

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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U.S., Bangladesh, Private Partners Work to Improve Worker Safety

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 09 May 2013

Washington – U.S. government agencies are enlisting the cooperation of U.S. buyers in Bangladesh’s ready-made garment industry to work with Bangladeshi authorities on the shared interest of ensuring safe working conditions.

Two weeks after a Bangladeshi garment factory collapse killed more than 900, officials at the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative convened a conference call May 8 with U.S. buyers in Bangladesh’s garment industry to discuss U.S. efforts to improve workers’ rights and working conditions in Bangladesh and to review how the private sector can assist.

There is an urgent need for government, business owners, buyers and labor organizations to work together to improve labor safety and the lives of working people in Bangladesh, said Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O. Blake Jr. and State Department Special Representative for International Labor Affairs Barbara Shailor.

In a media note released May 9, the State Department said that “both the United States and Bangladesh have a shared interest in ensuring that the growth of Bangladesh’s export sector does not come at the expense of safe and healthy working conditions or fundamental labor rights.”

According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the country is the world’s second-largest apparel exporter, after China. But Bangladesh has recently suffered a number of high-profile tragedies in its garment industry. On May 8, a fire in an 11-story garment factory in Dhaka killed eight people. The collapse of a garment factory building in April at Rana Plaza in Savar City killed more than 900 people. Still another factory fire in Savar in November 2012 killed 112 people.

The State Department is urging U.S. buyers to coordinate efforts with each other and with the government of Bangladesh and the BGMEA, as well as civil society and labor groups, on factory safety and fire safety initiatives, including helping pay for independent safety and fire inspectors. Buyers have been asked to communicate their concerns about labor conditions to the BGMEA and the Bangladeshi government, and to urge immediate passage of labor law amendments to lay the basis for the establishment of an International Labour Organization and International Finance Corporation Better Work

Program.

In 2012, in testimony delivered during a July 19 during hearing on human rights held by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in the U.S. Congress, Eric Biel, acting associate deputy under secretary of labor in the Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs, said U.S. concerns about labor rights in Bangladesh are significant and cut across key sectors of the economy. These include, he said, “violations of freedom of association and unsafe working conditions in the rapidly growing garment sector, as well as child labor in the ‘informal’ garment sector.”

Biel emphasized that the most important responsibility of the U.S. government is “engaging directly with the people in Bangladesh who are in the forefront of efforts to improve the protection of workers’ rights. Many of them put their lives at risk every day in order to advance that goal.”

Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders Important to U.S. History

09 May 2013

Washington – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell May 9 underscored the importance of recognizing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders’ contributions to the United States’ rich heritage.

She lauded efforts to commemorate and interpret Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) culture and history, particularly through the National Park Service, in order to tell a more complete story of the United States.

“Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have long been leaders in every aspect of our social fabric – in government, business, science, medicine, the arts, education and our armed forces,” Jewell said, according to a Department of the Interior press release of the same date.

“From Angel Island, where more than 1 million Asian immigrants arrived on these shores, to the Chinese immigrants who helped build the railroads across the country, to the Japanese American internment camps of World War II, these stories are all important threads in the great American tapestry.”

Jewell spoke at a White House forum that was hosted by the Interior Department, along with the White House Office of Public Engagement and the White House AAPI Initiative. The forum attracted scholars and other leaders from the AAPI community to celebrate Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, observed in May, and discuss the National Park Service’s new Asian American Pacific Islander Theme Study.

Under the leadership of Franklin Odo, former head of the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, scholars are developing a theme study and other materials over the next 18 months to further the understanding of how the National Park Service might appropriately identify and understand AAPI heritage and culture.

“The Asian American Pacific Islander Theme Study is an important first step in what must be a longer journey to more completely document and preserve Asian American Pacific Islander heritage sites across our country,” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis.

“The National Park Service remains committed that our parks and historic preservation programs reflect the diversity of the American experience, and this study will allow us to add to the growing body of resources that tell the AAPI story,” Jarvis said.

Jewell said the theme study is part of an overall effort by the Obama administration to commemorate the contributions of women and minorities that have been not been fully recognized in the past.

“This is a pivotal moment for our community – the National Park Service AAPI Theme Study is an invitation for all of us to share the incredible contributions we have made to our country's rich cultural and natural heritage,” said Rhea Suh, Interior Department assistant secretary for policy, management and budget. “I am proud and honored to be part of Interior's efforts to build a department that reflects the needs and diversity of America and look forward to continuing this conversation.”

Jewell highlighted steps that have already been taken to represent a more inclusive story of the AAPI contributions to U.S. history. These include the designation earlier in 2013 of the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience in Seattle as an affiliated area of the National Park System, which recognizes the national significance and mission of the museum.

Jewell also recognized the Interior Department's distinct responsibility, through the Office of Insular Affairs, to work with the United States' island areas to empower them and to help find solutions to their most pressing challenges.

“The federal government, under this administration, through its various initiatives, is working daily to find innovative approaches to highlight and showcase some of our unique cultural sites and historic artifacts that celebrate Americans in and from the Asia-Pacific region,” said Eileen Sobeck, acting deputy assistant secretary for insular affairs.

“In many ways our gathering is a reflection of our commitment to this initiative,” Sobeck said, “but also a demonstration of our collective duty to holistically represent and celebrate peoples from Asian-American Pacific Islander identities.”

U.S. Prepares for Insect Invasion 17 Years in the Making

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 07 May 2013

Washington — They have been living at least 20 centimeters underground for the past 17 years. This spring billions of cicadas known as Magicicada septendecim will emerge to invade parts of the U.S. East Coast, filling the skies and trees and making a lot of noise.

There are more than 170 species of cicada in North America, and over 2,000 species around the world. Most appear every year, but certain types operate on a 13- or 17-year schedule. This year's visitors, known as Brood II, were last seen in 1996 and are one of the insect's largest populations. People living between North Carolina and Connecticut may need to use shovels and rakes to clear them out of the way. Estimates of their eventual number are ranging from 30 billion to 1 trillion.

It may sound like some kind of biblical plague, but the insects are harmless and most people will only be annoyed in trying to avoid them, and by the incessantly loud drone of male cicadas singing in search of a mate. For nature and science lovers, their periodic appearance is actually a very interesting phenomenon.

According to the National Geographic Society, researchers have theorized that cicadas following a 13- or 17-year life cycle have evolved to follow this schedule to make it difficult for predators such as birds and squirrels to anticipate when they will emerge from the ground to molt into adult bodies and reproduce.

Another theory suggests that their life cycles evolved during the Pleistocene Epoch, which began 2.6 million years ago and lasted until around 12,000 years ago. That era was characterized by dramatic temperature fluctuations, and the insect could have adapted to prolonged colder periods when it would have been impossible for immature cicadas, known as nymphs, to emerge from the ground.

A Brazilian study published in 2004 suggested that most cicadas “didn't just settle on a random number, but instead found that intervals based on prime numbers — integers divisible by only one and themselves (3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, etc.) — offered the best breeding strategy for staying alive,” National Geographic reported April 19.

The true reason for the periodic cycle remains unknown,

as well as how the cicada has somehow developed such an innate sense of time. During their long life underground, cicada nymphs survive on xylem fluids that they suck from tree roots. When their year to emerge finally arrives, the nymphs wait until the soil has reached a temperature of 18 degrees Celsius before venturing out. Following the East Coast spring climate, the Brood II cicada invasion will move from south to north. Some parts of North Carolina have already reported sightings.

CICADA PREDATORS INCLUDE HUMANS

For their first week above ground, cicada nymphs are easy targets for birds, reptiles, squirrels and even people. According to a May 6 article in *Popular Mechanics*, they have "been described as tasting like asparagus, popcorn, and pine cones," and the magazine directs readers to a website featuring recipes for cicada-portobello quiche, cicada sauerbraten, cicada-cheese wontons, and German chocolate cicada cake, among other items.

At the same time, eating too many can reportedly result in painful stomach cramps. The American Humane Society has also warned pet owners that the plethora of insects can present a choking hazard and in large amounts can wreak havoc on animal digestive systems. Would-be human and pet consumers also need to beware of cicadas that have been treated with pesticides.

After a molting period of a few days, the adult cicada develops wings, discards its shell, and orients its entire life's purpose toward reproducing the species. To attract a mate, the males group in trees and chirp what some consider the loudest sound to be produced by insects. They rapidly push air through an organ on their abdomen called a tymbal, and the sound is amplified due to the fact that their abdomens are somewhat hollow.

The noise level under a tree full of cicadas can reach 90 decibels, which is comparable to a small engine or a lawnmower. Scientists have found that along with attracting females, the loud noise repels and confuses birds. Males have apparently evolved to sing together and increase the total amount of noise in order to better protect themselves.

By mid-July, the cicada invasion will likely be over. Soon after the adults have mated and females have laid their eggs in tree limbs, they will die. In late summer, newborn nymphs will hatch and drop to the ground to burrow below the surface. The next generation of Brood II will return in 2030 to repeat this fascinating life cycle.

The Changing Face of America's Chinatowns

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 07 May 2013

Washington — Most major American cities have a

"Chinatown," easily identified by Chinese-language shop and street signs, Chinese restaurants and merchants selling Chinese goods. The neighborhoods have long histories and are popular tourist destinations, but like many sections of urban America, they face the challenge of development and rising property costs as they try to maintain their tradition as ethnic residential areas.

New immigrants to the United States have often tried to settle among those coming from the same country, making their transition easier by having immediate access to community support networks for jobs, housing and worship, and living in a neighborhood where fluent English skills are not a necessity.

Like the Chinese, who began immigrating to the United States in the mid-19th century, other groups established neighborhoods like "Little Italy," "Irish town" and "Little Havana" as areas to live, work and socialize. But while many urban U.S. neighborhoods are still named for a predominant ethnic group and retain some of their character, economic conditions and assimilation have often dramatically changed the residential makeup. Are America's Chinatowns facing a similar risk?

In both San Francisco, which hosts the oldest American Chinatown, and New York, which is home to the largest, Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans are increasingly found in the suburbs instead of the urban centers. Many affluent and better educated immigrants have typically moved directly to suburbia. But Chinatowns have traditionally served as attractive destinations for lower-skilled workers lacking English-language skills.

Part of the broader trend toward suburbia can be blamed upon the urban renewal process known as "gentrification," in which aging buildings and homes are renovated or replaced by new, higher-priced living spaces, raising nearby property values and forcing many long-time residents and lower-income families to find a cheaper place to live.

Employment is another factor. During much of the 20th century, the U.S. Chinatown economy relied heavily upon garment factories, laundry services and restaurants that supplied jobs within the neighborhood. Ironically, competition from Chinese imports has forced many garment factories to close, and with fewer nearby job prospects, many residents have also opted to move to suburban neighborhoods.

A third reason is the reduced number of Chinese immigrants. China's rapid economic expansion has led to higher wages and better job opportunities back home, making overseas emigration less appealing, and thereby limiting the repopulation of Chinatowns as assimilated

residents decide to leave.

In fact, New York's Chinatown, which grew large enough to expand into areas of Little Italy, is now home to many other immigrants from Asian countries, as well as newcomers from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The effects of gentrification have likewise attracted many young urban professionals to the area.

To showcase the changes in its local Chinatown, Boston.com published a photo gallery to compare the neighborhood with the way it looked in 1987. The photos show how an old theater has been converted into an upscale apartment building, coffee shops have replaced adult video stores and mainstream chain stores have moved into the neighborhood.

CHINATOWN STILL AN ENTRY POINT FOR IMMIGRANTS

Despite its changed character, Chinatown remains the cultural and economic center for new Chinese immigrants in Boston, according to Tunney Lee, a professor who has studied the neighborhood's history. "It's the most flourishing ethnic neighborhood in the city," Lee told Boston.com.

Many of today's Chinatowns still provide an instant community to Chinese newcomers. In New York, the infrastructure set up by Chinese groups such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and other organizations is increasingly being tapped by immigrants from places like Eritrea, Iran and Mexico, according to a February 22, 2011, article that appeared in the New York Times.

"It's an entry point," anthropologist Kenneth J. Guest told the Times. "The Chinatown infrastructure, which has been set up to be part of a whole migration industry for Chinese coming into the country, has begun to be accessed by other immigrant groups looking for a way into the low-wage labor market."

Not all urban U.S. Chinatowns are facing the same level of economic pressure from rising property values. In Chicago, for example, the population has increased by more than 24 percent – to 7,254 – in the last decade, according to a January 17, 2012, article published by Northwestern University's Medill Reports.

Theresa Mah, a policy consultant with the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community, told Medill Reports that many of the newer housing options, as well as adjacent areas, remain affordable and are attracting new immigrants. Their presence will boost demand for English-language classes, bilingual social services and education, she said.

"New immigrants continue to see this area as a port of entry," Mah said, "because it is close to jobs that they can get without English skills, social services through the long-established agencies in the community, and good public transportation that serves the area."

Hopefully, many more American Chinatowns will be able to retain not only their character, but also the residents that have helped to set the neighborhoods apart from the surrounding city. Chinatown represents more than just a haven for tourists looking for interesting areas to explore, but also how American immigrants have been able to make a place for themselves and create a unique mixture of old and new traditions within the most populous U.S. cities.

President Obama Sees Energy as Benefit to Central American Economy

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 06 May 2013

Washington – The United States is working with the countries of Central America to develop its energy sector in order to bring down the high price of electricity and bring in investment and jobs.

President Obama said in a meeting with business leaders in Costa Rica May 4 that the high cost of electricity in Central America is a burden to businesses and families in the region.

Obama said Costa Rica already is getting 90 percent of its energy from renewable sources, indicating that it already has technology, expertise and a tradition of renewable energy. The president proposed that the United States collaborate in research and technology and form joint ventures to advance renewable energy in Central America.

"If any of us find good answers to renewable energy, that will spread like wildfire and everybody will ultimately benefit," he said.

Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla, speaking at a news conference with Obama in San Jose May 3, said energy is "a fundamental issue that undoubtedly is going to define the progress and the joint development not only between the United States of America and Costa Rica, but also between the United States and the Central American region."

A White House fact sheet released May 4 said the United States supports the creation of the Central American Electrical Interconnection System, which aims to connect Central American electricity grids from Guatemala to Panama.

"Interconnection creates larger markets that can help

attract the \$25 billion in power-sector investments needed in Central America by 2030," the fact sheet said. It added that the rich geothermal, solar, wind and hydropower resources of Central America will provide the elements of a diversified, lower-carbon power sector.

In June, the Inter-American Development Bank will host a Central American ministerial meeting in Washington to bring together business people, bankers and senior bureaucrats to launch the interconnection system.

In addition, the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation are tracking potentially several hundred million dollars in new clean-energy investments in Central America, according to the fact sheet.

Notably, the Export-Import Bank is making a \$29 million loan to a Honduran company that will expand wind generation at the Cerro de Hula Wind Farm. The fact sheet added that Ormat Technologies Inc. of Nevada will soon break ground on a 35-megawatt geothermal plant in Honduras. Ormat already operates plants in Guatemala, where it plans to expand its operations, according to the fact sheet.

President Obama said that in addition to creating new electricity generation and transmission capacity, it is just as important to create regulatory regimes that allow integration to take place.

"Given the small size of many Central American countries, it's critical to create a regional market. And that's not just transmission lines. It's also having the rules in place that allow the free flow of energy back and forth," he said. "Everybody stands to benefit."

Obama urged the Central American business people to work together to trade and invest more with each other.

"That's going to strengthen you. That will put you in a more effective position to compete in world markets, and it will allow you, then, to interface with Mexico and the United States and Colombia and other parts of the hemisphere," he said.

NASA Works on Long-Term Plan to Send Humans to Mars

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 06 May 2013

Washington — The U.S. space program is pursuing two goals to expand the dominion of the human race: flying astronauts to an asteroid by the year 2025 and landing astronauts on Mars by the 2030s. NASA Director Charles Bolden called on the space community and the aerospace industry May 6 to help solve some of the technological problems that must be overcome if those goals are to be

met.

The target dates may seem distant, but Bolden says NASA has work underway to solve the principal challenges of a mission into deep space, such as "improving life support systems, the challenges of maintaining them, as well as learning about and handling the effects of microgravity on the human body."

Thirteen years of astronaut experience in low Earth orbit on board the International Space Station (ISS) have created a solid body of knowledge about life support. A 2015 mission offers further opportunity for learning, Bolden said: A U.S. astronaut has accepted a yearlong assignment on board ISS for study of the body's reactions and performance during a prolonged sojourn in space.

The goal to "identify, capture and relocate an asteroid" is also in development, following a goal laid out by President Obama a few years ago, Bolden said. That mission calls for astronauts to explore the surface of the asteroid and sample the materials in its composition, which are expected to help us better understand the earliest formation of the solar system.

The mission will also help determine if an asteroid could serve as a stepping-stone to Mars and whether materials on the object might offer resources to supply the last leg of the journey to the Red Planet.

Expanding our understanding of asteroids might also provide insight into what humanity could do to avert a potentially devastating collision if such an object should intersect Earth's orbital path.

The landing of the rover Curiosity on Mars in August 2012 was a landmark achievement for NASA and its many international collaborators who contributed various technologies to the Mars Space Laboratory (MSL), which is sending back a steady stream of data about conditions on Earth's neighboring planet.

"We'll soon have radiation data from an instrument on Curiosity that will help us better understand and overcome challenges to human life in the Martian environment," Bolden said.

Before Curiosity, the rovers Spirit and Opportunity landed on Mars nine years ago. The data they returned helped identify the spot where scientists decided to land the rover Curiosity to search for habitable environmental conditions. Spirit has been silent since 2010 but Opportunity is still operable and transmitting data.

With its first few months on the planet, Curiosity gathered enough information to give scientists certainty that flowing water, likely pure enough to drink, once

flowed on the surface of what is now a cold, dry planet with little atmosphere.

The NASA plan and its projected budget allow sustained monitoring of the surface rovers and orbiting craft, which also continue to send back important information. Future unmanned Mars missions are scheduled for 2014 and 2016 to gather further data in support of the crewed mission of the future, Bolden said.

Bolden flew four missions on the space shuttle starting in the 1980s. He continues to work in the field today, he says, so his granddaughters can aspire to be space travelers.

Bolden made his remarks at a Washington conference called humans2Mars sponsored by a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization called Explore Mars. The three-day event is supported by private-sector partners, some of them from the aerospace industry, that will be key players in developing the technologies that NASA is lacking for a Mars mission.

A manned mission to Mars will require a "heavy lift" rocket and a multipurpose crew vehicle more advanced than any previously designed. The Obama administration is turning to the private sector to help develop those technologies.

The president of Explore Mars, Artemis Westenberg, opened the conference May 6 by telling participants that "the future of humankind" is the core topic of the meeting, and they will sketch out the plans that will enable humans to travel to Mars and then live and work there.

Presidents Obama and Peña Nieto Highlight Economics at U.S.-Mexico Summit

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 03 May 2013

Washington — President Obama and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto say they have revitalized the multifaceted U.S.-Mexican relationship with a new focus on strengthening economic ties.

"I believe we've got a historic opportunity to foster even more cooperation, more trade, more jobs on both sides of the border, and that's the focus of my visit," Obama said at a news conference with Peña Nieto in Mexico City May 2.

The centerpiece of the Obama-Peña Nieto summit is the formation of the U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue, which is designed to strengthen bilateral business ties and deepen the integration of the three North American economies — Canada, Mexico and the United States.

"It should open up opportunity and collaboration spaces in different arenas, with a very clear purpose in mind to make the North American region a more productive and competitive region," Peña Nieto said.

U.S.-Mexican trade exceeds \$500 billion a year and supports millions of jobs on both sides of the 3,200-kilometer border. Peña Nieto said that 40 percent of the content of Mexico's export products comes from the United States, so as Mexico exports more, it will import more from the United States and that will help the economies of both countries.

Mexico is the second-largest trading partner for the United States, after Canada, Obama said. Strengthening ties among the three North American economies helps them prepare to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a high-level trade arrangement for countries on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

"The fastest-growing part of the world is the Asia-Pacific region — huge markets," Obama said. "And by us working closely together to upgrade and revamp our trade relationship, we're also in a position to project outward and start selling more goods and services around the world."

Obama said the United States and Mexico have one of the most dynamic relationships on Earth, with tens of millions of Mexican Americans enriching the national life of the United States and more than 1 million Americans residing in Mexico.

"Every day, millions of workers in our countries earn a living from the jobs that are made possible by our trade, and more than 1 million people cross our shared border — business people, students, educators, scientists, researchers collaborating in every sphere of human endeavor," Obama said.

Obama said that he and Peña Nieto are in agreement for joint action to help entrepreneurs and small- and medium-sized businesses in both countries. "This action will favor, specifically, young entrepreneurs in both our countries," he said.

Obama and Peña Nieto agreed to establish a bilateral forum on higher education, innovation and research to expand student exchanges between the two neighbors, with an emphasis on science and technology.

"In order to compete with the world, specifically the highly developed countries where science and technology have been the target of their efforts and investment, it is fundamental that we have well-prepared youngsters with the skills necessary to give our economic development a greater strength and capacity," he said.

In the recent past, security issues related to narcotics trafficking and organized crime dominated relations between Washington and Mexico City.

Going forward, Obama said, the United States and Mexico will continue to cooperate closely on security issues, with the United States respecting how Mexico handles security inside its borders.

U.S. Rates Intellectual Property Protections of Trading Partners

03 May 2013

Washington – In an annual report on the adequacy of the intellectual property rights protections of U.S. trading partners, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) cites ongoing problems in Ukraine and praises improvements in Canada.

The Special 301 Report presents an annual review of the global state of intellectual property rights (IPR) protection and enforcement that USTR conducts under Section 182 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended by the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 and the Uruguay Round Agreements Act. The 2013 Special 301 review process examined IPR protection and enforcement in 95 trading partners, USTR said. Among the highlights in the 2013 report, released May 1, are the following:

- The U.S. Trade Representative designates Ukraine a Priority Foreign Country under the Special 301 statute because of severe deterioration of enforcement in the areas of government use of pirated software and piracy over the Internet, as well as denial of fair and equitable market access through the authorization and operation of copyright collecting societies. The report says Ukraine has recognized that it has a significant problem with the operation of these illegal or “rogue” collecting societies – organizations that collect royalties by falsely claiming they are authorized to do so. “The government has not prosecuted several rogue collecting societies -- even societies that the Government of Ukraine determined were collecting money without the necessary authorization,” the report says.

- USTR reports grave concerns about misappropriation of trade secrets in China and incremental progress on a few of China’s other significant IPR and market access challenges.

- Canada moves from the Special 301 Priority Watch List to the Watch List in recognition of significant progress on copyright issues, while USTR continues to work with Canada to address several remaining IPR concerns.

- Brunei Darussalam and Norway move off of the Special 301 Watch List.

- USTR adds Barbados, Bulgaria, Paraguay and Trinidad and Tobago to the Watch List because of specific

problems identified in the report.

- USTR announces that while El Salvador and Spain are not listed in the report, USTR will conduct out-of-cycle reviews to assess progress on IPR challenges identified in the 2013 reviews of those countries.

“I regret that the government of Ukraine has earned the first new Priority Foreign Country designation in 11 years due to its severely deteriorating climate for IPR protection and market access, and call upon that government to reverse recent backsliding and swiftly resolve the problems identified today,” acting USTR Demetrios Marantis said. “I am encouraged that other countries, notably Canada, have made long-awaited progress on concerns identified in past reports; I hope that Canada will sustain and build upon that progress, and that other listed countries will make similar progress.”

USTR designated Ukraine as a Priority Foreign Country in the 2013 report as a trading partner whose acts, policies or practices have the greatest adverse impact (actual or potential) on the relevant U.S. products, USTR said. In addition, Ukraine is not entering into good faith negotiations or making significant progress in bilateral or multilateral negotiations, USTR added.

Trading partners on the Priority Watch List present the most significant concerns regarding insufficient IPR protection or enforcement, or otherwise limited market access for persons relying on intellectual property protection. Ten countries – Algeria, Argentina, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Russia, Thailand and Venezuela – are on the Priority Watch List. USTR will seek to engage intensively with these countries, as appropriate, during the coming year.

Thirty trading partners are on the Watch List, also meriting bilateral attention to address underlying IPR problems: Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Agencies Speak with One Voice: Children Are Not for Sale!

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 03 May 2013

Washington – “Nations must speak with one voice,” President Obama has urged, “our children are not for sale.”

And now U.S. government agencies, after years of having operated separate programs to fight human trafficking, are joining forces to more effectively work to end the exploitation of vulnerable children, says Kathleen

Sebelius, U.S. secretary of health and human services.

Although the U.S. government has worked for decades to strengthen work being done by outside groups to fight child trafficking, it lacked internal coordination, Sebelius acknowledged May 1 in remarks to the Advisory Council on Child Trafficking, an all-volunteer bipartisan group of women who are committed to finding cost-effective, evidence-based solutions to domestic child trafficking.

"The Justice Department handled enforcement, Homeland Security handled international components, our department [Health and Human Services] handled victim services, and so on. The result of that was that we weren't being as effective as we could be," she said. "So we knew that we had to change our approach."

"We started," she said, "by ensuring that child trafficking was a priority issue across the federal government. We've stepped up our collaborative efforts, and will soon be hosting regular meetings to strengthen coordination between federal agencies."

On the local level, Sebelius said, the federal government is increasing its coordination with nongovernment groups to draw attention to the crisis of child trafficking. "We've also provided in-person training to help empower nearly a thousand front-line responders, in addition to webinars, workshops, videos, newsletters," she said.

Sebelius said U.S. government agencies are continuing to strengthen their capacity to identify and respond to victims of child trafficking who enter the United States from abroad. More than 700,000 public awareness materials have been distributed by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, she said.

"Right now, all unaccompanied children who immigrate to the United States alone, and who are placed in our Office of Refugee Resettlement shelters, are screened for trafficking," Sebelius said. "Last year, 13,600 children were screened. And that number will be even greater this year. When we identify trafficking victims through screenings, we're able to reach them right away with critical services to help them rebuild their lives. And the stronger our capacity is to identify victims, the closer we come to ensuring that every victim is treated, empowered, and put on a path back to a healthy life."

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), an estimated 5.5 million children worldwide are victims of forced labor and child trafficking. Thousands of children are trafficked in the United States. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that as many as 300,000 children are at risk for sexual exploitation each year in the United States.

"The cruelest aspect of child trafficking is the way it can erode children's sense of their own humanity," Sebelius said. "When young people are treated as less than human by the adults around them at an age when those cues matter so much, they often can't help but take that message to heart. Through these public awareness efforts and trainings, we are helping ensure that survivors hear a very different message about their fundamental value as human beings."

"We live in an age when few issues are black and white, but there is no gray area when it comes to the incomprehensible evil of child trafficking," Sebelius said. President Obama, she said, has made it clear that his administration is committed to being a leader in a multidisciplinary, partnership-based effort to end this scourge.

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