

American

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Vice President Biden's Trip to Latin America to Focus on Boosting Partnerships

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 23 May 2013

Washington — Vice President Biden's upcoming trip to Latin America — his fourth during the Obama administration — is testimony to the growing partnerships between the United States and the countries of that region, a U.S. official says.

Biden is set to visit Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Brazil during the week of May 27. Following so soon after President Obama's May 2–4 visit to Mexico and Costa Rica, Biden's trip, a senior administration official said in a May 22 conference call with reporters, is "our latest demonstration of the United States' commitment to reinforcing our partnerships in the Americas."

"It will also be our latest demonstration of an approach to engagement from the beginning that has been based on mutual respect and shared responsibility," said the official, who declined to be named for the background briefing.

"President Obama and Vice President Biden, right from the outset of their time in office," the official said, "have made clear their view that the Americas represent a region of opportunity for the United States, and they're looking at the period that we've entered now as a time to really ramp up our engagement in the hemisphere, in every part of the hemisphere, in Mexico, in Central America, the Caribbean and South America."

Biden will be visiting additional countries in the region later this year, the official said, and in the coming months, leaders of Latin American countries will be visiting the United States — most immediately Chile's president, Sebastián Piñera, and President Ollanta Humala of Peru.

The governments of Latin America have largely embraced democratic values and have been able to reduce poverty by more than 50 percent in the last decade, allowing tens of millions of their citizens to join the middle class. As a result, these countries have become increasingly important trading partners of the United States, the official said.

"Our economies, our societies, our people are becoming more and more connected," the official said. The U.S. objective, the official added, "is to work with our partners across the hemisphere to promote a hemisphere that's middle class, secure and democratic."

The countries of the Americas, including Colombia and Brazil, are playing an increasingly important role in global affairs, and that, the official said, is "just one more

reason for why the hemisphere and the region are so important to U.S. interests."

Biden will begin his trip in Bogotá to meet with President Juan Manuel Santos and reaffirm U.S. support for Santos' efforts to bring an end to conflict and provide security for the people of Colombia. Biden, who last visited Colombia in 2000, will also meet with business leaders "who will demonstrate firsthand to him the importance of our commercial relationships in the years since our free-trade agreement came into force," the U.S. official said.

In Trinidad and Tobago on May 28, Biden will meet with President Anthony Carmona and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and participate in a meeting with a number of other Caribbean leaders who have been invited by Trinidad and Tobago. "In that series of meetings," the U.S. official said, "we anticipate good discussions on regional efforts to promote economic growth, on cooperation around citizen security, on energy issues, and other issues that are high on the priority list of our partners across the Caribbean."

Biden will visit Rio de Janeiro May 29, where he will give a public speech on the U.S. view of Brazil as a strategic partner of the United States, the official said. Biden will also tour a site of operations for Petrobras, a Brazilian multinational energy corporation that is one of the largest in Latin America. There Biden will meet with Petrobras and Brazilian government officials to discuss issues related to the future of energy in Brazil, the United States and the world. Biden "will also have the opportunity to discuss with local leaders issues around security and social inclusion," the U.S. official said.

On May 31, Biden will travel to Brasilia to meet with Dilma Rousseff, Brazil's president. Rousseff, along with her vice president, Michel Temer, is scheduled to discuss with Biden the future of U.S.-Brazil relations and "get down to the specifics in terms of the bilateral and global agenda that our two countries share moving forward," the U.S. official said.

Active Atlantic Hurricane Season Ahead, Forecasters Say

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 23 May 2013

Washington — U.S. coastal areas on the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean have been forewarned of an active hurricane season. U.S. forecasters expect three to six major hurricanes during the season from June 1 to November 30.

U.S. officials with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced the 2013 hurricane forecast May 23.

"NOAA predicts an above normal and possibly an extremely active hurricane season," said Kathryn Sullivan, NOAA's acting administrator, at a May 23 press conference.

Scientists at NOAA's National Hurricane Center analyzed various trends and climate patterns to forecast a 70 percent likelihood that 13 to 20 tropical storms will develop in the Atlantic Ocean with winds of 39 miles per hour (63 kilometers per hour) or higher. About seven to 11 of those are expected to develop winds of 74 mph (119 kph), the delineation between a tropical storm and a hurricane.

A strong West African monsoon is one factor likely to contribute to an active season, the forecast says, along with warmer-than-average water temperatures in the tropical Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

The Pacific-born El Niño system can act to suppress the likelihood of hurricanes in some seasons, but that pattern is not expected to develop in 2013, forecasters said.

The annual hurricane prediction is neither a scientific exercise nor a game of chance. Officials say its real purpose is preparedness, to encourage hundreds of millions of residents in the Atlantic storm zone to draw up emergency plans and lay in supplies to sustain their households for at least 72 hours.

Supplies of water, food, batteries, flashlights are all important, said Joseph Nimmich from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). But having a prearranged evacuation plan is among the most important elements for preparedness. Knowing when to evacuate a place that lies in the path of a raging storm is an important part of that plan, Nimmich said.

"Whether it is an evacuation on the shoreline or inland flooding, not evacuating is [why] we lose most people," according to the FEMA official.

Sullivan also cautioned against a sense of false safety for those who live some distance from a coastline. Four land-falling hurricanes in 2012 proved that an inland address can still be in harm's way.

"Damage from every one of these [2012] storms reached well beyond the coastline. We often see strong winds, torrential rains, flooding and tornadoes can threaten areas far inland," Sullivan said.

Reporters batter the officials with questions about where or how many storms may strike land, but the science in its current stage doesn't go far enough to allow those predictions. Sullivan does say that technological and methodological improvements in the near future may

allow greater accuracy in predicting where and how soon storms may strike. More improvements to forecast models and data-gathering methods are coming into use this season. In July, NOAA will bring a new supercomputer online that will be capable of providing a 10-15 percent improvement in predictions of storm intensity.

A devastating tornado that occurred May 20 in Oklahoma was an unseen presence in the room as officials discussed the likelihood of disasters yet to come in 2013. Despite the enormous property losses and extensive infrastructure damage, Sullivan said she is confident that National Weather Service forecasters did save lives in Moore, Oklahoma.

Some 2,400 homes in Moore and nearby Oklahoma City were damaged by the storm, 10,000 people were directly affected, but fatalities remained relatively low given the magnitude of destruction. Just 24 Oklahomans lost their lives, and Sullivan says the 15-minute warning that forecasters issued on the approaching tornado helped minimize loss of life.

May 26 to June 1 is National Hurricane Preparedness Week, when NOAA will be offering advice on hurricane preparedness in English and Spanish to help people living in hurricane-prone areas.

Burma, U.S. Sign Trade and Investment Framework Agreement

22 May 2013

Washington — The new Trade and Investment Framework Agreement signed by the United States and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar May 21 will create a platform for dialogue and cooperation on trade and investment issues between the two governments, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) says.

As part of this dialogue, the two sides will work together to identify initiatives that support Burma's reform program and promote inclusive development that benefits the people of Burma, including the poorest segments of its population, the USTR said in a May 21 press release.

"The United States supports reforms that lay the foundation for a peaceful and prosperous future," said Acting U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis. "Economic reforms and trade are mutually supportive. Stronger institutions, transparency, and rule of law create stronger foundations for commercial transactions, trade and investment."

Following the easing of sanctions in 2012, trade between the United States and Burma has been increasing but still remains small. Through the first three months of 2013,

bilateral trade totaled \$90 million, including \$89 million in U.S. exports to Burma and \$1 million in U.S. imports from Burma. In 2012, Burma's total two-way goods trade with the world was roughly \$20 billion.

Under the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, the United States will seek to work with the government in Nay Pyi Taw for further improvements in the protection of worker rights.

Labor rights remain an area of concern to U.S. stakeholders and the international community. The agreement recognizes the importance of respecting in each country's laws and practices the fundamental labor rights enumerated by the International Labour Organization and of effectively enforcing their respective laws on worker rights, the USTR said.

Friends of Syria Press for Syrian Peace Conference

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 22 May 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry met in Amman, Jordan, with the foreign ministers of 10 countries in Europe and the Middle East to plot a common course aimed at convening an international conference in Geneva to end the war in Syria.

"All the partners come here to meet this evening with the goal of putting an end to the bloodshed that has cost tens of thousands of lives," Kerry told reporters in Amman May 22.

Gathering with Kerry were his counterparts from Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Bahrain, France, Germany and Italy. The 11-member group, known as the Friends of Syria, supports the Syrian opposition in its struggle to drive the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad from power.

More concretely, the members of the Friends of Syria want to convene a conference in Geneva to establish a transitional government "by mutual consent with full executive authority," Kerry said.

The secretary said the effort to convene the conference and establish a transitional government may fail, but an attempt must be made because of the horrible consequences of continued war.

"There will be more foreign fighters, there will be more extremists, there will be more danger to the volatility to the region. There may be more ethnic cleansing, more massacres. Syria may break up into different parts. Nobody will benefit from that continued struggle," Kerry said. "The Geneva process is a better alternative than doing nothing."

Kerry earlier visited Moscow, where Russian President Vladimir Putin said his government would support a Geneva conference. Russia is an ally and supplier of weapons to the Assad regime. Kerry said that fighters from the Lebanese militia Hezbollah and Iranians also are in Syria supporting the regime.

Kerry made it clear that President Obama does not intend to put U.S. forces on the ground in Syria but will support the Syrian opposition in other ways. The Obama administration "has taken no options off the table with respect to how that support may be provided or what kind of support it may be," he said.

Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh said his government has been reluctant to arm the Syrian opposition forces because of fears that some of them may be extremists.

"The presence of extremist organizations and non-Syrian fighters on the ground is of concern to many of us," Judeh said. He said Jordan wants to avoid the possibilities of the war spilling into Lebanon or causing the breakup of Syria.

"We are indeed concerned of these potential dangers, and we're certainly trying to resolve them through this diplomatic and political effort," Judeh said.

Kerry said that if the attempt to convene a Geneva conference fails, then the Friends of Syria will continue to support the opposition in its fight for Syria's freedom. He said with 70,000 people dead from fighting inside Syria and hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries, the humanitarian crisis is among the largest in recent memory.

China, U.S. Can Build on Common Ground, Admiral Says

By Donna Miles | American Forces Press Service | 22 May 2013

This article was originally posted to the Department of Defense website on May 22.

Washington — The United States and China, by increasing their dialogue and engagement, can build a foundation of trust while fostering regional security and prosperity, the top U.S. commander in the region said May 21.

"While competition between the United States and China is inevitable, conflict is not," Navy Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, told members of the National Committee on United States-China Relations in New York.

"This means identifying strategic areas where our two

countries can cooperate, while recognizing frankly and openly the areas where we will continue to differ, and to manage those," he said. "Our approach is to manage the friction and disruptive competition and increase areas of congruence and cooperation between our two nations."

Locklear encouraged the China experts to envision a future in which "the U.S. and China collaborate to build upon an existing Indo-Asia-Pacific community of peace and prosperity."

The U.S. strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific region is based on a strategy of collaboration and cooperation, he said. This rebalance acknowledges the reality that the United States' future is "inextricably linked" to Asia's, and one of the fundamental goals in implementing it is to build a "stable, productive and constructive relationship with China," he added.

Both countries must also recognize the major roles they both play in the region, he said. "The Pacific is big enough for all of us," Locklear told the group, borrowing a quote from both former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the United States' and China's economic relationship – one that Locklear said draws them together and positively affects the entire region.

The admiral noted other promising developments that are solidifying this foundation: China's growing participation in the international community, its commitment to a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and its efforts to address HIV/AIDS and pandemic diseases, among them.

Meanwhile, China is demonstrating "a real appetite to deepen the military-to-military dialogue and build on those areas on which we converge," Locklear said. The goal, he said, is to continually improve the channels of communication and to demonstrate practical cooperation on issues that matter to both sides.

General Fang Fenghu, China's top military officer, identified counterterrorism, antipiracy, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, logistics, and military medicine as potential areas of cooperation during a visit to Beijing by Army General Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Looking to the future, Locklear said, it's vital that both China and the United States recognize their responsibilities as regional and global leaders.

"We must move beyond our individual differences to bring consensus to issues that threaten regional stability and future prosperity," he said. That includes partnering

with other nations to address regional security challenges such as piracy, terrorism, proliferation and pandemic disease.

Secondly, he said, the two countries must work together and with the international community to ensure access to shared domains through universally accepted standards. This extends from the maritime domain – and territorial disputes in the South China and East China seas – to the cyber and space domains, where they can play a role in helping to establish worldwide standards and practices, he said.

Also key, Locklear said, is China's increasing participation in regional military-to-military engagements. He cited progress in the Military Maritime Consultative Meeting and other forums, and China's agreement to take part in the next Rim of the Pacific international maritime exercise.

These engagements help to build trust and mutual understanding and, ultimately, reduce the likelihood of miscommunication and miscalculation that could derail forward progress, Locklear said.

"I believe the best hope for sustained bilateral cooperation will come from strategically identifying those areas where our interests overlap and building, over time, greater understanding and trust between our two armed forces," the admiral said.

New Leader Plugs in at U.S. Department of Energy

22 May 2013

Washington – A scientist with a background in theoretical nuclear physics and energy technology took over the top job at the U.S. Department of Energy May 21. Ernest Moniz comes to the position from the faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and with prior experience in the Energy Department in the 1990s.

The U.S. Senate approved Moniz's appointment to the position by President Obama on a vote of 97-0. He served the Obama administration previously as a member of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

In remarks to an Energy Department audience moments after taking the oath of office, Moniz outlined the administration priorities he intends to pursue, putting the adoption of clean energy technologies and the mitigation of climate change at the top of the agenda. Emphasizing "the scientific basis calling for a prudent response on climate change," Moniz said he will pursue strategies for greater energy efficiency and innovation adoption.

Nuclear security is also a presidential priority for the

Energy Department, Moniz said, noting its mission to maintain a safe and reliable nuclear stockpile, ensuring that nuclear materials are held only by responsible parties and inaccessible to terrorists and criminals.

The Energy Department has a "legal and moral responsibility to clean up the Cold War legacy," Moniz said. The administration agenda in this area emphasizes nonproliferation, counterterrorism and a 21st-century nuclear weapons deterrence program.

As under secretary of the Energy Department from 1997 until January 2001, Moniz was responsible for overseeing science and energy programs and leading a review of nuclear weapons stockpile stewardship. He served as a special negotiator for the disposition of Russian nuclear materials.

Moniz also expressed his commitment to the administration's priority for "a robust scientific research infrastructure." The Energy Department oversees the 17 laboratories of the federal research system. The laboratories develop scientific and technical capabilities to benefit the nation.

Researchers Use Bacteria to Control Malaria Parasite

21 May 2013

Washington — Mosquitoes get a lot of the blame for malaria, but the single-cell parasite Plasmodium carried by the mosquito is the real cause of the disease. Researchers are finding they can control the reproduction of that parasite so the mosquito won't pass it to a human when the insect goes in for a blood meal.

While Plasmodium brings on disease in humans, a naturally occurring bacterium called Wolbachia isn't so good for the health of the Plasmodium, causing an infection that will, in effect, make mosquitoes immune to the malaria parasite.

Currently about 220 million people develop malaria each year, resulting in roughly 660,000 deaths, mostly among children in Africa who have limited access to health care.

The chain of transmission works like this: A female mosquito carries Plasmodium and passes the parasite on to her offspring. Plasmodium migrate to the mosquito's salivary glands, and the parasite is passed to a human bloodstream when the human is attacked by the infected mosquito.

Scientists have previously discovered that Wolbachia will block development of Plasmodium in mosquitoes. With backing from the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), Michigan State University (MSU) researchers set out to establish a stable, inherited

Wolbachia infection that would block Plasmodium in generations of the Anopheles mosquito, the primary malaria carrier in the Middle East and South Asia.

The MSU researchers infected the female mosquito with Wolbachia, making her immune to Plasmodium. She passes Wolbachia on to her offspring, resulting in females like Mom, who don't offer an environment for Plasmodium to reproduce. Male mosquitoes infected with Plasmodium become a reproductive dead end because their pairing with uninfected females rarely produces viable eggs.

That failure gives the Wolbachia-infected females the reproductive advantage, creating further generations of mosquitoes that grant no sanctuary for Plasmodium reproduction.

The MSU team created a stable Wolbachia infection in the mosquito population they raised in the laboratory for 34 generations, which was the end of the study period.

"Wolbachia-based malaria-control strategy has been discussed for the last two decades," researcher Zhiyong Xi said. "Our work is the first to demonstrate Wolbachia can be stably established in a key malaria vector, the mosquito species *Anopheles stephensi*, which opens the door to use Wolbachia for malaria control."

The researchers also tested how effectively Wolbachia could work its way through an uninfected population. They found that infected females making up as little as 5 percent of a population in a laboratory setting would infect the entire population within eight generations.

The Wolbachia effect can't eradicate Plasmodium and its byproduct, malaria, but it would probably lower the number of mosquitos that carry Plasmodium, as well as the likelihood of transmission from infected mosquitos to people.

On World Malaria Day in April, NIAID reaffirmed that efforts to combat malaria remain a high priority.

"We also renew our commitment to the research needed to better understand the disease process in malaria, find new ways to diagnose and treat people with malaria, control the mosquitoes that spread it, and prevent malaria through vaccination," according to a joint statement from NIAID's Lee Hall and Anthony Fauci.

The emergence of a strain of malaria parasite that is resistant to front-line medicines used in treatment is an especially worrisome trend. NIAID and its parent agency, the National Institutes of Health, are backing 10 International Centers of Excellence for Malaria Research, where surveillance and study of this health threat are

being pursued.

Russian Missiles in Syria Prolong Suffering, U.S. General Says

By Jim Garamone | American Forces Press Service |
20 May 2013

This news article originally was posted to the Department of Defense website on May 17.

Washington — Russia's planned delivery of advanced anti-ship missiles and the S-300 air defense system to Syria "is at the very least an unfortunate decision that will embolden the regime and prolong the suffering," said Army General Martin E. Dempsey during a Pentagon news conference May 17.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff went on to call the decision "ill-timed and very unfortunate."

Dempsey, speaking alongside Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, said the United States continues to try to find a way for the United States and Russia to work together to end the Syrian civil war. "One of the primary reasons that Secretary of State John Kerry went to Moscow was to find some ... intersection of interests in the Middle East," Hagel said.

The secretary said there is a real danger that the war could spill over Syria's borders and ignite the entire region. "What we don't want to see happen is for Syria to erupt to a point where we may find a regional war," he said. "We continue to work with the Russians and do everything we can to convince the powers in the region to be careful with escalation of military options and equipment."

Hagel said the United States is leaving all options open. "We are already doing a lot in Syria on the humanitarian side, the non-lethal side," he said. Still, U.S. leaders are trying to work out some consensus on Syria with the players in the region and beyond.

The anti-ship and air defense capabilities are more capable systems, Dempsey said. The S-300, for example, has a higher ceiling, longer range and multiple tracking capability. "It pushes the stand-off distance out a little more, increases risk, but it's not impossible to overcome," he said.

"What I really worry about is that [Syrian leader Bashar] Assad will decide that since he's got these systems he is somehow safer and more prone to a miscalculation," the chairman said.

There are several capabilities that Syria has not used responsibly including chemical weapons, long-range

rockets, missiles and high-end air defense, Dempsey said. "The things they have in their control, we have things to deal with," the general said. "We do not have options in any way to prevent the delivery of any military sales to Syria."

Change in Behavior Sparks Removal of Sanctions on Iraqi Bank

20 May 2013

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Treasury lifted sanctions against the Elaf Islamic Bank in Iraq on May 17 following what the department said was the bank's "significant and demonstrated change in behavior."

On July 31, 2012, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA) against Elaf Islamic Bank, a privately owned Iraqi financial institution. Treasury said sanctions were imposed "for knowingly facilitating significant transactions and providing significant financial services for the U.S. and EU-designated Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI)."

Following the CISADA finding, Treasury said, Elaf immediately engaged the department and began an intensive course of action to stop the conduct that led to the sanctions, including freezing EDBI accounts at Elaf and reducing its overall exposure to the Iranian financial sector.

Following the lifting of sanctions on the bank May 17, U.S. financial institutions are once again permitted to open or maintain correspondent accounts or payable-through accounts in the United States for Elaf Islamic Bank.

"Today we welcome Elaf Islamic Bank back into the U.S. financial system, and we urge other designated individuals and entities around the world to follow its positive example," said Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen. "As today's delisting demonstrates, our sanctions are flexible and can be lifted if the conduct that led to the sanction terminates. As we increase our sanctions against Iran, we will continue to target any financial institution that works with designated Iranian banks or attempts to assist Iran in evading sanctions."

Sanctions are lifted when circumstances warrant, which includes ceasing the activity that spurred the sanctions, the Treasury said. Any sanctioned party may petition Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control for sanctions to be lifted. In general, Treasury said, demonstrating changes in circumstances or behavior are essential to the lifting of sanctions.

The department also said it will continue to use all tools at its disposal to target entities or individuals engaging in sanctionable activity related to Iran.

"Dramatic Progress" in Global Health, but Virus Threat Lurks

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 20 May 2013

Washington — Representatives from more than 190 nations convened for the World Health Assembly May 20 with a record of achievement and a challenge for the future.

World Health Statistics 2013, released by the World Health Organization May 15, shows that the global community has made "dramatic progress" in improving health in the least developed nations.

But those gains are not reasons for complacency. Speaking May 20, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius told the assembly that "ensuring health's place in the next generation of global development goals" is the challenge that lies ahead.

Representing all the nations of the Americas in her remarks, Sebelius said the United States and its neighbors may have different priorities in ensuring broad access to health care, but all work to the same ends. Providing universal health coverage for all citizens is a goal important to many nations.

"Advancing the health of our nations is a fundamental commitment we make to all our people," Sebelius said. "As President Obama recently reminded us, access to health care is 'not some earned privilege — it is a right.'"

The findings of *World Health Statistics 2013* indicate nations are making progress in narrowing the disparity between wealthy and least advantaged nations on key markers for overall health.

Data on the last two decades show significant growth in the key health indicator of child survival. While more than 170 deaths occurred per 100,000 births in 1990, by 2011 the fatality rate for infants had declined to 107 deaths per 100,000 births, the report found.

Surveying health data from 194 countries, the statistics also show meaningful declines in maternal deaths and in tuberculosis deaths. Still, the report finds that continued diligence is required to achieve greater access to health care, medicines and vaccinations.

MONITORING H7N9 FLU STRAIN

As those positive developments are considered at the meeting, the potential for an Asian disease outbreak to

escalate into a pandemic is a looming concern for many.

H7N9 is a strain of avian influenza that has appeared in humans for the first time and taken 36 lives since early March, when it was first spotted. How and where those afflicted were exposed to the virus is still being investigated. The virus does not yet appear to be transmitted easily between humans. But if the virus mutates to develop that characteristic, there is a risk that pandemic influenza could surge out of China and circle the globe with the speed of a jetliner.

Though that health threat hangs over the annual WHA meeting in Geneva, World Health Organization Director-General Margaret Chan reminded the delegates in an opening session of the progress made by the global health community in confronting novel viruses and pandemic preparedness.

A previously unknown coronavirus swept out of Asia 10 years ago, spreading rapidly to almost 8,500 people and taking more than 800 lives. After that scare was contained, health officials everywhere recognized that they had to work together and freely exchange information and laboratory findings when confronted with a fast-moving, dangerous pathogen.

In her May 20 remarks, Dr. Chan thanked China for communicating a "wealth of information" about H7N9 in the two months since its appearance.

Sebelius leads the U.S. delegation to the World Health Assembly, which runs to May 28. She will speak at other conference events focusing on violence against women, noncommunicable diseases and medical education, according to her office.

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