

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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G8 Foreign Ministers Discuss Sexual Violence, Mideast Peace	1
U.S. Supports Negotiated Political Solution in Syria	2
Obama Seeks \$47.8 Billion for Fiscal Year 2014 Foreign Operations	3
U.S. Dollars Designed to Outsmart Counterfeiters.....	3
Secretary Kerry, Mideast Leaders Launch Business Initiative for West Bank	4
White House Intensifies Fight Against Human Trafficking	5
Remaining Martian Atmosphere Still Dynamic.....	6
Secretary Kerry Sees Key Role for Turkey in Renewed Mideast Peace Process	7
Global Health Partnership Is Strong Amid China Flu Reports	7

G8 Foreign Ministers Discuss Sexual Violence, Mideast Peace

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
11 April 2013

Washington – Foreign ministers from the Group of Eight (G8) advanced economies concluded two days of talks in London on an array of issues, including the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, the Middle East peace process, nonproliferation and disarmament, and significant regional concerns.

In a communiqué following the London meeting April 11, the ministers endorsed a declaration calling for urgent action to address a “culture of impunity and to hold perpetrators to account for acts of sexual violence in armed conflict.” The ministers want to strengthen the existing legal system, produce more prosecutions of those who use sexual violence against innocents in conflict, and give more long-term support to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague, who served as host for the meeting, announced pledges of \$36 million in additional funding to curb sexual violence in armed conflict. Hague called such violence “the slave trade of our generation.”

The ministers agreed to declare that rape and serious sexual violence in armed conflict constitute war crimes and breaches of the Geneva Conventions on the Laws of War.

The G8 are the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States. The G8 Summit is scheduled for June 17-18 in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland.

“The G8 has an important role in advancing the implementation of the relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and Children and Armed Conflict, including by tackling conflict-related sexual violence and advancing the participation of women in peace building,” the ministers’ communiqué said.

The State Department announced April 11 that the United States is committing \$10 million to support new and ongoing efforts that align with the G8 Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative. “Such efforts include improving access to services for survivors of gender-based violence in places such as South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Haiti,” the department said.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry attended the London meetings April 10-11 after arriving from three days of

talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. While in London, Kerry held a series of one-on-one talks with some of the foreign ministers, including Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

The G8 ministers confirmed in their communiqué a commitment to a comprehensive peace for the Middle East and the urgent need for a peace process aimed at driving the process forward.

“They urged both sides to show the bold political leadership needed to achieve peace, to take the necessary steps to build trust and to work towards the resumption of negotiations without preconditions,” the communiqué said.

The foreign ministers also called on Israelis and Palestinians to refrain from unilateral actions and to create an atmosphere conducive to the peace process. The ministers also offered support for the Palestinian Authority and encouraged Arab nations and others to extend “the fullest assistance possible to revitalizing the Palestinian economy.”

The G8 foreign ministers offered continued support to Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Libya and Yemen. They cited the progress the six nations have made and the challenges they continue to face in political transition. “Ministers reiterated their belief that democratic process, open societies and open economies were essential to create confidence, consolidate political reform and achieve inclusive economic growth,” the communiqué said.

In addition, the foreign ministers said the continued proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them remain a major threat to international peace and security.

“G8 countries are all committed to seeking a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in a way that promotes international security, peace and undiminished security for all in accordance with the goals of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” the communiqué said.

The ministers said that the illicit trade worldwide in conventional weapons also represents a serious challenge, causing great suffering and threatening regional stability. The ministers welcomed adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by the U.N. General Assembly April 2, saying its efficient implementation will save lives, reduce human suffering, protect human rights, prevent the diversion of weapons to illegal markets and combat terrorism.

U.S. Supports Negotiated Political Solution in Syria

11 April 2013

Washington — The Obama administration believes that the best end to the crisis in Syria will come about through a negotiated political solution between the Syrian opposition and members of the government “without blood on their hands” to form a mutually agreeable transitional government to guide the country to elections.

In her prepared testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee April 11, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Beth Jones said it is currently not in the interests of the United States or the Syrian people to provide opponents to Bashar al-Assad’s regime with lethal support.

“The judgments we make must pass the test of making the situation better for the Syrian people and must also take into account the long-term human, financial and political costs for us, Syria and the region,” she said.

“Our assistance to the Syrian opposition, at the national and local levels, from local councils in liberated areas to civil society, is enabling these groups to plan for the future while providing essential services and extending the rule of law inside liberated areas of Syria now,” Jones said.

Jones said the Assad regime bears the “overwhelming responsibility” for the suffering of the Syrian people and the destruction of their country. She said at least 70,000 Syrians have been killed since the beginning of the two-year-old crisis, with 3 million to 4 million displaced from their homes and at least 1.3 million Syrians living outside the country as refugees.

She warned that the number of displaced and refugees “could double or even triple by the end of 2013,” which “would amount to nearly one-third of Syria’s population.”

The United States is giving nearly \$385 million in humanitarian assistance inside Syria and for refugees, to provide them with emergency medical care and supplies, blankets, food, clean water and shelter.

“We are sending flour to 50 bakeries in Aleppo and sponsoring food and sanitation projects for the desperate families in Atmeh refugee camp. But this is not enough to meet the overwhelming need,” Jones said. She urged countries to fulfill pledges made at a January 30 donors conference, where more than \$1.5 billion was promised to help Syrians in need.

As the result of economic sanctions imposed by the United States, the Arab League, the European Union and

others, the Assad regime’s finances “have never been so weak,” and it “has never been so isolated in the world community,” she said.

“With each passing day, the regime’s grip on power weakens. Territory slips from its grasp, and, in a growing number of towns and villages, a new Syria is being born. The regime of Bashar al-Assad must and will go. The sooner he steps aside, the better for all Syrians,” she said.

In his prepared remarks to the committee, Treasury Department Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing Daniel Glaser said U.S. sanctions have frozen close to \$80 million of the Assad regime’s funds in the United States and have blocked nearly 100 individuals and entities identified as key regime supporters from the U.S. financial system, as well as disrupting their access to financial services beyond the United States.

Sanctions “are not a silver bullet in ending the Assad regime’s vicious war on its own people,” but they are playing an important role within the broader international strategy, he said.

“While the U.S. government has implemented our own robust set of measures, it is important that we continue working with our partners around the world to multilateralize the effort to pressure the Assad regime. Ideally, such efforts would start at the United Nations,” he said.

Glaser also said the Obama administration has been working with the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces to prepare the groundwork for lifting sanctions once the Assad regime steps aside. This is aimed at helping facilitate the country’s economic recovery, he added.

“We will need to be ready both to help the legitimate new authorities rebuild the country and constrain those actors that either profit from continued bloodshed, like Iran and Hizballah, or thrive on instability, like the al-Nusra Front,” he said.

U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford said the Syrian people themselves are starting to plan for a political transition. The country’s future, Ford said, will depend on its ability to build a tolerant society that respects the dignity and rights of its many sectarian and ethnic communities.

“To effectively make the transition beyond the Assad regime, the opposition will need a vision for a pluralistic Syria that abides by the rule of law, subordinates the military to civilian authority, and guarantees the rights of all of its citizens while preserving continuity of the state and its institutions,” Ford said in his prepared remarks.

Obama Seeks \$47.8 Billion for Fiscal Year 2014 Foreign Operations

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 10 April 2013

Washington — President Obama has asked Congress to approve \$47.8 billion to fund the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other international programs for the fiscal year starting October 1.

The president's request, submitted April 10, is 6 percent less than the amount requested for the current fiscal year. It is part of the president's overall \$3.77 trillion request to fund the U.S. government during fiscal year 2014 (FY14).

The budget request next will go to the Senate and House of Representatives for a series of committee debates. Leaders of both chambers then will negotiate a final budget agreement that will go to the president for signature or veto. The process could take as long as a year.

The budget proposal reflects the administration's continued focus on working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The goals set by world leaders at the United Nations in 2000 aim to achieve significant progress toward reducing extreme hunger and poverty, boosting universal primary education, improving child and maternal health, fighting HIV/AIDS and other diseases, promoting gender equality, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The president's budget would continue, with \$1.1 billion, the multiyear Feed the Future program that makes strategic investments to address the root causes of hunger and helps prevent food insecurity. The request includes proposed reforms to food aid programs to make them more cost-effective while having greater impact.

The budget would shift funds from the program that provides U.S. agricultural commodities to meet emergency food needs to two accounts. One would be for the purchase of food from markets near crises. The other account would fund development programs directly rather than through proceeds from selling U.S. food abroad.

The president's budget would increase funding for agricultural development and nutrition programs and provide more than \$4 billion to help internally displaced persons, refugees and victims of armed conflict and natural disasters.

The requested funding would support, with \$8.3 billion, aggressive HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment targets and continue progress toward eliminating AIDS in children. It would maintain the \$1.65 billion U.S.

contribution to the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; fully fund the U.S. \$175 million pledge to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, and increase spending on proven child survival interventions that address malaria, pneumonia and complications in childbirth.

The proposed budget would direct \$909 million to combat climate change by promoting low-emission, climate resilient economic growth. That funding would be directed to multilateral institutions and to national and local governments and would focus on energy efficiency, renewable energy, low carbon infrastructure, sustainable land use and programs to build resilience in communities and countries vulnerable to climate change.

The request would continue to support a focus on promoting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment. It also would continue to support innovation and partnerships by USAID and continue to increase the efficiency of USAID's contract procurement procedures.

It would spend \$1.1 billion to deploy information resources in line with foreign policy priorities, and to support academic programs and professional and cultural exchanges.

The proposed budget would provide \$580 million to help countries in transition in the Middle East and North Africa. It would provide \$3.1 billion for Afghanistan, \$1.7 billion for Iraq and \$1.3 billion for Pakistan. And it would direct \$1.2 billion to tap into Asia's growing markets, and support democratic reform and security in the region.

The president's budget would provide \$2.9 billion to fund the international development banks and international technical assistance programs. It would increase the U.S. quota in the International Monetary Fund by \$63 billion.

U.S. Dollars Designed to Outsmart Counterfeiters

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 10 April 2013

Washington — As the world's most actively traded and principal reserve currency, the U.S. dollar is probably the most instantly recognized form of money on the planet. Its wide use also makes it a prime target for counterfeiters, so the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) has been updating cash notes to better keep up with increasingly sophisticated and publicly available printing technologies.

It is becoming rarer to find \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$100 notes that were printed before the BEP began its redesign efforts in 1996. The most notable difference in the new bills is the off-center and enhanced portraits of Abraham

Lincoln, Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Jackson and Benjamin Franklin, respectively. But look more closely at your U.S. notes and you will find features designed to frustrate forgers and guarantee they are genuine.

When the bill is held up to a light, there are numeric watermarks on the \$5 bill, and portrait watermarks on one side of the higher denominations. There are also security threads placed in different spots, depending on the bill, which will glow under an ultraviolet light. The \$10, \$20 and \$100 bills also have small graphics and numerals that will change color as the note is tilted. The newest notes even have a touch test. Scrape a fingernail across the portrait's vest and you may notice that it has ridges.

If you happen to see a note larger than \$100 in circulation, it is almost certainly a fake. The last \$500-\$1000 bills were printed in 1945, and President Richard Nixon ordered them removed from circulation in 1969 in an effort to fight organized crime.

Along with deterring counterfeiters, redesigned notes will also be more useful to the visually impaired, who long have coped with the difficulty that all U.S. notes are the same size and texture. Many have tried to overcome this with specially designed electronic readers or even by simply folding different denominations in unique ways. In May 2011, former Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner announced that, along with an improved distribution of currency readers, the BEP will begin printing notes with higher contrast colors and raised tactile features that will allow a note's value to be determined by touch.

Older notes remain valid, but they will continue to disappear as worn and damaged currency is exchanged. At the same time, U.S. currency is designed to withstand a certain amount of wear and tear, including being folded 8,000 times. The paper is actually more of a fabric, made up of 75 percent cotton and 25 percent linen, with reinforcing silk threads. That design has helped anyone who has made the mistake of leaving cash in pockets that have gone through a laundry cycle.

According to the BEP, the lifespan of a typical \$5 bill is 16 months. It is 18 months for \$10; 24 for \$20; and 89 months for \$100. The \$1 bill, which accounts for nearly half of U.S. notes in circulation, lasts an average of 22 months.

All U.S. currency paper is specifically made for the BEP by the Crane Paper Company, which creates the security threads and watermarks for notes \$5 and above before sending the sheets of paper to the BEP's printing facilities in Washington and Fort Worth, Texas. Both the paper's precise recipe, as well as what makes up the BEP's green ink, are closely guarded secrets.

At the printer, the paper undergoes a three-stage process that adds subtle background colors and uses engraved plates to print front and back images, apply color-shifting ink and add texture.

The press is capable of printing 10,000 sheets per hour, and the BEP produces an average of 38 million notes a day with a face value of approximately \$541 million. Nearly all of it is used to replace notes that are already in circulation.

IS THE \$1 BILL HERE TO STAY?

The most widely circulated U.S. note, the \$1 bill featuring George Washington on the front and the Great Seal of the United States on the back, has managed to keep the same design for the past 50 years. The less common \$2 bill with Thomas Jefferson has also been exempt from the recent redesign campaign.

Since 1971, the U.S. government has tried to encourage the use of more durable \$1 coins as a replacement for paper bills. Metal coins are able to stay in circulation for an average of 25 years. According to the U.S. Congress' General Accounting Office (GAO), the switch would save \$4.4 billion over 30 years. But in practice, the U.S. public has repeatedly shown it prefers paper.

Some of the public resistance has centered on confusion with similarly sized coins, objection to the weight of carrying metal, as opposed to paper, and the inability to use them in older vending machines.

But the U.S. Mint has continued to produce dollar coins. Beginning in 2000, the government has minted a coin bearing the likeness of Sacagawea, the Lemhi Shoshone woman who guided and interpreted for the Lewis and Clark expedition in the early 19th century. There are now approximately 1 billion Sacagawea dollars in circulation. A newer series of dollar coins has been minted since 2007 honoring former U.S. presidents.

Increased circulation and familiarity with the \$1 coin could finally help it to gain greater acceptance. At the same time, the role of all U.S. paper and coin currency may be changing, thanks to the growing popularity of electronic and credit card transactions.

Secretary Kerry, Mideast Leaders Launch Business Initiative for West Bank

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 09 April 2013

Washington — An initiative forged by Secretary of State John Kerry and Israeli and Palestinian leaders aims to bring investment and commerce to the West Bank while creating conditions favorable to the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

The agreement to stimulate the West Bank economy emerged from talks with Israeli President Shimon Peres, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in Jerusalem and Ramallah, West Bank, April 7-9, Kerry said.

The secretary of state said business expansion and private sector investment in the West Bank will improve the livelihoods of the people living there as well as the security of the people of Israel. The Obama administration will bring the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the Export-Import Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the trade partnership agency into the effort, along with international financial institutions, he said.

"We are going to engage in new efforts, very specific efforts, to promote economic development and to remove some of the bottlenecks and barriers that exist with respect to commerce in the West Bank," Kerry said. "Economic growth will help us be able to provide a climate ... in which people have greater confidence about moving forward."

While visiting Turkey April 7, Kerry and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Turkey is ready to play a strong role in the economic development of Palestinian Authority areas.

Kerry said the West Bank development initiative does not replace Israeli-Palestinian peace talks aimed at a two-state solution to conflict.

"It is not a substitute. The political track remains the primary focus," Kerry said, adding that creating jobs and businesses in the Palestinian Authority areas will improve the climate for political talks.

"We intend to try to create the conditions for peace so that we can resume negotiations between the parties in a clear and precise, predetermined manner," he said.

The secretary said that future peace talks must take into account Israel's security concerns and Palestinians' aspirations for statehood. He said that the United States cares deeply about the security of Israel and cooperates on an unprecedented level with Israel's military and intelligence services.

The Israeli prime minister said he was determined not only to resume the peace process with the Palestinians but to make a serious effort to end this conflict once and for all. "We welcome any initiatives that you and others will bring forward in this regard," Netanyahu said in a news conference with Kerry. "This is a real effort, and we look forward to advance in this effort with you."

White House Intensifies Fight Against Human Trafficking

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 09 April 2013

Washington — At the White House Forum to Combat Human Trafficking April 9, the Obama administration released its latest plan to combat a practice that has been called modern-day slavery and to provide help for its victims.

In his remarks at the forum, Attorney General Eric Holder said that the new strategic plan will better coordinate the efforts of U.S. federal agencies in dealing with a crime that enslaves an estimated 27 million victims worldwide.

"Attorneys, analysts, researchers, investigators, and law enforcement officials are coming together as never before to study the latest trends in human trafficking," Holder said. "Over the next five years, this plan will enable us to reinforce our relationships with nongovernmental allies — and build public-private partnerships. It will lead us to develop innovative new strategies for identifying, assisting and seeking justice on behalf of those trapped in some form of slavery, bonded labor or forced prostitution."

U.S. officials said the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking will take anti-trafficking efforts to a new level. Holder added that the plan will increase support for legal and victim service providers.

According to the attorney general, the plan sends "a strong message to anyone who would prey on their fellow human beings: that, in this country, human trafficking will not be tolerated. Our commitment to moving aggressively in identifying and prosecuting human traffickers — and supporting those who bring help and healing to victims — has quite simply never been stronger."

Among the plan's objectives is to build capacity to better identify and serve victims among service and health care providers, law enforcement and other first responders. To this end, the plan calls for better coordination of federal funding and better alignment of federal, state, tribal and local policies.

The plan also calls for new public-private partnerships that will provide cutting-edge technology tools to aid law enforcement's efforts to bring traffickers to justice, as well as new online applications to help link victims with much-needed services. According to the White House announcement, leading technology companies have partnered with advocates and survivors to develop new applications to reach trafficking victims online and on their phones and to link them with services in their

community.

The plan also calls for a free legal services network for trafficking victims. The Department of State is establishing a public-private partnership with New Perimeter, LLC, a nonprofit organization established by the law firm DLA Piper designed to increase the availability of pro bono legal services to combat human trafficking. The partnership will use the "3P" framework of prosecuting traffickers, protecting survivors and preventing victimization.

In a September 2012 speech, President Obama called the fight against human trafficking "one of the greatest human rights causes of our time" and emphasized his administration's commitment to leading efforts in partnerships worldwide.

The administration's commitment, Holder said, "has led the Justice Department to charge a record number of human trafficking cases – increasing forced labor and adult sex trafficking prosecutions by more than 30 percent." In addition, he said, "it has driven us to reinforce partnerships with domestic law enforcement allies, foreign governments, nonprofit organizations and many others – boosting our capacity to deter and dismantle trafficking networks that span jurisdictions and international borders."

Janet Napolitano, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, who was also present at the White House forum, noted in her agency's blog that "last year alone, we received more tips through the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) tip line than ever before, investigated a historic amount of cases and rescued more victims of human trafficking, and provided support to over 1,200 human trafficking victims."

Remaining Martian Atmosphere Still Dynamic

09 April 2013

Washington – Mars has lost much of its original atmosphere, but what's left remains quite active, recent findings from NASA's Mars rover Curiosity indicate.

Rover team members reported diverse findings April 8 at the European Geosciences Union 2013 General Assembly, in Vienna, NASA said in a news release the same day.

Evidence has strengthened during April that Mars lost much of its original atmosphere by a process of gas escaping from the top of the atmosphere.

Curiosity's Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) instrument analyzed an atmosphere sample the week of April 1 using a process that concentrates selected gases. The results provided the most precise measurements ever made of

isotopes of argon in the Martian atmosphere. Isotopes are variants of the same element with different atomic weights.

"We found, arguably, the clearest and most robust signature of atmospheric loss on Mars," said Sushil Atreya, a SAM co-investigator at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

SAM found that the Martian atmosphere has about four times as much of a lighter stable isotope (argon-36) compared to a heavier one (argon-38). This removes previous uncertainty about the ratio in the Martian atmosphere from 1976 measurements from NASA's Viking project and from small volumes of argon extracted from Martian meteorites. The ratio is much lower than the solar system's original ratio, as estimated from argon-isotope measurements of the sun and Jupiter. This points to a process at Mars that favored preferential loss of the lighter isotope over the heavier one.

Curiosity measures several variables in today's Martian atmosphere with the Rover Environmental Monitoring Station (REMS), provided by Spain. While daily air temperature has climbed steadily since the measurements began eight months ago and is not strongly tied to the rover's location, humidity has differed significantly at different places along the rover's route. These are the first systematic measurements of humidity on Mars.

Trails of dust devils have not been seen inside Gale Crater, but REMS sensors detected many whirlwind patterns during the first hundred Martian days of the mission, though not as many as detected in the same length of time by earlier missions. "A whirlwind is a very quick event that happens in a few seconds and should be verified by a combination of pressure, temperature and wind oscillations and, in some cases, a decrease in ultraviolet radiation," said REMS Principal Investigator Javier Gómez-Elvira of the Centro de Astrobiología, Madrid.

Dust distributed by the wind has been examined by Curiosity's laser-firing Chemistry and Camera (ChemCam) instrument. Initial laser pulses on each target hit dust. The laser's energy removes the dust to expose underlying material, but those initial pulses also provide information about the dust.

"We knew that Mars is red because of iron oxides in the dust," said ChemCam Deputy Principal Investigator Sylvestre Maurice of the Institut de Recherche en Astrophysique et Planétologie in Toulouse, France. "ChemCam reveals a complex chemical composition of the dust that includes hydrogen, which could be in the form of hydroxyl groups or water molecules."

Possible interchange of water molecules between the atmosphere and the ground is studied by a combination of instruments on the rover, including the Dynamic Albedo of Neutrons (DAN), provided by Russia under the leadership of DAN Principal Investigator Igor Mitrofanov.

For the rest of April, Curiosity will carry out daily activities for which commands were sent in March, using DAN, REMS and the Radiation Assessment Detector (RAD). No new commands are being sent during a four-week period while Mars is passing nearly behind the sun, from Earth's perspective. This geometry occurs about every 26 months and is called Mars solar conjunction.

"After conjunction, Curiosity will be drilling into another rock where the rover is now, but that target has not yet been selected. The science team will discuss this over the conjunction period," said Mars Science Laboratory Project Scientist John Grotzinger, of the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena.

NASA's Mars Science Laboratory Project is using Curiosity to investigate the environmental history within Gale Crater, a location where the project has found that conditions were long ago favorable for microbial life. Curiosity, carrying 10 science instruments, landed in August 2012 to begin its two-year prime mission. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a division of Caltech in Pasadena, manages the project for NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington.

Secretary Kerry Sees Key Role for Turkey in Renewed Mideast Peace Process

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 08 April 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry says the agreement between Turkey and Israel to restore normal diplomatic relations in March opens the door for Turkey to play an important role in a renewed Middle East peace process, specifically in the economic transformation of the West Bank and Gaza.

"Turkey and Israel are both vital allies of the United States. And we are hopeful that their agreement to restore normalization between their countries will actually help to open the door to greater cooperation," Kerry said at a news conference with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in Istanbul April 7.

In March, President Obama arranged a three-way telephone conversation with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that resulted in a decision to restore full diplomatic ties that had been downgraded since 2010.

Kerry said Turkey can play a key role in the economic

development of the West Bank and Gaza.

"The West Bank, Gaza together, both need to transform," he said. "Turkey can be very helpful, perhaps, in transitioning that component of the process, as well as in helping to build on our efforts to transform the economics of the West Bank itself."

"Turkey will provide all forms of support within her capabilities, and we will try to contribute to the solution" based on the 1967 borders, Davutoğlu said. "In Israel, in West Bank, and in Gaza, the living standards should be improved, and all of the embargoes should be eliminated once and for all." He said "a prospective visit by the prime minister of Turkey to Gaza" stems from Turkey's vision for a new Middle East based on democracy and economic interdependence.

Regarding Syria, Kerry praised Turkey for its role in helping Syrian refugees and keeping pressure on the regime of Bashar al-Assad to leave power.

"Turkey has also been incredibly generous to the refugees of this crisis, and they have taken them in by the thousands, kept their borders open, done everything possible to try to respond to that increasing humanitarian crisis. And the United States and Turkey will continue cooperating towards the shared goal of a peaceful transition within Syria," Kerry said.

The secretary paid homage to Turkey's efforts to peacefully end its struggle with the Kurdish separatist group, PKK.

"Difficult steps lie ahead, but the foreign minister and I are confident that a lasting peace will improve the lives of all of Turkey's citizens," he said.

He urged the Turkish government, in its plans to redraft the constitution, to keep the protection of universal rights and basic freedoms at the center of the process.

Global Health Partnership Is Strong Amid China Flu Reports

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 05 April 2013

Washington — The United States and China have made remarkable progress in responding to a potential disease outbreak, said a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services assistant secretary April 5. Dr. Nils Daulaire's assessment of the bilateral relationship on public health issues comes as a form of bird flu never previously detected in humans has caused five confirmed deaths in China.

Outbreaks of a flu strain that has made the leap from animals to humans raise anxiety about possible rapid

transmission of a new form of influenza. But similar experiences over the last decade have put Chinese health authorities on alert. China has built an effective disease surveillance system, said Daulaire, and it has worked closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop the proper response to infectious threats.

“This is an area in which global health diplomacy is working directly to protect both the Chinese people, the American people and, of course, the world,” said Daulaire.

The assistant secretary for global health made the remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington April 5 as he participated in a panel on Obama administration health priorities for the next several years. Daulaire said global health security and the capability to respond to pandemic illness are high on that list.

The international community must build “robust systems” with global capabilities, Daulaire said, to detect and respond to infectious disease threats. The capability to achieve that goal is bolstered by “a growing recognition of global interconnectedness” and the broad realization that infectious pathogens can travel as fast as airliners in a world economy.

The U.S. Department of State will be supporting efforts to build health care cooperation through the recently created Office of Global Health Diplomacy. Ambassador Leslie Rowe is leading the office, which will work to provide embassies with the information, support and expertise they need to serve as advocates for improved health systems and increased multilateral cooperation in addressing broad health problems such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Rowe said the office will strive to make public health “a part of the daily diplomatic dialogue that ambassadors engage in.” This new undertaking will also be able to rely on backing from Secretary of State John Kerry, who was a longtime supporter of global health programs as a U.S. senator and who has since spoken about the U.S. role in eradicating polio, fighting HIV/AIDS and improving maternal mortality.

Further expanding the list of health concerns that the Obama administration hopes to tackle in the next few years, Daulaire said the United States must work both domestically and internationally to lower the rates of noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke and the many forms of cancer. These have become leading causes of death in both the developing and developed world, and more effective ways to address those trends must be identified.

The broad sale and distribution of substandard, inferior or counterfeit pharmaceuticals is another global health problem growing in scope. Daulaire said this trafficking in false medications can disappoint and harm a patient hoping for relief, but they can have a broader, more damaging impact.

Some misrepresented pharmaceuticals circulating in the marketplace do contain trace amounts of the real medicinal compounds that the consumer is expecting, Daulaire said. Dispensing such products to patients in a diluted form may allow pathogens to develop a resistance to the drugs, rendering a once-effective medicine useless.

This is a problem that demands coordinated international action for an effective response, Daulaire said. Private companies, as manufacturers and distributors of legitimate medicines, will also have an interest in becoming part of the solution.

Both Daulaire and Rowe foresee attempts to gain greater private sector support in the search for solutions to other global health problems. Multinational companies expanding operations into developing countries, for example, need a vigorous workforce. This workforce, in turn, needs a capable public health system.

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