

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Foreign Aid Request Targets Food Security, Economic Growth

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 25 April 2013

Washington — The Obama administration's budget request for U.S. international aid activities in fiscal year 2014 focuses on food security, maternal and child health, gender equality and poverty reduction through sustainable economic growth, say the heads of America's two leading aid agencies.

Obama is asking Congress to approve \$20.4 billion for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), 6 percent below the amount enacted for each of the last two years, and \$898.2 million for the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the same amount requested for 2013. Fiscal year 2014 begins October 1.

Congressional committees will weigh the requests and send their recommendations to the full Senate and the full House of Representatives. Each of those bodies will determine its recommendation. Representatives of the Senate and the House then will negotiate a final recommendation to be sent to the president for signature or veto. The process could take several months.

### USAID

Testifying April 24 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a House Appropriations subcommittee, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said the president's request for USAID would support the agency's work with major international partnerships, including the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition and the Child Survival Call to Action.

Shah testified along the same lines April 25 before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He was joined that day by MCC Chief Executive Officer Daniel Yohannes.

Shah said the budget request would provide \$269 million for the president's commitment to the New Alliance to unlock the potential of agricultural growth. The alliance aims to lift 50 million people out of poverty by 2014.

The 2014 request supports the goals of creating an AIDS-free generation, ending preventable child and maternal death, and protecting communities from infectious diseases, Shah said. He said the requested budget would scale up high-impact HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment methods and provide \$1.65 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The proposal would bolster USAID's work on human rights and governance, with an emphasis on marginalized groups, including women and youth, Shah said. It would allow USAID to continue to support democratic and economic transitions and provide humanitarian assistance, and allow USAID to help areas experiencing recurrent crises and natural disasters to build resilience.

The budget request includes funding to mobilize a new generation of innovators and scientists. Through its

Development Innovations Venture, USAID invites innovators to contribute cost-effective and cutting-edge ideas for solutions to development challenges that could benefit millions of people, Shah said.

He explained that the budget request would accelerate USAID's Higher Education Solutions Network, in which academically based innovation laboratories in the United States work with global partners to develop solutions. The network is leveraging millions of university and private-sector dollars, Shah said.

Other partnerships Shah described are the Development Credit Authority, which in fiscal 2013 leveraged \$383 million from the private sector for investments in entrepreneurs around the world, and the Global Climate Change Initiative, which brings private-sector investment to help countries transition to climate-resilient, low-emission economic growth.

Shah said USAID wants to continue to close gaps between girls' and boys' access to quality education. It wants to help 100 million children improve their reading skills by 2015 and make access to education more equitable for children in crisis environments, he said.

The administrator said a good example of USAID's efforts to become more efficient and effective is a proposal in the budget request to reform U.S. food aid. The proposal would make the aid more flexible by devoting up to 45 percent of aid resources to procuring food from local producers and providing food aid recipients with cash transfers and electronic vouchers to purchase food for their families.

"At a time of urgent human need and budget constraints, we can save more lives without asking for more money," Shah said.

### MCC

The budget request for MCC would support funding for the five countries that the agency in December 2012 determined qualified to submit proposals for multiyear agreements, Yohannes said.

To qualify for MCC funding, countries are required to practice sound polices and build strong institutions. Results of independent evaluations of countries' performance are published online. Yohannes said other countries are taking notice and enacting reforms so they too can become eligible for MCC assistance.

The fiscal 2014 budget would support MCC's active agreements, or compacts, in 15 countries, and short-term funding for two countries, Yohannes said.

## U.S. Identifies Lebanese Money Exchangers with Links to Hezbollah

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 24 April 2013

Washington — The U.S. government has named two Lebanon-based money exchange businesses as illicit

financiers involved in laundering money from narcotics trafficking and channeling it to the Hezbollah terrorist organization.

Kassem Rmeiti & Company for Exchange and Halawi Exchange Company “move millions of dollars annually on behalf of narcotics traffickers and money launderers and for the benefit of Hezbollah,” Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen said April 23. “This money moves internationally, and a good portion of it comes to banks here in the United States.”

Cohen said Rmeiti Exchange and Halawi Exchange are linked to the Ayman Joumaa narcotics and money-laundering network that has close ties to Hezbollah.

“Make no mistake, Hezbollah is both a full-fledged terrorist organization, lavishly funded over the years by Iran, and an enterprise that increasingly turns to crime to finance itself,” Cohen said.

The U.S. Treasury action aims to forbid any U.S. financial institution from maintaining a correspondent account with Rmeiti Exchange or Halawi Exchange and prohibits any foreign financial institution with a U.S. correspondent account to process transactions from those two exchanges. The intent is to “effectively cut off Rmeiti Exchange and the Halawi Exchange from the U.S.,” Cohen said.

According to Cohen, the cycle of drug trafficking and money laundering starts in South America where the drugs are produced. The drugs are transported to West Africa and Europe. In West Africa, he said, money from drug sales is mixed with money from used car sales. Bulk cash from those transactions is brought to Lebanon and deposited in exchange houses such as Halawi and Rmeiti. From Lebanon, the funds are wire transferred to the United States to purchase used cars, which are sent off to be sold in West Africa, or to Asia to buy consumer goods. Money from the United States and Asia is sent back to South America to buy more drugs.

An agent for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Derek Maltz, said Hezbollah is operating like a major drug cartel.

“Drugs and terrorism coexist across the globe in a marriage of mutual convenience. As state-sponsored terrorism has declined, these dangerous organizations have looked far and wide for resources and revenue to recruit, to corrupt, to train, and to strengthen their regime. Many drug-trafficking groups have stepped up to fill that revenue void, and so has these facilitators, like Rmeiti and Halawi,” he said.

Cohen estimated that the Ayman Joumaa network has laundered tens of millions of dollars for Hezbollah during the past six to 12 months.

Maltz said Ayman Joumaa was indicted by U.S. prosecutors for trafficking 85,000 kilos of cocaine in late 2011. “You can only imagine the amounts of money we’re

talking about moving through this network,” he said.

U.S. court documents show that Joumaa's network has played a major role in the global drug trade for years, helping Colombian producers get their product into the hands of cartels in Central America and Mexico, and from there into the United States.

### **Vietnam Talks Advance Trans-Pacific Partnership**

24 April 2013

Washington — Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis met with Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang on April 23, continuing work on the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Vietnam is one of 11 nations involved in the TPP negotiations, which aim to build a comprehensive agreement liberalizing trade among the member Asia-Pacific nations.

With Sang and in meetings with other officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Vu Van Ninh, Marantis discussed issues that are becoming more important to resolve as the TPP moves closer to conclusion — specifically, market access for American businesses wishing to trade with Vietnam, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said in an April 23 release.

With Vietnam’s Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Minh Quang, Marantis discussed TPP’s groundbreaking proposals to combat illegal trade in wildlife and illegal logging, as well as to address fisheries subsidies, USTR said.

Marantis said the United States expects the final TPP agreement to have high-standard, fully enforceable commitments on the environment, as well as on labor rights.

Two-way trade between the United States and Vietnam has grown from \$1 billion in 2001 to \$26 billion in 2012. The TPP can boost that growing trade further, USTR said.

### **NATO Allies in Agreement on Afghanistan, Syria, North Korea**

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 23 April 2013

Washington — The United States and its NATO allies are in unanimous agreement about Afghanistan never again becoming a haven for terrorists, about the need for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to leave power and for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to cease its provocations, according to Secretary of State John Kerry.

Speaking at the NATO ministerial conference in Brussels April 23, Kerry said, “My counterparts and I reaffirmed our commitment to the Afghan people and to our determination that Afghanistan not again ever become a haven for terrorists.”

“There was a unanimity about the principle that has governed our engagement in Afghanistan — in together,

out together," he said.

Kerry said the NATO mission after 2014 when the allies cease combat operations "will be to support, advise, train the Afghan military on an ongoing basis as well as engage in counterterrorism activity."

Regarding the conflict in Syria, Kerry said the first choice of all the NATO allies is a "political resolution" in which President Bashar al-Assad leaves power to enable Syria to "move forward with its future."

"The mass murder that is taking place outside Damascus is unacceptable. We committed, all of us, to the notion that we must continue to work together in Europe, elsewhere, to root out extremism," Kerry said. He said the humanitarian situation in Syria is reaching "catastrophic proportions."

The NATO allies want to see Syria become a nonsectarian democracy that respects the human rights of all its citizens, particularly members of threatened minorities who fear for their future, Kerry said. He added that because Syria borders NATO member Turkey, the allies are in agreement about deploying Patriot missiles in Turkey to bolster its defense capability with the Syrian conflict raging across the border.

On the sidelines of the NATO consultations, Kerry met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov about Syria. According to Kerry's account, the United States and Russia agree that Assad's departure is inevitable but they have differences of opinion about when and how Assad might leave. Kerry said ultimately Syria's future will be decided by the forces inside Syria.

"You have Assad and you have the opposition, and until they come to some kind of an assessment of what they're willing to do here, this remains a very, very difficult diplomatic initiative to achieve," he said.

Turning to North Korea, the NATO allies unanimously view Pyongyang's provocations as violations of international agreements, a threat to the stability of East Asia and a global threat to nonproliferation, Kerry said. He added that the NATO allies are committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner, and they urge North Korea to join the effort to accomplish that goal.

### **U.S. General Urges More Strategic Dialogue with China**

By Karen Parrish | American Forces Press Service | 23 April 2013

*This article was originally posted April 22 on the Defense Department website.*

Beijing — The strategic rebalance to the Asia-Pacific doesn't mean deploying high numbers of U.S. troops into the region, but it does involve more interest, more engagement and more quality in equipment and capabilities, America's senior military officer said here

April 22.

Army General Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Fang Fenghui, chief of the general staff for the Chinese army, spoke to reporters here during a news conference following about three hours of meetings at the Bayi Building, China's ministry of national defense.

"My theme [on this visit] is quite simple, actually: A stable and prosperous region is in everyone's best interest," Dempsey said.

The two leaders met before the news conference during a small-group meeting for about an hour, then moved to a larger group meeting. As translators rendered Dempsey's remarks in Mandarin and Fang's in English at the news conference, the pair spoke with similar voices on topics including terrorism, North Korea, disaster relief and cyber attacks.

Responding to a reporter's question asking his stance on North Korean nuclear capability, Fang said he always has maintained that the Korean Peninsula should be free of nuclear weapons.

"We are thoroughly opposed to the nuclear test conducted by the [North Korean government]," he said. "We support the U.N. Security Council in appropriate and reasonable sanctions against North Korea."

Fang said he thinks peaceful dialogue is the most desirable approach to resolving multinational concerns about North Korea's nuclear ambitions. The last round of Six-Party talks aimed at the issue — involving North and South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia — was in 2009.

"We ask all sides to work actively ... [to persuade] the North Koreans to stop the nuclear tests and to stop producing nuclear weapons," he said.

Fang also answered a question about cyber attacks in the wake of recent reports that many are launched from within China's army. He said cyber attacks are a concern for all "big cyber countries."

If the Internet is not managed well, he said, "it may bring damaging consequences." He added, "If the security of the Internet cannot be guaranteed, then ... results may be as serious as a nuclear bomb."

China is a major victim of cyber attacks, he said, and the nation's leaders have no tolerance for it. Fang pointed out, however, that pinpointing the source of attacks can be very difficult, as the Internet is open to everyone and attacks can be launched from anywhere.

"General Dempsey and I have already talked about the importance of maintaining cybersecurity," he said. "I believe it is important that we check out the idea that we should jointly work on this issue."

Dempsey responded to a reporter's assertion that three obstacles inhibit U.S.-Chinese relations: U.S. arms sales to

Taiwan, reconnaissance by U.S. ships and aircraft, and “the discriminatory laws against China.” The reporter asked what the United States can do to improve the relationship.

“We talked about all three of those issues today, and another three, four or five beyond that,” the chairman said. “And maybe isn’t that the point? It’s the first time we’ve spoken about these issues.”

The two nations have frequent military-to-military contact on the tactical level, Dempsey said, but could benefit by more frequent senior-leader engagement. “It’s our desire, both of us, that we maintain dialogue at the strategic level. ... We are committed to building a better, deeper, more enduring relationship,” the chairman said.

It’s important that each side do that while keeping in mind the other side’s commitments to other nations, Dempsey said. The United States considers its relationship with China in the context of historic and enduring alliances in the region, he noted.

“This isn’t about choosing any one or the other,” he said. “We have some treaty obligations, but we will build this relationship by increasing our contact at the strategic level and recognizing [those alliances].”

The final question was to Dempsey, asking why the United States conducts military exercises in China’s vicinity. Dempsey said the answer “is probably at the core of why I’ve made this visit.”

The United States is and has been a Pacific power, and while its military has been particularly active and busy in the Middle East, it has never left and will not leave the Asia-Pacific, the chairman said.

“Our intention, of course, is to contribute to stability in a way that protects our national interests, which are very much tied to this region,” he said.

Dempsey said the United States seeks to be a stabilizing influence in the region. “We believe that it would be our absence that would be a destabilizing influence on the region, not our presence,” he added.

Fang led the news conference by welcoming Dempsey and his delegation, and said he hopes the chairman’s visit furthers the exchange of ideas between the two nations’ militaries.

In his opening remarks, Dempsey thanked Fang for his hospitality and offered his condolences for the victims of the April 21 Sichuan earthquake, which left a reported 189 people dead and injured more than 11,000. The chairman also complimented Fang on the Chinese army’s quick response after the earthquake, and the general’s leadership of that effort.

The chairman also expressed sympathy for the family of Lu Lingzi, a Chinese graduate student who had been pursuing a master’s degree at Boston University when she was killed in the Boston Marathon bombings April 15.

She “was a gifted student, tragically killed,” he said. “Our thoughts and prayers go out to her grieving family.”

Dempsey arrived in Beijing April 21 after a stop in South Korea. Later this week, he will continue his Asia trip with a visit to Japan.

### **Kerry Urges Turkey’s Erdoğan to Postpone Gaza Visit**

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 22 April 2013

Washington – Secretary of State John Kerry has asked Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to postpone a visit to Gaza.

“We have expressed to the prime minister that we really think that it would be better delayed,” Kerry said after a meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Istanbul April 21. “We thought that the timing of it is really critical with respect to the peace process that we’re trying to get off the ground.”

Erdoğan had tentatively planned to visit Gaza in May after a visit to the United States. Gaza is governed by Hamas, a rival to the Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank under Abbas’s leadership.

Israel and Turkey are in the process of restoring full diplomatic relations, which Turkey downgraded in 2010 after Israeli forces blocked a flotilla of Turkish ships trying to deliver relief supplies to Gaza.

Kerry said Erdoğan’s trip to Washington is an important step in the effort to revive the Israel-Palestinian peace process and move toward improved living conditions for the people of Gaza. “Turkey can play a role in helping us to do that,” Kerry said. Turkey has indicated its interest in spurring business development and investment in the Palestinian Territories.

A few days before his meeting with Abbas in Istanbul, Kerry met former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who heads the Quartet, an international group supporting Israel-Palestinian peace, as well as the president of the Coca-Cola Company and other business people. Blair and the business people “are all part of our initiative to try to change life in the West Bank as rapidly as possible, create some transformative economic issues,” Kerry said.

Regarding the recent resignation of Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Kerry said Fayyad has been a “very, very important force in the development of a viable Palestinian Authority on the West Bank.”

“I am convinced Salam Fayyad will continue to be involved in the development efforts and the politics of the Palestinian Authority,” Kerry said.

### **Vietnam Visit Designed to Advance Trans-Pacific Partnership**

22 April 2013

Washington – Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis arrived in Hanoi, Vietnam, April 22

to meet with officials about the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The TPP negotiations — which are aimed at a high-standard, comprehensive agreement to liberalize trade among member Asia-Pacific nations — are at an advanced stage, and minister-level officials for all the member countries committed in recent days to talk more with one another to make sure that key issues are resolved, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said in an April 22 release.

As part of that effort, Marantis met with the head of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, Dang Ngoc Tung, to stress how important it is to the United States that the final TPP agreement include strong, enforceable labor provisions, including a responsibility to adopt and maintain the five core International Labour Organization standards on workers' rights, including the freedom to associate.

Marantis expressed to Vietnamese Vice Minister of Planning and Investment Dang Huy Dong the need for progress on investment issues that will improve access for U.S. investors. Marantis also discussed the importance of "high ambition" in the TPP, which will allow for greater flow of goods and services among TPP countries, USTR said.

The 11-member TPP — which is set to expand to include Japan following the successful conclusion of the domestic processes of the current TPP members — includes countries at varying levels of development. While all TPP partners are expected to meet the agreement's standards, USTR said, the United States has committed to work with Vietnam to provide technical assistance and to consider other flexibilities that will help it meet the high standards of the TPP.

### **World Bank, IMF Set Ambitious Poverty-Reduction Goal**

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 22 April 2013

Washington — The World Bank and International Monetary Fund want to reduce to 3 percent the share of the world's population living in extreme poverty by 2030.

The ambitious goal is an extension of the Millennium Development Goal of cutting in half the percentage of people who live in poverty between 1999 and 2015. That goal was set by world leaders at the United Nations in 2000.

"We believe that we have a historic opportunity to end extreme poverty within a generation," the institutions said in a communiqué from their joint Development Committee.

"Achieving this goal will require strong growth across the developing world, as well as translation of growth into poverty reduction to an extent not seen before in many low income countries," they said in the communiqué,

issued April 20 during the annual World Bank-IMF spring meetings in Washington.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon joined the meetings. In a statement following the sessions, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim noted that all three institutions can be more effective if they combine forces to address economic development and security.

The Development Committee said it remains committed to the Millennium Development Goals aimed at reducing hunger, improving health, especially for women and children, and achieving universal access to primary education, gender equality and environmental sustainability. It called on the World Bank to step up its support of the goals.

The committee said sustained economic growth requires investments that create opportunities for all citizens and focus on people who are vulnerable to becoming poor. It set the goal of bettering the incomes of people who are in the bottom 40 percent of every country's population.

The committee further said that achieving growth must be done in a sustainable manner. "The welfare of current and future generations requires securing the future of our planet, ensuring social inclusion, and limiting the economic debt inherited by future generations," it said.

It noted that with adequate infrastructure and policies that promote competition and entrepreneurship, the private sector can participate in developing countries' prosperity and offer job opportunities to all citizens.

The committee called for World Bank members to make strong funding commitments to the bank's International Development Association so it can support countries that address challenges such as climate change, crisis response and gender equality.

On climate change, one of the themes of the spring meetings, the committee asked the bank and the IMF to support countries that want to transition to low-carbon growth and make their cities resilient to climate risks. It noted that 3.6 billion people now live in cities, compared to 1.5 billion 20 years ago.

The committee also asked the institutions to request that countries phase out inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption and to scale up efforts to adopt climate-smart agriculture. Climate-smart agriculture includes proven practices like conservation tillage, mulching, intercropping, crop rotation, integrated crop-livestock management, agro-forestry, improved grazing, and water management.

Kim added that the meetings also addressed the need for countries to invest in education and health. He said that without investments in education so that children not only go to school but also learn, and without investments in health systems that provide quality care, "countries will miss the opportunity to ... determine their competitive position in the global economy."

"Investment in people ... is the right thing to do, both from a moral and a strategic perspective," he said.

The Development Committee next meets October 12 in Washington.

### **Treasury Secretary Affirms U.S. Support of World Bank**

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 22 April 2013

Washington — The Obama administration will continue to work with the World Bank and other multilateral institutions to promote global prosperity and to help low-income countries build resilience to climate change, Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew said in an April 19 statement to the Development Committee of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The committee gathered during the annual World Bank-IMF spring meetings April 19-21 in Washington.

Lew urged the World Bank to do more to promote reforms that assure that the benefits of growth are shared, adding that a country cannot sustain growth if its policies include exclusion, inequity and corruption. He said that expanding incomes of the middle class and empowering women are key to sustainable growth.

Lew outlined challenges the World Bank faces. One is improving agricultural production, particularly among smallholder farmers in low-income countries who have poor access to credit, low quality or not enough seeds and fertilizers, poorly functioning local and regional markets, and weak infrastructure.

He said the United States has provided nearly \$330 million to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program to help low-income countries strengthen their agricultural sectors. He added that the United States will continue its support of the World Bank-based program and stressed that "addressing global food insecurity remains a long-term challenge." He urged other donors to increase their financial backing of the program. The program was launched by the world's top 20 economies in 2012 to coordinate donor support for strategic, country-led agricultural and food security plans.

Lew also urged the Bank to give more attention to building rural infrastructure and to improving health care systems, especially those that serve women and children. He noted that the two are linked in that rural roads provide access to health facilities. World Bank support would complement the support of other donors in these areas, he said.

The treasury secretary said the World Bank is well-positioned to regularly assess the institutions and practices that are most effective in supporting the potential of women. He said studies have shown that women use their incomes to invest in their children's health and education. He also said the United States would like the Bank to give more attention to gender-

based violence.

Lew warned that climate change threatens to turn back much of the progress achieved in development and push some people back into poverty. The World Bank recently concluded that both advanced economies and growing economies that are fast becoming large emitters of greenhouse gases need to cut back on their emissions.

Lew said the United States will back the World Bank's strategy of helping countries eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, incorporate climate-smart land use practices and design targeted safety nets for people affected by those changes. He suggested that the Bank's International Development Association — its fund for the lowest-income countries — incorporate climate resilience into its programs for fragile countries.

Another area in which Lew said the Bank can be more active is in mobilizing local and foreign investment. "High and low income countries alike are searching for new ways to create jobs," he said. He added that the Bank also can do more to maximize the impact of its investments.

"We will continue to press the World Bank Group to play a leading role in private-sector development," he said.

### **U.S. Welcomes Japan to Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade Talks**

22 April 2013

Washington — Acting U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis April 21 hailed a "steady march forward" on job-supporting trade and investment priorities at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings of ministers responsible for trade, and he reiterated the United States' welcome to Japan as the newest participant in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) talks.

Marantis led the U.S. delegation at the APEC meetings in Surabaya, Indonesia, and chaired meetings of the 11 TPP ministers on the margins of the APEC event, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said.

"The cooperative work of APEC economies in Surabaya has underscored the essential contributions this body is making to trade and economic growth in the Asia-Pacific and around the world," said Marantis, who praised Indonesia's leadership in hosting the gathering. "From steps to improve supply chain performance, increase trade in environmental goods, promote innovation and adopt better regulatory practices, to tackling the troubling trend of local content requirements, there is a steady march forward by APEC economies to deepen our economic integration and improve opportunities in the region."

Marantis also welcomed the announcement April 20 that TPP ministers had agreed by consensus to bring Japan into the ambitious regional trade talks, pending successful

conclusion of each member's respective domestic procedures.

"TPP negotiations continue to move forward at a dynamic and promising pace. The TPP membership was already robust, presenting economic opportunities for the United States and every member country, and the addition of Japan increases its significance and its potential across the board," Marantis said.

As the APEC meetings came to a close, Marantis and Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Michael Punke, the U.S. ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO), cited the broadening concern among APEC economies about the scope and direction of multilateral trade discussions in Geneva.

"APEC economies cautioned this week that there must be a course correction if the WTO is to produce any results on trade facilitation and other key priorities at the Bali ministerial this December," Marantis said. "We share the determination of our fellow APEC members to work together and shape a realistic package in Geneva now. This is necessary not only to produce economic opportunities for Members, especially developing countries, but also to restore faith in the WTO's ability to deliver multilateral results."

From Surabaya, Marantis will travel to Hanoi, Vietnam, for meetings on the Trans-Pacific Partnership and bilateral issues, USTR said.

### **United States Doubles Aid to Syrian Opposition**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 21 April 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the United States is doubling nonlethal humanitarian assistance to the regime opposition in Syria to underscore America's firm support for a political resolution to the two-year-old violent crisis in Syria.

The aid was announced by Kerry followed a marathon meeting with Syrian Opposition Coalition President Moaz al-Khatib, members of the coalition's leadership and other international partners supporting the opposition. That meeting ended early April 21 in Istanbul. In a written announcement, Kerry said the aid is also "for the opposition's advancement of an inclusive, tolerant vision for a post-Assad Syria."

"This conflict is now spilling across borders and is now threatening neighboring countries," Kerry said during a press briefing with al-Khatib and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. "The president directed me to step up our efforts."

The new assistance is scheduled to be provided by April 30.

Opposition leader al-Khatib told journalists that "our revolution is for the entire Syrian people." The coalition issued a communiqué at the conclusion of the meeting

declaring that its stated aim is "a political solution" to the civil conflict, that it rejected extremism, and that a post-Assad Syria would be both pluralistic and based on the rule of law.

The United States pledged an additional \$123 million assistance package that brings the total U.S. nonlethal assistance to the opposition and to civil society groups to \$250 million since civil strife began in Syria.

And Kerry announced approximately \$25 million in additional food assistance for Syrians who remain inside Syria as well as those who have fled to nearby countries, recognizing the devastating humanitarian situation as a result of the ongoing crisis. "The United States is the largest donor of food assistance both within Syria and for refugees in the affected neighboring countries and is providing a total of \$409 million in humanitarian assistance for the Syrian crisis," the written statement said.

The food aid will provide 25,500 metric tons of wheat — providing a four-month supply of flour to more than 1 million people — as well as food rations for those inside Syria and refugees in Jordan affected by the violence, the statement said. And the U.N. World Food Programme will begin distributing the wheat to those in need in all 14 Syrian governorates as quickly as possible, the State Department said.

According to the United Nations, more than 70,000 people have been killed in the ongoing civil conflict.

The crisis began March 15, 2011, largely as popular, peaceful protests, but expanded into a civil conflict in response to a violent crackdown by the regime of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. Assad deployed the Syrian army in April 2011 to halt the nationwide protests. The protesters have demanded the resignation of Assad and his regime.

Kerry also urged international partners gathered in Istanbul, as well as Friends of the Syrian People, to make similar pledges of assistance to the coalition and the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the military wing of the opposition coalition, with the goal of reaching \$1 billion in total international support for the opposition, the statement said.

"The United States will also use a portion of this non-lethal assistance to implement President Obama's directive to provide an expanded range of support to the Supreme Military Council," the statement said. "We intend to expand this new support beyond military food rations and medical kits to include other types of non-lethal supplies, which would be determined in collaboration with SMC leadership."

Kerry said that the United States will work with the Syrian coalition and other opposition representatives to determine how the new nonlethal assistance can best support their efforts to meet the needs of the Syrian

people and lead the way to a political transition that will bring an end to the civil conflict.

Kerry met with al-Khatib and the Syrian Opposition Coalition and foreign ministers from the core group of nations supporting opposition efforts in Syria. This group is known as the London 11, and, in addition to the United States, involves Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Italy, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom, according to a senior State Department official in a background briefing en route to Istanbul April 19.

While in Istanbul Kerry is also scheduled to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. He also will hold security and bilateral consultations with Turkish leaders, according to a senior State Department official.

The secretary leaves April 22 for meetings with NATO foreign ministers in Brussels that will include a series of bilateral talks, the NATO-Russia Council and a separate meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

### **Democratic Trends in Mideast, Burma Headline Rights Report**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 19 April 2013

Washington — The difficulty of systemic transition in Middle East nations and measured progress toward democracy in Burma are the highlights of the *2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, issued by the U.S. Department of State April 19.

“The hope of the early days of the Arab Awakening has run up against the harsh realities of incomplete and contested transitions,” according to the report’s introduction.

Citizens of the region demonstrated for dignity, education and self-determination in 2011, but many found continued resistance in 2012. Secretary of State John Kerry presented the report at a press briefing.

“The vision of so many who have fought and sacrificed across the region will never be realized if their human rights are denied or ignored,” Kerry said. He decried the “murder, mayhem and more bloodshed” that Bashar al-Assad has inflicted on the people of Syria and their two-year pursuit of greater human rights.

Burma’s “historic transition towards democracy” is one of the positive highlights for human rights in 2012. Kerry said the “calm courage” of democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi has helped bring Burma to this crossroads and will continue to do so in the future.

“After decades of confinement, not unlike Nelson Mandela,” Kerry said, “she has come out and been able to forgive, and to start working alongside her former captors to try to build a stronger and freer Burma.”

If Burma remains on this path, Kerry said, its people will discover what advocates of human rights understand to

their bones — where human rights are strong, people have better lives. “Economies thrive, rule of law is stronger, governments are more effective and responsive,” Kerry said. “They are countries that lead on the world stage and project stability across their regions.”

Besides a country-by-country analysis of human rights activity in 199 nations, the 2012 report cites some trends that are gaining disturbing momentum. The findings reveal what is described as a “shrinking space for civil society activism.”

“2012 saw new laws impeding or preventing the exercise of freedoms of expression, assembly, association and religion, [and] heightened restriction on organizations receiving funding from abroad,” said Uzra Zeya, acting assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, who appeared at the briefing with Kerry.

She also cited “the harassment, arrest and killing of political, human rights and labor activists.” Nations harm themselves, the report asserts, when they do not open themselves to a lively public dialogue. Discussion and dissent among diverse individuals in a free society brings new ideas and energies into a society.

Open and vibrant media are also an important pillar of a dynamic nation, and the 2012 report reveals disturbing trends in that regard as well.

“Record numbers of journalists were killed in the line of duty or as a consequence of their reporting,” Zeya said. She said some countries are manipulating their laws to incarcerate and stifle journalists, even while citizens are gaining access to technology tools and using new media for social discussion and the exchange of ideas.

The 2012 human rights report also criticized persistent social policies persecuting vulnerable groups, such as women and girls; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons; people with disabilities; and other minority groups. Legal migrant workers are another group that does not receive adequate protection under current laws in many nations, the report states.

While Kerry reviewed this annual presentation many times as a member of the U.S. Senate, the 2012 report is the first to be issued during his term as secretary of state. He called the compilation and release of the report a department activity that inspires great pride, demonstrating the nation’s commitment to fundamental values for all people and to the individuals still seeking those rights in some of the world’s darker corners.

The annual report on human rights is prepared by the State Department under a mandate from the U.S. Congress. The report, begun in the 1970s, is viewed as a national responsibility to highlight international human rights standards. Congress uses the report as a reference in shaping and funding foreign policy decisions.

The full text of [2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) is available on the State Department website.

## World Meets Poverty Reduction Goal

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 19 April 2013

Washington – Global extreme poverty fell to 21 percent in 2011, less than half of the poverty rate in 1990, the World Bank reports.

The World Bank said the drop in the percentage of people living in poverty means that the world has met the first Millennium Development Goal to significantly reduce hunger and poverty. Eight goals centered on improving people's lives were set by world leaders at the United Nations in 2000 with a target date of 2015.

The achievement was cited in the bank's 2013 World Development Indicators report, released April 18 at the start of the annual World Bank-International Monetary Fund spring meetings in Washington. The report includes the latest data available. Extreme poverty is defined as living on \$1.25 or less a day.

The world also made progress toward other goals, the bank said. Girls' primary school enrollment jumped from 86 percent of boys' enrollment in 1990 to 97 percent in 2011. Girls' secondary school enrollment also went up – from 78 percent of boys' enrollment in 1990 to 96 percent in 2011, the World Bank said.

The mortality rate for children age 5 and younger fell from an average of 95 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 56 in 2011. In all, 41 countries are set to reach the child mortality reduction goal by 2015 and many other countries are stepping up progress, the bank said.

The U.S. Agency for International Development partners with the World Bank on an array of international development projects aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In his State of the Union address, President Obama made a commitment to end extreme poverty in the next two decades.

The economies of many developing countries continue to grow faster than advanced economies, the bank said. Notably, India became the world's third-largest economy in 2011 behind the United States and China, with Japan, Germany, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Brazil and Italy filling out the top 10.

Mongolia grew at the second-fastest rate, at nearly 16 percent in 2011, while the Macau administrative region of China had the highest growth rate, at 18 percent. They were followed by Lithuania, Latvia, Turkmenistan, Ghana, Qatar, Panama, China and Estonia, the bank reported.

### WORLD BANK PRESIDENT KIM

Speaking to reporters at the start of the meetings, World Bank President Jim Young Kim said developing countries now account for more than half of global growth. He said that to end extreme poverty, developing countries need to accelerate their growth, and translate growth into jobs that will benefit all population groups. Growth also needs

to be resilient to potential shocks like weather-related disasters, or food, fuel or financial crises. He called climate change a threat to economic development as well as an environmental challenge.

Kim specified the bank's growing areas of interest. One area is climate change. About 130 countries have asked the World Bank for assistance in managing climate change, and the bank invested \$9 billion in agriculture in 2012.

The bank wants to ensure that "every single project we do is focused on what we call climate smart agriculture ... like help to recover degraded lands [and] help to increase yields by bringing in varieties of crops that quite literally have longer roots and take more carbon and put it back into the earth," Kim said. The bank also wants to find ways to provide developing countries with sustainable sources of energy, he said.

"Unless the world takes bold action now, a disastrously warming planet threatens to put prosperity out of reach of millions and roll back decades of development and poverty reduction," he said.

Kim said that the bank is shifting some of its funds to help fragile and conflict-affected countries and that it wants to help meet the "huge needs for infrastructure in the in BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Of a BRICS Development Bank proposed by those countries, Kim said he saw such a bank not as a rival but as a natural extension of the need for more investment in infrastructure. "We would welcome it," he said.

[More information on the spring meetings](#) is on the World Bank website.

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