said, "but just as we believe that the leaders people choose will govern better than any absolute ruler, so too do we believe that the ideas that will emerge through the messy interchange of ideas will be preferable to ideas dictated and controlled by the government."

But even in the United States, where freedom of expression is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, not everything is tolerated, he said. "Free speech is not a license to assault or kill or to engage in acts of vandalism," Perez said.

Free speech likewise "is not a license to harass or discriminate," he said, and U.S. civil rights laws protect individuals from discrimination and harassment in schools, the workplace, housing and other areas.

"There are many laws, both at the state and federal level, which prohibit and severely punish violence and threats of violence committed with a bias motivation," Perez said. "We enforce such laws in the Civil Rights Division, and enforce them vigorously. We refer to them shorthand as 'hate crimes,' but they require, in addition to a bias motivation, acts of violence or the threat of violence."

Perez acknowledged that "sometimes the goals of seeking a society that is truly equal for all regardless of color, race, religion, national origin, gender or disability can seem to conflict with the goal of protecting conscience and expression."

"There will always be those, for example, who use their right to free speech to say reprehensible things to others, creating divisions along racial, ethnic or religious lines," Perez said.

Perez said that "free speech can sometimes even serve the cause of equality and harmony when the motive of the speaker is the complete opposite." He cited examples of white supremacist demonstrations that drew larger and more powerful demonstrations from Americans rejecting their stance and calling for racial and religious equality and harmony.

"The experience in the United States has been that the fundamental rights of equality on the one hand and speech and conscience on the other can work side by side," he said. It was freedom of expression, for example, that allowed for a national dialogue that resulted in better laws to protect civil rights for African Americans and other minorities, he said.

"The United States," Perez said, "was able to become more inclusive not because we changed our principles, which reflect universal and timeless values, but because we learned to apply our principles more consistently. Over time, we also developed tools that help us to better apply our principles."

### **European, U.S. Space Agencies Plan Human Flights Far into Space**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 16 January 2013

Washington — NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) are working together to build a spacecraft that will take a human crew farther into space than ever before.

The two agencies finalized an agreement for ESA to provide Orion, NASA's spacecraft for human exploration, with a module performing critical functions such as propulsion, power generation and storage of crew supplies.

Officials from both agencies talked to reporters about the mission in a news conference January 16 at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. NASA Orion Program Manager Mark Geyer said the mission will build on the cooperative multinational space activities that have taken place on the International Space Station.

"A lot of the same experts are working on both sides," said Geyer. "We get to apply that to this great exploration mission."

The Orion crew module, being built by NASA, is set for its first test flight in 2014. An uncrewed flight is planned beyond Earth orbit in 2017. The first crew is set to journey into space on Orion by 2021, according to the long-range plan prepared by the U.S. space agency.

Human space flight has not gone beyond low-Earth orbit since the end of the Apollo program, which put the first humans on the moon but ended in 1972.

Thomas Reiter, ESA director of human spaceflight and operations, was also on the Houston panel. He said the collaboration between the two space agencies is no mere gesture of political convenience, but an opportunity "to exploit synergies that have been developed in the past and that can be beneficial for reaching common objectives."

William Gerstenmaier, NASA associate administrator for human exploration, said the work ahead will be "difficult and complicated," but also "inspiring."

While engineers and technicians are working to build the hardware that will propel a crew into space and sustain it there, discussions are still under way about exactly where

the crew may be going. Another visit to an unexplored part of the moon, a voyage to an asteroid and, eventually, a trip to Mars are all being considered. Gerstenmaier and the engineering staff are not troubled that the destination is still unclear.

"We're building a system that will allow us to go explore [multiple destinations]," he said. "We want a system that can actually push human presence out into the solar system and allow us to go to these different destinations."

From an engineering standpoint, Gerstenmaier said, scientists already know the demands that will be put on the Orion spacecraft and the capabilities that must be built into the craft: the load it can carry, the fuel it will need, and the supplies and resources that must be built into the mission to sustain a crew on a long-term mission.

While travel to and operations aboard the International Space Station have become almost routine, Gerstenmaier said a lot remains to be learned about deep-space operations.

"How do we protect our crews, how do we look at return trajectories, how do we look redundancy in systems" are among the many operations that must be understood better, Gerstenmaier said.

As the NASA-ESA team works toward the 2017 flight deadline, progress is being made on a number of individual spacecraft components and systems. Geyer said several of these are set for completion in 2013 to be handed over to the team responsible for incorporating them into the launch vehicle.

### **Internet Gender Gap Hurts World's Economy, Study Finds**

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 16 January 2013

Washington — The Internet gender gap is hurting the world's economy as well as millions of women across the globe, says a newly released, groundbreaking study.

Getting Internet access to an additional 600 million women in the next three years would result in an estimated increase of \$13 billion to \$18 billion in gross domestic product across 144 developing countries, according to the report titled Women and the Web.

The report is the result of studies sponsored by Intel Corporation, an American multinational semiconductor chip maker; Dalberg, a management consultancy firm specializing in global development; and GlobeScan, a public opinion research consultancy working in more than 70 countries. World Pulse, a nonprofit media network involving women from 190 countries, also contributed to the study.

According to the report, women are nearly 25 percent less likely than men to be online. "For women in developing countries, the Internet can be the gateway to a host of tangible benefits, such as job and education opportunities, and to less tangible benefits, such as confidence, self esteem and empowerment," the report says.

So what's standing between women and the Internet?

One huge barrier is illiteracy, the report says. Across all developing countries, about 25 percent of women are illiterate, compared to 14 percent of men.

In some countries, cultural norms deem Internet usage "inappropriate" for women, the report says.

Many women simply do not know what the Internet is, or how it might benefit their lives. Others have never learned to use the Internet, according to the report.

"Women are not inherently less adept at technology than men," the report says, "and as analyses have shown, so-called technophobia is largely a reflection of gender disparities in education, employment and income."

But the report also found that the longer a woman has used the Internet, the more likely she is to engage in online activities that yield tangible benefits.

"Women with more than five years of online experience are twice as likely to seek out information on financial services and banking, or related to their source of income, than women who have joined the Internet within the last year. They are also 50 percent more likely to buy things online," the report says.

The report was unveiled January 10 at the International Forum on Women, ICT, and Development (WICTAD), a two-day forum co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Office of Global Women's Issues and U.N. Women at the Institute of International Education in Washington. The forum brought together representatives from civil society, academia, government, the private sector and the United Nations to assess the social, economic and political implications of the gender gap in Internet access.

Internet access is the 21st century's "great equalizer," according to Melanne Verveer, the U.S. Department of State's ambassador-at-large for global women's issues. "Should we fail to close the gaps that are already occurring, we will fail in so many other ways as well," she said at the forum.

To help close those gaps, Verveer said, the U.S. Department of State has launched a number of initiatives aimed at women and girls.

For example, mWomen works to give more women access to mobile technology. Even women who are entrepreneurs at the lowest level of economic activity, according to Verveer, can use simple technology such as mobile phones to monitor weather reports that affect their work in agriculture and to track the markets in their goods.

TechWomen and TechGirls, Verveer said, bring entrepreneurial women and girls to the United States to expand their knowledge of technology and business and to learn ways in which they might apply new skills in their countries.

### **World Bank Projects Slow but Steady Economic Growth for 2013**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 16 January 2013

Washington – The World Bank says that in 2013 the global economy will continue to experience very slow but steady growth, citing the need for structural fixes in high-income countries and weaker-than-expected growth in developing countries, but it says the risk of a large financial crisis has diminished.

Speaking to reporters in a January 15 conference call to preview the World Bank's "Global Economic Prospects 2013" report, World Bank Senior Vice President and Chief Economist Kaushik Basu predicted that the overall growth rate for the coming year would be 2.4 percent, saying the economic situation is better than it was at the start of 2012, but that slightly improved prospects would not translate to much improvement over the 2.3 percent growth that the world experienced in 2012.

"The overall situation ... remains difficult. Four years ago the world plunged into a deep crisis and since then it has been a bumpy journey. There were big dangers in 2011 ... but the view that we take now is that on the financial side [and] the monetary side there is an easing of the situation and the downside risks have diminished. The market conditions look better. The [European Union]'s borrowing costs are a little lower than what was the case earlier, so overall the situation looks better," Basu said.

Basu said the World Bank expects the largest developing countries to experience some recovery, projecting that Brazil, China and India would see growth at 3.4 percent, 8.4 percent and 6.1 percent respectively. Astute policy changes from leading industrialized countries have given the global economy some breathing space and greater liquidity, but Basu said those changes are serving to buy some time rather than supply needed structural fixes, particularly in the Eurozone countries.

China has experienced a growth rate averaging around 10 percent over the past 20 years, but Basu said that level of growth cannot be sustained. He predicted that India,

whose economic development began to take off during the past decade, will begin to close the gap by 2015 when China will see a 7.5 percent growth rate while India's economy will be expanding by 7 percent.

The U.S. economy is projected to grow at a rate of 1.9 percent in 2013. Basu said the deal reached between President Obama and U.S. lawmakers on taxes at the end of 2012 was very comforting, and he believes they will also resolve their current disagreement over raising the U.S. debt ceiling. He said he hopes that structural reforms will prevent these "flash points" from occurring with such regularity.

"For developing countries nothing is as important as a stable, buoyant U.S. economy," he said.

Andrew Burns, the manager of the World Bank's Macroeconomics Team, told reporters the United States needs a clear path to long-term budgetary consolidation and movement toward a more sustainable path.

"To the extent that that's achieved, then I don't think we need any more consolidation necessarily in the U.S. this year," Burns said.

In general, Burns said, high-income economies such as in the United States, Japan and Europe are continuing to struggle in the aftermath of the financial crisis, and the growth of developing countries will average 5.5 percent, rather than the 6 percent to 7 percent they enjoyed in the late 2000s.

To get past this relatively weak growth, Burns said, "the trick is ... this has to be achieved by putting the emphasis once again on structural policies, on investing in infrastructure, investing in health and education to support that sustained growth of the supply side of their economies in the same way that they were so able to do in the early 1990s and 2000s."

While problems in the Eurozone and U.S. fiscal difficulties continue to create financial risks, Burns said, the amplitude of those risks has been reduced and their likelihood of being realized has significantly diminished. He cited improvements in the U.S. housing and labor markets, and said there would be growth if financial-sector improvements in Europe begin to have their desired effect.

Burns said 2013 will be a "period of volatility and a period of challenge for developing countries." He urged those countries to maintain a steady hand on their fiscal and monetary policy levers and "not to react too forcefully to changes in the situation in the high-income world."

## State's Stern Shares Hopes for Climate Talks at World Summit

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |  
15 January 2013

Washington — U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern told delegates to the 6th World Future Energy Summit that the world faces "a fundamental challenge and a genuine opportunity" in new international climate talks.

Stern said that at the recent conference on climate change, participants pointed the way forward for development of a new agreement having legal force that would be applicable to everyone, not just developed countries, in contrast to the Kyoto Protocol.

"So this was a landmark moment," Stern told delegates in prepared remarks January 15 at the World Future Energy Summit being held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. "Now we have to deliver."

The purpose of the U.N.-sponsored climate change negotiations is for nations to reach a new agreement by 2015 that would go into force by 2020.

In a wide-ranging speech, Stern said the central focus of future climate change talks must be on doing what it takes to start solving the problem, which is the point of the international effort to rein in dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and preserve a hospitable world for everyone. That is the central objective of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, he said.

A crucial element in the success of the climate change talks must be flexibility, Stern said.

"Anyone can say we should demand draconian, legally binding commitments to slash our emissions and to have those commitments subject to a rigorous compliance regime with tough penalties for noncompliance," Stern said. "But this is really just ambition on paper, because in the real world, countries will reject obligations they see as inimical to their core interests in development, growth and eradicating poverty."

"What we need is real ambition to achieve maximum action in a way that nations will embrace because they see it as consistent with their core interests," Stern said. "At the same time, we all must challenge ourselves to take a deeper look at what pursuing core interests really means. The fact that moving to clean energy may have a cost in the short run cannot be taken as an excuse not to act."

Stern told delegates that some actions can be taken at low cost or even no cost, but other actions will have some costs. However, Stern said, over time the efforts will pay

off, especially when the full cost of fuel choices – pollution, health impacts and energy security – are taken into account.

“So, yes, real ambition has to be consistent with the core interests of countries, but countries need to expand the boundaries of their own thinking about what is and isn’t consistent,” he said. “We all ... must challenge ourselves.”

Stern also said the agreement nations are pursuing must cover everyone.

“Developing countries now account for about 55 percent of greenhouse gas emission and are projected to account for some 65 percent by 2030,” he said. “We simply cannot address climate change on the theory that all commitments must come from developed countries.”

Stern said the openness that countries show in implementing their commitments will be a critical element for any new climate agreement. Nations are more likely to be ambitious if they have the confidence that other nations are also genuinely meeting their commitments, he said.

Stern told delegates that commitments to mitigate or reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are rooted in national policy planning stand a better chance of being successfully implemented than producing abstract numbers agreed to in an international conference. “If we do go the route of nationally determined commitments, however, we will need to focus intensively on how best to ensure ambitious country submissions,” he said.

## U.S. Trade Deficit Widened in November

14 January 2013

Washington – The U.S. trade deficit expanded to a seven-month high in November at \$48.7 billion, reflecting a rise in the U.S. import of consumer goods from its trading partners around the world, according to data released January 11 by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis.

According to the U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services report, which is released every month, the gap between U.S. imports and exports expanded in November from the October level of \$42.1 billion, and was the highest since April 2012, when the U.S. trade deficit stood at \$49.6 billion. The report said that in November the total value of U.S. imports was \$231.3 billion, versus the value of its exports at \$182.6 billion.

The United States has not had a trade surplus since 1975. Although the November figures showed a sharp rise in the trade deficit, they are down from the January 2006

high of \$66.7 billion, according to Commerce Department data.

U.S. imports of consumer goods, including mobile phones, pharmaceuticals and clothes, rose by \$4.6 billion in November. According to a January 11 article in the Washington Post, the increased import of consumer products could indicate stronger demand and spending by American consumers – a sign that the U.S. retail sector is growing stronger.

However, the Post said, the widening of the U.S. trade deficit could also indicate a smaller-than-hoped-for economic growth rate for the 2012 fourth quarter, speculating that the rate may be only around 1 percent.

The article added that the November 2012 trade figures may have been affected by Superstorm Sandy, which disrupted port activities along the U.S. East Coast in late October. The increase in imports could have reflected the need for some cargo ships to delay their docking and unloading until November.

The November report shows U.S. trade surpluses with Hong Kong, Australia, Singapore and Egypt. Deficits were recorded with China, the European Union, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Germany, Japan, Mexico, Canada, Ireland, Venezuela, Korea, Taiwan and Nigeria.

## President Obama, Afghanistan's Karzai Reach Key Agreements

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 11 January 2013

Washington – Afghan national forces will assume the lead for security across all of Afghanistan during the spring while troops from the United States and other NATO allies shift their mission to training, advising and assisting Afghan forces, according to a joint statement by President Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai after their meeting in Washington January 11.

The United States will be a long-term partner for “a strong and sovereign Afghanistan,” Obama said at a press conference with Karzai following their summit at the White House. “And by the end of next year – 2014 – the transition will be complete. Afghans will have full responsibility for their country, and this war will come to a responsible end.”

“I’m very happy to hear from the president ... that the international forces – the American forces will be no longer present in Afghan villages, that the task will be that of the Afghan forces to provide for the Afghan people in security and protection,” Karzai said.

The joint statement said providing additional equipment

and training for the Afghan forces will be a key priority in the security transition.

Obama and Karzai said they eliminated obstacles that were blocking negotiations for a bilateral security agreement to allow the United States to keep a residual force in Afghanistan after 2014. Obama insisted that an agreement contain legal immunity for U.S. forces from Afghan law. Karzai said he will "go to the Afghan people and argue for immunity for U.S. troops in Afghanistan in a way that Afghan sovereignty will not be compromised."

The joint statement said the two presidents committed to placing Afghan detainees under the "sovereignty and control of Afghanistan, while ensuring that dangerous fighters remain off the battlefield." The document also indicated that detainees will be treated humanely and lawfully.

#### ECONOMIC TRANSITION

Obama and Karzai said the United States will support Afghanistan's economic strategy that focuses on developing human capital to lead Afghanistan's institutions and fostering growth based on the private sector, entrepreneurs and Afghanistan's natural wealth.

On the issue of corruption, Karzai said his government has made progress in reducing it but more needs to be done.

"I have been very clear and explicit," Karzai said. "Corruption that is foreign in origin but occurring in Afghanistan" cannot be brought under control "unless there is cooperation between us and our international partners."

According the statement, at least 50 percent of U.S. development assistance will be channeled through the national budget of the Afghan government.

#### ELECTIONS IN 2014

Karzai vowed that Afghanistan's presidential and provincial council elections on April 5, 2014, will be free, fair and inclusive. Karzai is nearing the end of his second term and is constitutionally barred from running again. "Certainly, I would be a retired president, and very happily, a retired president," Karzai said.

#### PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Obama and Karzai said security gains must be matched by political progress, and they committed to supporting a reconciliation process between the Afghan government and the Taliban. They were in agreement on the Taliban opening an office in Qatar where direct talks would take

place between the Afghan government and the Taliban with support from regional countries, including Pakistan.

Obama said the Taliban must end violence, break ties with al-Qaida and accept Afghanistan's Constitution.

Obama said political and diplomatic work lies ahead for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the United States will facilitate cooperation between the two sovereign countries. He added that Pakistan is starting to see the need for cooperation with Afghanistan in the interest of peace and stability in the region.

Karzai said he returns to Afghanistan bearing "news of Afghanistan standing shoulder to shoulder with America as a sovereign, independent country but in cooperation and partnership."

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