

American

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President Obama to Seek Trade, Investment Progress at APEC Summit

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 19 September 2013

Washington — At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit October 7-8 in Bali, Indonesia, President Obama will ask other leaders in the region to create a dedicated fund to help their economies implement their supply chain and trade facilitation commitments, said top officials from the State Department and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).

The officials briefed reporters at the Foreign Press Center in Washington September 18 about the U.S. goals for the APEC meeting.

APEC supports sustainable economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region. With a combined population of 2.7 billion people, the APEC economies represent 60 percent of the world's gross domestic product and 44 percent of world trade, said Robert Wang, the State Department's senior official for APEC.

The supply chain fund would help APEC economies better understand where choke points in the supply system are located and how holdups can be eased. "Then the goods that are being sent through the supply chain will be traveling faster, easier and with greater certainty," Wang said.

The fund also would provide "a model for how to promote domestic economic growth goals without resorting to localization barriers," said Arrow Augerot, deputy assistant U.S. trade representative for APEC affairs.

Obama also will ask his counterparts to endorse best practices for job creation and competitiveness and to promote more connections among economies, Wang said. Physical connectivity would be through infrastructure, and air and sea traffic. Institutional connections would be through customs and regulatory policies, he said.

Businesses have said that unconnected regulatory systems are "among the biggest barriers that they face in trading and investment," Augerot said.

"We're trying to make sure that we keep the momentum going forward in terms of liberalization rather than protectionism," Wang said.

Augerot said the United States also will ask APEC leaders and ministers to endorse creation of an APEC public-private partnership on environmental goods to address such issues as local content requirements, regulatory coherence, government support programs and

procurement of renewable and clean energy goods.

The United States also wants APEC leaders and ministers to agree to help more students cross borders within APEC for education. Studying in different countries would help students understand each other's economic and cultural systems, Wang said. The goal is to get 1 million students involved in cross-border learning, he added.

The United States wants to see strong political support for "a meaningful outcome" at the ninth ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization in Bali in early December, Augerot said.

He said that when APEC met in Indonesia in 1994, APEC leaders came together to develop what are known as the Bogor Goals for trade and investment liberalization.

"We have a real opportunity again this year to take forward work towards achieving those Bogor Goals and to demonstrate APEC's collective commitment to free and open trade and investment," he said.

Secretary Kerry Says Time Grows Short to Remove Syrian Chemical Weapons

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 19 September 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry says it is imperative for the U.N. Security Council to act on the U.N. inspectors' report that unequivocally shows a deadly nerve agent was used in an August 21 rocket attack that killed nearly 1,500 Syrian civilians.

"The findings in the [Swedish scientist Åke] Sellström report were as categorical as they were convincing," Kerry said in a late afternoon State Department briefing September 19. "Every single data point — the types of munitions and launchers that were used, their origins, their trajectory, their markings, and the confirmation of sarin — every single bit of it confirms what we already knew and what we told America and the world. It confirms what we have brought to the attention of our Congress, the American people and the rest of the world."

The Sellström-led U.N. weapons inspection team presented its findings to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last week, and he presented the report to the Security Council on September 16, calling the attack a war crime.

Kerry said the United States has linked the improvised 122-millimeter rockets used in the chemical attack to the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. They were, Kerry said, used in previous Syrian chemical attacks and are under the control of the Syrian army.

He added that there is no evidence in the U.N. report or any intelligence assessment that the Syrian opposition forces had the means, the deadly nerve agent sarin, the munitions or the ability to launch such an attack on its own people from an area in Damascus that is controlled by the Syrian army.

"So, there you have it. Sarin was used. Sarin killed," Kerry said. "The world can decide whether it was used by the regime, which has used chemical weapons before, the regime which had the rockets and the weapons, or whether the opposition secretly went unnoticed into territory they don't control to fire rockets they don't have containing sarin that they don't possess to kill their own people."

Kerry said the U.N. Security Council must be prepared to act during the week of September 23-27, the opening of the 68th Session of the U.N. General Assembly, on the findings of the chemical weapons inspection report.

"So I would say to the community of nations, time is short. Let's not spend time debating what we already know," Kerry told journalists. "Instead, we have to recognize that the world is watching to see whether we can avert military action and achieve through peaceful means even more than what those military strikes promise."

"A complete removal of Syria's chemical weapons is possible here, through peaceful means," he said.

In response to the chemical attack, President Obama announced that the United States would carry out a limited military response against the Syrian regime if it failed to turn over its chemical weapons to international control under the United Nations. He advised the U.S. Congress that he would await diplomatic efforts before asking for support for the use of a military strike.

In just-completed talks in Geneva, Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov developed a framework that could lead to the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons in an open, quick and verifiable manner. In the aftermath of the attack, the Syrian regime has pledged to sign the international Chemical Weapons Convention and to adhere to the convention's terms.

U.S. Works to End Fatal Aftereffects of War

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 18 September 2013

Washington — Wars kill even after they are long over. The forgotten land mine cripples the unsuspecting farmer. An unexploded bomb kills the curious child.

According to Rose Gottemoeller, the State Department's acting under secretary for arms control and international

security, there were an estimated 26,000 casualties each year from land mines when the United States in 1993 launched an intensive multiagency program to support international humanitarian efforts for mine removal and destruction of old stockpiles of conventional weapons.

The 20-year global effort has paid off. Gottemoeller, speaking at a September 17 briefing at the Foreign Press Center, cited statistics from the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, a civil society organization that tracks the humanitarian and developmental consequences of land mines and other munitions. Gottemoeller said the group's statistics show casualties from land mines and explosive remnants of war totaled 4,286 in 2011. "That number is still too high," she said, "but it is a big change from the 26,000 land mine casualties that we were seeing per year in the early 1990s. So this program is having a real impact."

Since 1993, the United States has contributed more than \$2 billion to more than 90 countries to reduce the harmful effects of conventional weapons of war, according to Tom Kelly, the acting assistant secretary for political-military affairs at the State Department, who also spoke at the Foreign Press Center briefing. That makes the United States, he said, the world's largest donor supporting humanitarian mine action programs that include removing and destroying land mines and other explosives, rehabilitation programs for the victims of these weapons and programs to educate the public about their dangers. "Taken together, these efforts can really help to make post-conflict communities safer and to set the stage for recovery and development," Kelly said.

Although the United States is the largest donor to these kinds of efforts, Kelly said it is far from alone. "We share a common cause with those working to address the harmful effects on civilians of indiscriminate land mine use."

"The United States," Kelly said, "remains an active member of the Mine Action Support Group, which provides a forum for donors to discuss priorities and coordinate their efforts. We also work with the United Nations Mine Action Team, the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining, the Organization of American States, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, NATO, [and] other regional organizations to coordinate assistance."

The United States is proud of its public-private partnerships with some 70 organizations in the area of conventional weapons destruction, Kelly said. Those partnerships, he said, "help to unite the resources of the private sector, passion of the nonprofit sector, and the reach of the United States government so that together we can make a concrete difference that saves lives."

In fiscal year 2012, Kelly said, the Department of State provided more than \$149 million in conventional weapons destruction assistance to 35 countries. The largest portion of this aid, he said, was for programs in Afghanistan, which received more than \$40 million. This assistance, he said, has supported eight Afghan explosive ordnance disposal teams, which were able to operate independent of oversight from U.S. contractors. "So what we're trying to do is encourage indigenous solutions to life-threatening situations, but at the same time save millions of assistance dollars," Kelly said.

According to Gottemoeller, the programs to destroy conventional weapons are "a modest investment" and not only save lives, but "promote peace and security by helping to establish conditions conducive to stability, nonviolence and democracy."

Gottemoeller lauded the State Department's newly released 12th edition of *To Walk the Earth in Safety*, the annual publication that outlines the work the U.S. government is doing with nongovernmental organizations and other governments to promote security through the conventional weapons destruction programs.

Russia-U.S. Pact to Expand Collaboration on Nuclear Research

17 September 2013

Vienna — Russia and the United States have signed an agreement to expand cooperation between the countries in nuclear research.

U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz and Director-General of Russia's State Atomic Energy Corporation (ROSATOM) Sergey Kirienko signed the pact on the margins of the International Atomic Energy Agency's General Conference in Vienna September 16.

The agreement will complement provisions of the U.S.-Russian Agreement for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, which came into force in January 2011 and opened new opportunities to work together on a wide range of issues in this sphere, according to the U.S. Energy Department.

"This agreement supports President Obama's nonproliferation and climate priorities by providing a venue for scientific collaboration and relationship-building between the U.S. and Russian research and technical communities," Moniz said. "Jointly, these communities will work to further develop advanced technologies that can address some of our most pressing nuclear energy and nuclear security challenges."

Potential projects covered by the agreement could include international safeguards, establishment of a Multi-

Purpose Fast Research Reactor International Research Center, irradiation of fuels and materials in the fast-spectrum research reactor BOR-60, and defense from asteroids, among others. The United States and Russia are equal partners under the agreement, with each country bearing its own costs.

The United States and Russia have a long history of cooperation on nonproliferation, nuclear security and nuclear energy. This new framework builds upon the success of the 1992 Agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation Concerning the Safe and Secure Transportation, Storage and Destruction of Weapons and the Prevention of Weapons Proliferation, commonly known as the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Umbrella Agreement, which expired in June 2013.

Later in 2013, the United States and Russia are scheduled to celebrate the final delivery of low-enriched uranium under a 1993 agreement that provided for the conversion of 500 metric tons of Russian highly enriched uranium from nuclear weapons to non-weapons-usable low-enrichment uranium for use in U.S. commercial reactors.

U.S. Will Work with Shanghai Group to Boost Trade with China

17 September 2013

Washington — U.S. Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Francisco Sánchez signed an agreement September 16 intended to enhance trade between the United States and China.

The memorandum of intent with the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) Shanghai will expand collaboration between the U.S. government and the group, according to a September 16 news release from the U.S. International Trade Administration (ITA).

"AmCham Shanghai offers a unique perspective on Chinese leadership and China's economic goals," Sánchez said. "We welcome and encourage their increased collaboration as we seek to continue our trend of strengthening our mutually beneficial trade relationship."

AmCham Shanghai, known as the "Voice of American Business" in China, is one of the world's largest American chambers of commerce and routinely works with ITA, which is part of the U.S. Commerce Department. The nonprofit, nonpartisan business organization is committed to the principles of free trade, open markets, private enterprise and strengthening U.S.-China commercial ties.

By signing the agreement, both participants acknowledged the desire to explore opportunities to work

together to develop strategies and carry out activities to enhance the competitiveness of and opportunities for U.S. businesses in Shanghai and more broadly within China and elsewhere in Asia.

The agreement will facilitate cooperation between the U.S. government and the AmCham by having designated points of contact to foster greater mutual awareness of each other's programs and activities. These activities are expected to include discussions about entering into a more formal partnership in the near future, ITA said.

Sánchez and AmCham Shanghai officials also discussed increasing exports to China by U.S. small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) through the use of AmCham Shanghai's new SME Center. The SME Center provides resources such as market analysis, information on business issues and investor match-making services, which can help support the success of small and medium-sized U.S. businesses in China. Sánchez encouraged the AmCham to provide ideas on how to utilize the SME Center in order to increase U.S. SME exports to China.

"I am pleased to work with the AmCham Shanghai to increase U.S. exports to China and to work together to identify further opportunities to continue our economic integration into China," Sánchez said.

Governments Urged to Invest in Water Infrastructure

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 16 September 2013

Washington — Good water management can foster cooperation among nations, says the U.S. Army's chief engineer.

"Water can bring together adversaries, provide a venue for dialogue, and help integrate in a practical way diverse interests and values," Thomas Bostick, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said at a September forum on water security and conflict prevention at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington.

USIP is an independent institution established and funded by Congress to increase the nation's capacity to manage international conflict without violence.

The forum was co-sponsored by USIP, the Association of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Water Partnership. It brought together scientific, economic, diplomatic, national security and military experts to outline issues related to growing water scarcity and risks for conflict around the world.

Bostick and other forum speakers urged governments to increase their investments in water management infrastructure. "Effective water resource management and resilient infrastructure encourage security, encourage capital flows into a region, and create a platform for

growth and development," he said. He noted how early investment in building infrastructure along major rivers and tributaries in the United States helped avert major damage following several significant floods over the decades.

He said that effective water management systems aid in developing economies that permit free institutions to exist. He added that investments in water resource management and infrastructure can be a valuable tool in capturing water when it is abundant and managing the supply when it is less available.

Aaron Salzberg, the State Department special coordinator for water resources, said water and security are "growing on the political agenda" internationally.

While some have predicted an increased risk of water wars as water supply declines and demand grows, such events are rare and water often serves as a source of cooperation, not conflict, he said. While disagreements over who gets what water, for what purpose and where are likely to rise among countries and within countries, Salzberg said the State Department works with nations to help keep the disagreements from escalating into violent conflict, and water is used as a means for strengthening cooperation.

He said the State Department encourages water-sharing countries to use science and technology to understand their water challenges and make good decisions about how to provide water to their citizens in the quantity and quality they need.

He said regional bodies like river-basin commissions are effective in negotiating water-sharing agreements.

"We should not lose the value of water as a peacekeeping tool," he said.

Salzberg said Secretary of State John Kerry has often noted that building capacity for water "is one of the most important things we can do to save lives."

Julia Bucknall, a water program manager at the World Bank, said investments in water infrastructure should reflect the needs of growing populations and patterns of water consumption. They also should reflect environmental changes like erosion. "We lose more water storage per capita with sedimentation that we are constructing," she said.

"Water tensions have led to more water-sharing agreements than they have led to violent conflict. We hope that trend continues," said Jun Bando, a special adviser to the commander of U.S. Africa Command.

Strengthening water management institutions that include access to clean water and sanitation is key to “sustainable progress,” she said.

Agreement Sets Goal of Eliminating Syrian Chemical Weapons

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

Washington — An agreement worked out between Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov represents a concrete step toward eliminating Syria’s lethal and extensive chemical weapons program, says President Obama.

Kerry and Lavrov reached agreement September 14 in Geneva on a diplomatic framework to eliminate one of the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons in the Middle East.

In a statement from Washington September 14, Obama said that the agreement reached after three days of intense negotiations “provides the opportunity for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons in a transparent, expeditious, and verifiable manner, which could end the threat these weapons pose not only to the Syrian people but to the region and the world.”

“The international community expects the Assad regime to live up to its public commitments,” Obama added.

Under terms announced in Geneva, the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad must provide a comprehensive listing of its entire chemical weapons stockpile within one week, Kerry told journalists September 14 at a press conference with Lavrov at Geneva’s Intercontinental Hotel. They agreed to use extraordinary procedures under the 1992 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) for stringent verification of Syrian chemical weapons and their rapid destruction.

And the United States and Russia agreed that the Assad regime must provide the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which administers the Chemical Weapons Convention, and its supporting personnel immediate and unfettered access to inspect all chemical weapons sites in Syria, Kerry added. International inspections teams will be in Syria by November. During that time, all equipment used for mixing and filling chemical weapons are to be destroyed.

Finally, the agreement calls for the complete destruction of all Syrian chemical weapons, including the possibility of removing the weapons from Syria for destruction. Full destruction of the weapons must be completed by mid-2014.

“Ensuring that a dictator’s wanton use of chemical weapons never again comes to pass, we believe is worth pursuing and achieving,” Kerry told journalists.

Syria has been locked in a protracted civil war since March 2011.

This Geneva agreement was reached in the aftermath of a chemical weapons attack by the Syrian regime on civilians early on August 21 in an agricultural neighborhood east of Damascus. The attack killed 1,429 people including 426 children. After that attack, President Obama announced that he was ordering an American military response, positioned U.S. Navy warships in the Mediterranean Sea and asked the U.S. Congress for authorization to use force.

“The use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world is an affront to human dignity and a threat to the security of people everywhere,” Obama said in the September 14 statement. “We have a duty to preserve a world free from the fear of chemical weapons for our children. Today marks an important step towards achieving this goal.”

After a response from Kerry, Russia proposed disarming Syria of chemical weapons and Obama asked Congress to delay an authorization vote until the United States and Russian delegations could reach an accord. Negotiations began September 12 in Geneva with Kerry and Lavrov and significant disarmament delegations from both countries along with U.N. Special Envoy for Syria Lakhdar Brahimi.

If Syria’s Assad regime fails to comply with the terms of the accord, then the United States and Russia can seek a resolution under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, which can authorize the use of force and also nonmilitary measures, Kerry told journalists.

“There can be no games, no room for avoidance or anything less than full compliance by the Assad regime,” Kerry said.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced in New York on September 13 that he would present an “overwhelming” U.N. weapons inspection team report on Syria’s chemical weapons on September 16 to the U.N. Security Council. Syria is known to hold the largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the Middle East, including sarin, mustard gas and VX, and all the munitions necessary to deliver them and the elements needed to make them.

Ban said in a statement from New York that he hoped the agreement reached in Geneva will “help pave the path for a political solution to stop the appalling suffering inflicted on the Syrian people.”

The Chinese government announced September 15 that it welcomed the U.S.-Russian agreement on Syria's chemical weapons. "We believe this framework agreement has cooled the tense situation in Syria and has opened a new opportunity to use a peaceful means to resolve the chemical weapons issue," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said following a meeting with visiting French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, according to news reports.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said September 14 that the agreement was "a significant step forward." German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said "if deeds now follow the words, the chances of a political solution will rise significantly."

The Chemical Weapons Convention approved by the U.N. General Assembly on November 30, 1992, augments the 1925 Geneva Protocol for chemical weapons, and includes extensive measures such as on-site inspections. The protocol was an outgrowth of the world's response to the extensive use of chemical weapons during World War I in Europe. As of September this year, 190 states are party to the CWC, though not until the past week had Syria agreed to sign and ratify the treaty.

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