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President Obama's Earth Day 2012 Proclamation

Earth Day, 2012. By the President of The United States of America

and recommit to the spirit of togetherness and shared responsibility that galvanized a movement 42 years ago.

A PROCLAMATION

On April 22, 1970, millions of Americans came together to celebrate the first Earth Day. Students, teachers, activists, elected officials, and countless others challenged our Nation to confront our most urgent environmental issues and rallied around a single message: the success of future generations depends upon how we act today. As we commemorate Earth Day this year, we reflect on the challenges that remain before us



President Barack Obama shakes hands with people attending an Earth Day reception in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, Thursday, April 22, 2010. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

Continued on page 2

Introduction to Elections in the United States

Free and fair elections are the keystone of any democracy. They are essential for the peaceful transfer of power.

When voters elect representatives, they elect the leaders who will shape the future of their society. This is why elections empower ordinary citizens: They allow them to influence the future policies of their government, and thus, their own future.



Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama, left, and vice presidential nominee Joe Biden wave to fellow Democrats at the party's 2008 convention. (© AP Images)

The United States has been a representative democracy since the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1788 — although the electoral tradition began during the colonial era and had its roots in British history. This article discusses the nature of the modern

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President Obama's Earth Day 2012 Proclamation

(Continued from page 1)



President Barack Obama walks from the Oval Office to speak at an Earth Day reception in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, Thursday, April 22, 2010. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

America rose to meet the call to action in the months and years that followed the first Earth Day. We passed the Clean Air, Clean Water, Endangered Species, and Marine Mammal Protection Acts; founded the Environmental Protection Agency; and ignited a spirit of stewardship that has driven progress for over four decades. Today, our air and water are cleaner, pollution has been greatly reduced, and Americans everywhere are living in a healthier environment.

While we have made remarkable progress in protecting our health and our natural heritage, we know our work is not yet finished. Last July, my Administration proposed the toughest fuel economy standards in our Nation's history -- standards that will save families money at the pump, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and significantly reduce our dependence on oil. In December, we finalized the first-ever national standards to limit mercury and other toxic emissions from power plants, helping safeguard the health of millions. We have taken action to protect and restore our Nation's precious ecosystems, from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes. And we continue to make landmark investments in batteries, biofuels, and renewable energy that are unlocking American innovation and ensuring our Nation stays on the cutting edge. Our country is on the path to economic recovery and renewal, and moving forward, my Administration will continue to fight for a healthy environment every step of the way.

As we work to leave our children a safe, sustainable future, we must also equip them with the tools they need to take on tomorrow's environmental challenges. Supporting environmental literacy and a strong foundation in science, technology, engineering, and math for every student will help ensure our youth have the skills and knowledge to advance our clean energy economy. Last year, we launched the Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools recognition award to encourage more schools to pursue sustainability, foster health and wellness, and integrate environmental literacy into the curriculum. In the days ahead, we look forward to awarding the first Green Ribbons and recognizing the accomplishments of green schools across our country.

Forty-two years ago, a generation rallied together to protect the earth we would inherit. As we reflect on that historic day of activism and stewardship, let us embrace our commitment to the generations yet to come by leaving them a safe, clean world on which to make their mark.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 22, 2012, as Earth Day. I encourage all Americans to participate in programs and activities that will protect our environment and contribute to a healthy, sustainable future.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand twelve, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
April 20, 2012



President Barack Obama waves to the crowd after speaking at an Earth Day reception in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, Thursday, April 22, 2010. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

U.S. Embassy Plants Trees and Flowers at a Local Orphanage for Earth Day



Ambassador Krol plants a walnut tree. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On April 23, in recognition of the 42nd Earth Day, the U.S. Embassy partnered with the nongovernmental organization Eco-Maktab for a public tree-planting at Orphanage No. 23 in the Chilanzar district of Tashkent. The planting was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section.

After planting a walnut tree and an apple tree, Ambassador Krol spoke, noting that "because of this grant we are here today to plant some fifty different fruit trees, and we hope that they will grow tall and beautiful for many years to come."

In speaking to the event's participants, he highlighted the importance of Earth Day: "Today, our planet needs international dedication and commitment to preserve and protect the earth's resources—be it air, water, plant or animal. While we take time to recognize our achievements, we should not lose sight of the challenges that remain, and we should continue to build upon the legacy of the modern environmental movement that began 40 years ago."

Throughout the morning, children from the orphanage participated in a number of Earth Day oriented activities, including face painting, creating an Earth Day poster, learning about flowers and planting. They were eager to meet

Ambassador Krol and help him plant. The children, volunteers and U.S. Embassy officials worked together to plant trees and create flowerbeds, complete with garden gnomes.

Svetlana Ruzimuhamedova, the director of the orphanage, commented on how wonderful the event was: "The children were happy; they had a lot of fun. All these trees and flowers that we planted today will grow into kindness and love for everything beautiful in the future, because this land that surrounds us is love, is beauty."

Before the conclusion of the festivities, Ambassador Krol took a moment to thank the Scientific Research Institute of Horticulture, Eco-Maktab and its director, Natalya Shivaldova, and the orphanage's staff for all of their help with the event. The ambassador also congratulated the winner of the U.S. Embassy's Earth Day essay competition and presented him with a book and a certificate.

Earth Day began in the United States on April 22, 1970, launching the modern environmental movement. In the 42 years since then, it has grown to become a day of international recognition, where people all across the globe are encouraged to actively improve the natural world around them and work to protect the environment for future generations.



Ambassador Krol presents the essay competition winner with his prize. (U.S. Embassy photo)

What is Earth Day?



This image provided by NASA shows a 'Blue Marble' image of the Earth taken from the The Visible/Infrared Imager Radiometer Suite or VIIRS instrument aboard NASA's most recently launched Earth-observing satellite - Suomi NPP. (AP Photo/NASA)

Earth Day, April 22, is the annual U.S. celebration of the environment and a time for Americans to assess the work still needed to protect the natural gifts of our planet. Earth Day has no central organizing force behind it, though several nongovernmental organizations work to keep track of the thousands of local events in schools and parks that mark the day. It affirms that environmental awareness is part of the country's consciousness and that the idea of protecting the environment — once the province of a few conservationists — has moved from the extreme to the mainstream of American thought.

This was not always the case. In the 19th century, Americans, blessed with a vast land rich in natural resources, lived with the notion that fresh fields were always just over the horizon. When one exhausted the soil or forests or coal of a given place, it was possible to move on to another. As industry boomed in the early 20th century people accepted without question skies blackened from smokestack emissions and rivers fouled with industrial waste. As early as the mid-1930s — and again in the 1950s — Ohio's Cuyahoga River, running through America's industrial heartland, was set ablaze by burning chemical waste from factories built upon its banks. There was no public outcry. Few people even noticed.

During the 1960s public attitudes began to change. In 1962 a marine biologist named Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*. The title referred to a future without birds and described in plain language devastating long-term effects of highly toxic pesticides and other chemical agents then commonly used in American agriculture, industry and daily life. The book was a surprise best-seller.

In 1968 Apollo astronauts, returning from their pioneering orbital flight around the moon, photographed the planet Earth as a whole for the first time. This image of the Earth — small, fragile, beautiful, and unique — quickly was imprinted on the psyches of millions. In 1969 industrial runoff in the Cuyahoga River again caught fire. This time the public reaction was immediate and intense. Cleveland, where the fire occurred, became a national laughing-stock, and the satirical song "Burn On, Big River, Burn On" was heard on radios across the country. In that same year the U.S. Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), establishing a "national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment."

Concurrent with this slow building of environmental awareness was the increasingly vocal opposition to U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam. Public demonstrations against the war — par-

ticularly on college campuses — gave impetus to the idea that organized challenges to the "status quo" could in fact change public policy and behavior.

ORIGIN OF EARTH DAY

Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. senator from Wisconsin and a longtime conservationist, was one who understood that the methods developed for use in the anti-war protest could succeed in other areas as well. "At the time," Nelson later wrote, "there was a great deal of turmoil on the college campuses over the Vietnam War. Protests, called anti-war teach-ins, were being widely held on campuses across the nation ... It suddenly occurred to me, why not have a nationwide teach-in on the environment? That was the origin of Earth Day."

Nelson returned to Washington and began promoting Earth Day to state governors, mayors of big cities, editors of college newspapers and, importantly, to *Scholastic Magazine*, which is circulated in U.S. elementary and secondary schools. In September 1969, Nelson formally announced that there would be a "national environmental teach-in" sometime in spring 1970. "The wire services carried the story nationwide," recalled Nelson. "The response was dramatic Telegrams, letters, and telephone inquiries poured in from all over the nation. Using my Senate staff, I ran Earth Day activities out of my office. By December, the movement had expanded so rapidly that it became necessary to open an office in Washington to serve as a national clearing-house for Earth Day inquiries and activities

"Earth Day achieved what I had hoped for. The objective was to get a nationwide demonstration of concern for the environment so large that it would shake the political arena. It was a gamble, but it worked. An estimated 20 million people participated in peaceful demonstrations all across the country. Ten thousand grade schools and high schools, two thousand colleges, and one thousand communities were involved That was the remarkable thing that became Earth Day."

Groundbreaking federal legislation followed the success of the first Earth Day. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was



Volunteers at Morningside Park clear overgrowth from a hill during the annual commemoration of Earth Day Sunday, in New York. (AP Photo/Michelle Poire)



Children play near a tent depicting wind power during Earth Day events on the National Mall in Washington Sunday, April 25, 2010. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)

established in 1970, followed by the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act of 1972, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Among the many far-reaching provisions of these bills was the requirement that automobiles use unleaded gasoline, achieve a minimum number of miles-per-gallon of gasoline and be equipped with catalytic converters to reduce the amount of toxic fumes released by automobile exhaust.

Then, in the wake of this legislative success, Earth Day seemed to disappear. Though annual celebrations continued, they failed to match the size and enthusiasm of the first year. Earth Day seemed to have become a relic of the protest days of the early 1970s.

Yet the spirit of Earth Day continued. Environmental organizations grew in size and power. Groups such as Greenpeace, formed in Canada in 1971, adopted principles of nonviolent civil disobedience to raise public consciousness about dwindling whale populations and the risks of nuclear power. The Nature Conservancy, formed in 1951, rededicated itself in the early 1970s to the “preservation of natural diversity” and began to buy undeveloped land for use as nature preserves. Venerable institutions such as the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society vigorously brought suits against logging companies to slow the destruction of old-growth forests. Funded by public contributions and staffed with lawyers and educators as well as scientists and naturalists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) became aggressive watchdogs for the environment.

At home, Americans, often prompted by their children, began to separate their household trash for recycling. By the late 1980s recycling programs were established in many communities. By the mid-1990s these municipal recycling programs were paying for themselves, the amount of trash dumped into landfills was in noticeable decline, and more than 20 percent of America’s municipal trash was being converted into useful products. Corporations, ever conscious of the desires of the consumer — and the bottom line of profits — began to promote themselves as being environmentally friendly. Many firms adopted sensible business practices that increased efficiency and reduced the amounts of industrial waste.

RESURGENCE IN 1990s

Earth Day came back in a big way in 1990. Led by Dennis Hayes,

a primary organizer of the first Earth Day, Earth Day 1990 was international in scope. More than 200 million people around the world — 10 times the number in 1970 — participated in events that recognized that the environment had finally become a universal public concern. The global momentum continued in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where an unprecedented number of governments and NGOs agreed on a far-ranging program to promote sustainable development.

The 25th anniversary of the first Earth Day in 1995 was a time to assess environmental progress. In Western countries the news seemed good — air and water were cleaner, forests were expanding and many other environmental indicators were up as well. The sometimes volatile combination of legislation, lawsuits brought by NGOs, public education and more efficient business practices had made a noticeable and positive effect on the condition of the environment.

But there were conflicting views on just how good this news was. Environmental reporter Gregg Easterbrook wrote in *The New Yorker* magazine that environmental laws “along with a vast array of private efforts spurred by environmental consciousness ... have been a stunning success Environmental regulations, far from being burdensome and expensive, have proved to be strikingly effective, have cost less than anticipated, and have made the economies of the countries that have put them into effect stronger, not weaker.”

Environment magazine, a leading NGO journal, offered a gloomier assessment: “Earth Day ... has neither spawned a permanently active citizenry nor transformed the general malaise



Environmentalists call for a climate action during the Earth Day celebration on the National Mall in Washington Sunday, April 25, 2010. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)

that undermines faith in democratic accountability. Although environmentalism has made great strides since 1970, institutionally as well as in public consciousness, environmental security... today remains even more elusive than 25 years ago.”

What began in 1970 as a protest movement has evolved into a global celebration of the environment and commitment to its protection. The history of Earth Day mirrors the growth of environmental awareness over the last few decades, and the legacy of Earth Day is the certain knowledge that the environment is a universal concern.

U.S. Government Contributes to Greener Education in Samarkand



Representatives from the U.S. Embassy and the other project partners tour the greenhouse. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On March 16, 2012, Samarkand State University hosted the opening ceremony of its newly renovated greenhouse. Representatives from the U.S., German and Swiss Embassies, along with representatives from the Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Program (GEF/SGP), attended the ceremony, which included a presentation about the project at the Samarkand State University rector's office and a tour of the greenhouse.

In 2010, the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent provided a grant to Samarkand State University's Board of Trustees in order to renovate the university's botanical greenhouse. The greenhouse was established in 1969 and has been a place for scientists and student-biologists to conduct scientific research, cultivate and breed more than 250 rare and exotic plant species from various tropical and subtropical ecosystems.

At the opening, Rector Tashkenbayev Ulugbek thanked the partners for their support of the project, which will allow the greenhouse to play a greater role in further establishing Samarkand State University as a leader in scientific research and makes it one of the most energy efficient educational facilities in the region.

After more than 35 years of operation, the greenhouse's infrastructure had significantly deteriorated. The glass planes were broken, the boiler had become obsolete and natural gas consumption was very wasteful due to its inefficient design, outdated insulation and heat distribution systems. The existing energy and supply usage systems were not cost and resource

effective. These constraining factors lead to the disappearance of many plants and, ultimately, to the collapse of the greenhouse.

Active and committed students of the university managed to mobilize a number of international donors in order to save the greenhouse. Donors such as the GEF/SGP in Uzbekistan and the U.S., German and Swiss embassies in Tashkent jointly funded the 130,000 USD project to revive the greenhouse. The U.S. Embassy's contribution included the installation of solar power panels for electricity supply, scientific cataloging of the plant collection, website development and hosting, educational workshops and publications of the greenhouse materials.

The U.S. Government is committed to promoting environmental protection programs and initiatives, including those addressing climate change issues. In order to imple-

ment those initiatives, the U.S. Department of State works closely with the international community on various international programs and U.S. Embassies around the world use a variety of diplomatic and public program approaches to support the efforts of national partners to promote environment protection projects.

This particular project was funded through the U.S. Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, which seeks to support Uzbekistan's democratic institutions and civil society on a variety of issues, including environment development, by awarding small project grants on a competitive basis to Uzbekistan's nongovernmental organizations, nonprofit community-based organizations and other nonprofit associations and community groups, as well as independent local media organizations.



An outdoor view of Samarkand State University's greenhouse. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Alumna Organizes Dance Performance in Recognition of Disabilities Awareness Day



Dancers perform Visage Movement Theater's newest project, "Presence," for a standing room-only audience. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Constitution Day, widely celebrated across the country, saw the debut of "Presence," a new dance project by the Visage Movement Theater. The performance combined young people with special needs and professional dancers; yet at some point the viewers stopped noticing such details and saw only one group of dancers on the stage. "Integration is the key element," notes Liliya Sevastyanova, the artistic director of Visage Theater. "We want our audience to accept our dancers as equals, not only on stage, but in everyday life as well."

While participating in the International Visitor Leadership Program in the U.S. in 2002, Ms. Sevastyanova visited many venues – theaters, orchestras, festivals – and learned not only the creative and cultural parts of artistic work, but also the managerial aspect. According to Ms. Sevastyanova, the program helped her adopt new outreach strategies to promote the work of her theater. Prior to participating in IVLP, she had been too shy to reach out to other private and public organizations to ask for assistance or support. After meeting with her American counterparts, however, Liliya understood the key idea that "you don't turn this into a begging process, but make it a partnership, which will be beneficial for everybody."

This was a moment of change for Ms. Sevastyanova's way of thinking – she realized that being an artistic director and trying to promote her theater takes much more than simply reaching out to the audience; it also requires understanding what one can offer partners and what one can receive in return. "It's not just the monetary donations that we would like to receive; it's the moral support of what we do. That is also important, because if people believe in what we do is right, then they would be more open to partner with us and promote our activities on a broader scale," she emphasized.

In 1982, fresh out of the Tashkent Institute of Culture with a

degree in choreography, Ms. Sevastyanova created the Visage Movement Theatre, the first of its kind in Uzbekistan, to stage performances of modern choreography. In the early 2000s, Ms. Sevastyanova also began working as a volunteer with children with special needs at the Tashkent Club of Rehabilitation and Integration, which is when she came to the conclusion that she needed to offer people with disabilities an opportunity to express themselves through art.

Through her tireless efforts, there are now about 30 people in the performing group, of which more than 20 are those with various disabilities. Ms. Sevastyanova's innovation and inclusive, creative outreach strategy allows the theater to conduct educational activities and produce integrated performances featuring people with special needs. This includes people in wheelchairs, people with oligophrenia, Down's syndrome, disorders of support-locomotion system, and those who are deaf, mute or visually impaired.

"You cannot imagine how difficult it is for some of our children with disabilities to get to the theater for rehearsals. Yet they can't wait until the next time so they can meet with their friends – here they find home outside their home," says Liliya. "Whether we receive funding or not, we gather at least twice a week for rehearsals. Thanks to the U.S. and German Embassies that supported our performance around the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. There was no better way of commemorating this important day than premiering our performance."

U.S. Ambassador George Krol enjoyed the performance and recognized its value. "It is important that organizations like Visage continue to fight for the rights of the disabled and help integrate them into society," he summed up. "People with disabilities have much to contribute. It is an honor for the U.S. Embassy to co-sponsor such events and we will continue investing in causes and projects that help Uzbekistan build a better society."



Dancers and their disabled counterparts dance together. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Ambassador Attends Puppet Performance for Disabilities Awareness Day



A student manipulates a wheelchair-bound puppet. (U.S. Embassy photo)

A puppet with a toy hearing aid, one in a wheelchair, a third that can't hear and another that can't speak – Ambassador Krol gave opening remarks at a very unusual performance that premiered at the local lyceum in Termez, Surkhandarya region in December, 2011. It all began in 2002, when Nargis Ziyavatdinova traveled to the U.S. as a participant of the International Visitor Leadership Program. Among many stops throughout several states, she met with the representatives of the Pacer School in Minnesota, which provides educational and other services for children with disabilities.

Upon her return to Uzbekistan, Nargis decided to open a similar school in her hometown of Termez. Since then, hundreds of children with various types of disabilities have studied at the Imkon Center. Roughly 50 students have already successfully integrated into public school after having graduated from the center.

In February 2011, Nargis traveled to the U.S. again; this time as one of 18 participants in a prestigious “‘Gold Stars’ Tour: Alumni Connecting the World,” celebrating the 50th anniversary of the International Visitors Exchange Program. Once again, Ms. Ziyavatdinova visited her old friends from the Pacer Center, where she learned about their “Count Me In” program. This program features six child-size, multicultural puppets that portray children with disabilities. These puppets have proven to be effective communicators of the message of understanding and acceptance, helping to dispel fears, myths and misconceptions about persons with disabilities. That is when Nargis realized she wanted to put together a similar performance for Uzbek audiences.

The Pacer Center helped Nargis obtain puppets, while the U.S. Department of State provided a small grant to help implement the project. Together with her colleagues at the Imkon Center, Nargis wrote a short play with the script that tells about disabilities and chronic illnesses, in an effort to bridge the gap between typical students and those with disabilities.

“It was a project of the year for our center. From the moment I returned from the U.S. and discussed the idea with my colleagues, we knew it was the best way to raise the public awareness on disabilities issues, especially among the younger generation,” reflects Nargis.

On the frosty morning of December 3rd, the “Accept Me!” performance, which Ambassador Krol said was “the first of its kind in Uzbekistan,” opened at Termez City Lyceum # 2. U.S. Ambassador George Krol traveled to Surkhandarya region to attend the event and provided the opening remarks in Uzbek, highlighting that December 3rd marks International Disabilities Awareness Day. This day was established thirty years ago by the United Nations to promote a better understanding of disability issues with a focus on disabled rights.

“It is important that Imkon and each of us continue to fight for the rights of the disabled and integrating them into society,” said the ambassador. “People with disabilities have much to contribute to society. Every country needs to do what it can to ensure that every citizen can reach his or her full potential.”

The students from the center were nervous about performing in front of such a large crowd, but they were even more anxious to tell their stories. The audience truly enjoyed the hour-and-a-half-long performance which included a theatrical play, national dances and poem recitation in the Uzbek, Russian, German and English languages. Throughout December, the play will be shown in all 16 public schools in Termez City to raise disabilities awareness.

Nargis sums up the mission of Imkon: “Disabled people abroad, and especially in the USA, have access to education and a good healthcare system; they are an integral part of society. Our goal is to reach that level of integration in Uzbekistan.”



Ambassador Krol gives opening remarks before the start of the puppet show. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The “Accept Me!” Puppet Show Hits the Road in Uzbekistan



The visually impaired puppet tells her story. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The Imkon Rehabilitation Center for Children with Disabilities took its extraordinary “Accept Me!” puppet show on the road, traveling to the Kashkadarya, Bukhara and Navoi regions on April 14-16. The puppet show premiered in Termez on December 2 of last year to commemorate Disabilities Awareness Day (See page 8 for the story). Ambassador Krol attended that performance and provided the opening remarks. The show depicts the stories of four puppets with various impairments – hearing, speaking, visual and walking. Manipulated by the students from local schools and children from the rehabilitation center, the puppets demonstrate how to accept people with disabilities, focusing on universal inclusive education for all children, seeking to eliminate misconceptions and promoting understanding and public awareness.

First Action Officer Working Group Meeting for FY 13 Held in Tashkent

On February 22-23, the Action Officer Working Group met in Tashkent to plan the next fiscal year’s security cooperation plan. This group included representatives from the U.S. Department of Defense, the Uzbek Ministry of Defense and the Uzbek Ministry of Emergency Situations.

Ambassador Krol opened the session, which represented the beginning of the military-to-military contact cooperation planning process for fiscal year 2013. He highlighted the importance the past twenty years has played in enhancing bilateral cooperation through building a strong relationship and solidifying a mutual partnership based on values that are important to both the United States and Uzbekistan.

The goals of this year’s Action Officer Working Group are to update the current fiscal year plan for the Military-to-Military Contact Program and to prepare a draft plan for the next fiscal year’s program. The next step will be to finalize the draft plan at the Consultative Staff Talks (CST) in Tampa, Florida in May, followed by execution of the agreed upon plan beginning on October 1, 2012.

In addition to reviewing the current plan and proposing a

future one, another objective of the meetings was to introduce the Mississippi National Guard as Uzbekistan’s new State Partnership Program partner. The Mississippi representatives discussed the role of the Mississippi National Guard in implementing various cooperation programs that support U.S. efforts to build partner capacity and to enhance bilateral relations.

“It’s so exciting to take our performance on the road,” says Nargis Ziyavatdinova, the director of the center. “For most of my crew, this is the first time they ever left their hometown, traveling to such historical cities as Bukhara and Karshi, connecting with their peers and sharing their stories. It’s becoming a life-changing experience for all of us, both the audience and the performers.”

The project is being implemented with a Democracy Outreach Alumni Grant, sponsored by Assistance to Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia (AEECA) funds of the U.S. Department of State. Additionally, Ms. Ziyavatdinova is a 2002 International Visitor Leadership Program alumna, who was also one of 18 participants in the prestigious “Gold Stars’ Tour: Alumni Connecting the World” program, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the International Visitors Exchange Program last year.

Next month the troupe will travel to Ferghana Valley to perform in three more regions: Ferghana, Namangan and Andijan.

While the State Partnership Program facilitates military-military exchanges, it will foster military-civilian and civilian-civilian cooperation. In particular, the partnership will facilitate building economic ties between Mississippi and Uzbekistan. For example, Uzbekistan and Mississippi have shared interests in the areas of agriculture and manufacturing. This collaboration represents just one of the ways in which the United States and Uzbekistan are working to promote common goals.

COL David Smith, of the Mississippi National Guard, said: “We’re very excited about this partnership. It is a great opportunity to do exchanges with the military but we’re also equally excited to do civilian exchanges and increase institutional relationships.”

While the State Partnership Program facilitates military-military exchanges, it will foster military-civilian and civilian-civilian cooperation. In particular, the partnership will facilitate building economic ties between Mississippi and Uzbekistan. For example, Uzbekistan and Mississippi have shared interests in the areas of agriculture and manufacturing. This collaboration represents just one of the ways in which the United States and Uzbekistan are working to promote common goals.

Ambassador Krol Meets with Academics and Tours the Oriental Studies Institute



Ambassador Krol views manuscripts at the Oriental Studies Institute. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On Friday, April 13, Ambassador George Krol visited the Oriental Studies Institute in Tashkent, which contains one of the largest collections of Oriental manuscripts and incunabula in the world. While at the institute, Ambassador Krol met with the director, Dr. Bakhrom Abdukhamilov, and several department heads before receiving a tour of the collection and viewing some of the manuscripts. The institute itself is housed under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, and its collection dates back as far as the 10th century. The manuscripts are

comprised of a variety of materials used by local scholars for centuries: parchment, papyrus, animal skin, Samarkand silk paper, linen and cotton. In 2001, through the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, the U.S. Embassy provided support to the institute for restoration of the Abu-Raykhan Beruni archival collection, which included improving the climate control necessary to protect delicate works. Many prominent Central Asian, Chinese, Iranian and Arabic scholars, poets and historians are represented in the institute's collection and the Ambassador enjoyed the opportunity to view some of these important cultural artifacts.

Ambassador Krol and Dr. Abdukhamilov discussed instances of prior cooperation between the institute and the Embassy as well as previous academic exchanges, which allowed American scholars from leading U.S. study centers to examine and analyze some of the priceless manuscripts. Ambassador Krol pointed out the importance of sharing academic resources: "How can the U.S. and Uzbekistan preserve Uzbek history that is unknown to Americans? For example, Al Beruni is little known in the U.S. but everyone should know of figures like him, people who are important to Eastern history." According to the Ambassador: "It is important to the whole world that we work together to find a way to collaborate on these preservations. It is my desire to expand this conversation and our cooperation with you."

Students from Uzbekistan Choose to Study in the U.S.

In September, 2011, the U.S. Embassy highlighted Michael Danilov, a jazz student who received a scholarship to study in the United States, with help from the Educational Advising Center. Danilov is just one of many recent success stories. In fact, another is also a musician – this time, a violinist. Anna Tsukervanik received a full scholarship to attend Lynn University's Professional Performance Certificate program for string instruments in Boca Raton, Florida. Prior to getting her scholarship, Anna took advantage of the EAC's resources by attending presentations about studying in the U.S. and receiving individual advising from the EAC advisor.

Other scholarship recipients include: Rukhsora Rakhmatova, Business and Finance at Park University; Nozima Botirova, Public Relations at Drexel University; Nigorabonu Miliyeva, Cello Music at Ball State University; Ziyodakhon Gazieva, English and Psychology at Ball State University; and Azizbek Khudoynazarov, Business and Finance at Truman State University. The number of Uzbek students wanting to study in the United States has been increasing, as has the number of students for whom that is possible. Apply-

ing and being accepted to a U.S. institution is only one of the hurdles students must face; often, one of the larger issues is how to finance a U.S. education.

Fortunately, the EAC is equipped to help students find ways to finance their studies. It has access to comprehensive and accurate information about studying in the U.S., including scholarship information. Additionally, colleges and universities from the U.S. have been increasing their efforts to attract students from Uzbekistan.

A representative of Truman State University recently visited Uzbekistan to participate in the Education Abroad Fair and to give a presentation at the EAC. She was able to share information about Truman State and answer questions from many interested students. When asked why she chose to visit Uzbekistan she answered: "Our

university has a number of students from Uzbekistan, and when I asked them, how they learned about the Truman State, they told that they visited the Educational Advising Center at the U.S. Embassy and I decided to come and meet with other students."



EducationUSA at the Education Abroad 2011 Fair in November. (U.S. Embassy photo)

International Travel to United States Increasing



The World War II Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial are two of the monuments that draw thousands of international tourists to Washington every year. (© AP Images)

U.S. Commerce Secretary John Bryson announced April 23 that the United States can expect a 4 percent to 5 percent average annual growth in tourism over the next five years, with 65.4 million foreign travelers projected to visit the United States in 2012 alone.

The newest Travel and Tourism Forecast, released semi-annually by the U.S. Commerce Department's International Trade Administration (ITA), predicts continued strong growth through 2016 following two consecutive visitor-volume records set in 2010 and 2011.

Bryson announced the forecast at the U.S. Travel Association's International Pow Wow in Los Angeles, an annual event that draws more than 5,000 travel and tourism professionals from 70 countries.

"Today's forecast is a positive sign that the travel and tourism industry — our Number 1 services export — is growing stronger," Bryson said. "We will remain focused on making the U.S. even more welcoming to visitors, and our message to the world is clear: The United States is open for business."

On April 23, the ITA also launched a Web-based tool to provide the travel and tourism industry, as well as foreign visitors, with information and statistics from the departments of Commerce, Homeland Security and State. In addition to providing basic information like travel tips, the resource contains a set of 15 regularly updated graphs on visa wait times, international arrivals processing times and airline capacity in key markets.

Tourists from all world regions are forecast to grow over next five years, ranging from a low for the Caribbean (a 9 percent increase), to a high for Asia (a 49 percent increase), South America (a 47 percent increase), and Africa (a 47 percent increase).

The numbers of visitors from all but three of the top 40 origin nations are forecast to increase from 2011 through 2016. Countries with the largest total growth percentages are China (up 198 percent), Brazil (up 70 percent), Argentina (up 46 percent), Australia (up 45 percent), South Korea (up 35 percent) and Venezuela (up 35 percent).

North America is forecast to account for the largest proportion of the total visitor growth of 14 million visitors (42 percent). Asia (25 percent), Western Europe (11 percent) and South America (13 percent) are expected to account for the bulk of the remaining 58 percent of total growth in visitor volume forecast in 2016 compared to 2011 actual volume, according to the Commerce Department.

The department recently released data showing that 62 million international visitors traveled to the United States in 2011.

Commerce Secretary Bryson and Under Secretary for International Trade Francisco Sánchez met April 23 with the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board to discuss strategies for increasing travel to the United States. The board advises the commerce secretary on policies and programs that affect the U.S. travel and tourism industry.

In January, President Obama announced several initiatives to increase travel and tourism in the U.S. and created a Task Force for Travel and Competitiveness. The president charged Bryson and Interior Department Secretary Ken Salazar with developing recommendations for a national tourism and travel strategy to promote domestic and international travel opportunities throughout the United States.

To view the travel and tourism indicators website, visit www.trade.gov/travelindicators. To learn more about the Spring 2012 Travel and Tourism Forecast, visit www.trade.gov.



The Statue of Liberty is seen in New York harbor. (AP Photo / Richard Drew, file)



The State of Louisiana – the Pelican State



Louisiana is a southern state bordering the Gulf of Mexico. It contains the delta (mouth) of the Mississippi River. Louisiana lies on the coastal plain of North America and includes marshlands across its southern coastline. It borders Texas in the west, Arkansas in the north, and Mississippi in the east. The Mississippi River zigzags through the state and forms part of its eastern border. The Sabine River forms much of the border with Texas.

The climate is humid and subtropical. The average summer temperature is 28°C. Louisiana is one of the wettest states, with an average rainfall of 1,473 mm a year. Hurricanes and tornadoes are fairly common and often cause great damage.

PEOPLE

When Europeans first reached the area, its native peoples included the Caddo, the Natchez, the Chitimacha, and the Choctaw. Louisiana today has a rich mix of cultures. Creoles – descendants of the first French and Spanish settlers – live mainly in the south. The Cajuns are descendants of French Canadians who settled in the 1700s. African Americans make up 33 percent of the population. There is also a growing Vietnamese population. Major cities include New Orleans, Baton Rouge – the state capital – and Shreveport.

Basic differences between the people of southern and northern Louisiana are reflected in many aspects of Louisiana life and stem from the character of the regions and from the components of the population. The population of southern Louisiana has a greater percentage of nonwhites, citizens of French descent, and Roman Catholics. When a Louisianian of French-Canadian descent speaks the “Cajun” dialect, or a black speaks “Gumbo,” a mixed dialect of African origin, he may be identified as a resident of southern Louisiana.

ECONOMY

For many years Louisiana was mostly rural, and it still has a strong farming economy. Soybeans, rice, cotton, and cattle are the major agricultural products.



Louisiana Republican Gov. Bobby Jindal and his wife Supriya, look back at the State Capitol building as they arrive on the steps of the Capitol for his inauguration in Baton Rouge, Monday, Jan. 14, 2008. Jindal became the first elected Indian-American governor in the United States. (AP Photo/Bill Haber).



Legislators and the general public gather on the steps of the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge, La., Monday, Jan. 12, 2004, for the inauguration of Louisiana's governor: Kathleen Blanco took the oath of office to become Louisiana's first woman governor. (AP Photo/Bill Haber)

Today 80 percent of the workforce is in service jobs. They include retail, tourism, and government. Chemicals are the state's most important manufactured products. Food processing and paper manufacture are among the other major industries. Louisiana is also rich in oil, natural gas, and sulfur, and its minerals, farms, forests, and fisheries provide the basis for modern industries.

HISTORY

In April 1682 the French explorer Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, reached the mouth of the Mississippi River. Over the next 100 years various parts of Louisiana belonged to France, Spain, and Britain. European settlers brought slaves from Africa and the West Indies. In 1800 Spain returned the whole area to France.

During the American Revolution Louisiana helped the American colonies. In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson sent James Monroe to Paris to buy the Isle of Orleans – New Orleans and the mouth of the Mississippi – from France. Instead, Monroe bought 2 million sq. km of land from the



Re-enactors portraying the French National Guard troops file in front of historic St. Louis Cathedral in the French Quarter of New Orleans, Saturday, Dec. 20, 2003, during ceremonies celebrating the Louisiana Purchase. This is part of a year long bicentennial celebration of the Louisiana Purchase. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

French ruler Napoleon for \$15 million. The deal was known as the Louisiana Purchase.

In 1804 Louisiana was organized as the Territory of Orleans. It joined the Union as the state of Louisiana 1812. Cotton and sugar plantations thrived, and the state grew quickly. Louisiana joined the Confederacy in 1861. When slavery was abolished after the Civil War (1861-1865), the economy suffered badly. In the 1900s the oil and chemical industry helped Louisiana's recovery. But the collapse of the oil industry in the mid-1980s brought more hardship to the people of the state.

RECREATION

The most important museum in the state is a living one – the Vieux Carré Historic District, an 85-block area of New Orleans, known as the French Quarter. The district, designated a National Historic Landmark, coincides approximately with the original area of the city. It has a continuum of architectural styles including French and Spanish Colonial, early Federal, and antebellum. The iron-trellised balconies are a distinctive feature.



The state bird of Louisiana, the Brown Pelican, is silhouetted against the setting sun on Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans on Thursday, Aug. 23, 2007. (AP Photo/Ann Heisenfelt)

Kisatchie National Forest, Louisiana's only national forest, is spread out in several divisions over the north central part of the state. Chalmette National Historical Park was the scene of part of the Battle of New Orleans, the last major

encounter of the War of 1812. The federal government also has jurisdiction over more than 20 recreational facilities.

New Orleans' famed Mardi Gras, a custom imported from France, is often termed the greatest free show in the country. Each year thousands of visitors gather in the city for the carnival season. Several weeks of masked balls, parades, parties, and general frivolity reach a climax on Shrove Tuesday, or Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday") the day before Lent begins. Several smaller communities in southern Louisiana hold similar celebrations.

Sources:

- <http://louisiana.gov>
- <http://factfinder2.census.gov>
- <http://www.50states.com>
- Grolier Student Encyclopedia, V.10
- Encyclopedia Americana, V.17



U.S. Map, courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau.

QUICK FACTS

Abbreviation: LA

Capital City: Baton Rouge

Governor: Bobby Jindal

Date of Statehood: April 30, 1812 (18th state)

Population: 4,574,836; 22nd largest

Area: 134,649 sq.km; 31st largest

Origin of State's Name: Named in honor of France's King Louis XIV

Largest Cities: New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, LaFayette, Lake Charles, Kenner, Bossier City, Monroe, Alexandria, New Iberia

Economy:

Agriculture: Seafood, cotton, soybeans, cattle, sugarcane, poultry and eggs, dairy products, rice. *Industry:* Chemical products, petroleum and coal products, food processing, transportation equipment, paper products, tourism

Introduction to Elections in the United States

(Continued from page 1)

American electoral process and how it works at the federal, state, and local levels. The process, complicated and sometimes confusing, has evolved to ensure universal suffrage to all men and women who are U.S. citizens 18 years of age or older.

Elections in the United States

Elections occur in every even-numbered year for Congress and some state and local government offices in the United States. Other states and local jurisdictions hold elections in odd-numbered years.

Types of U.S. Elections

There are two basic types of elections: primary and general. Primary elections are held prior to a general election to determine party candidates for the general election. The winning candidates in the primary go on to represent that party in the general election (although there may be a few more steps before their party lets them do that).

Since the early 20th century, primaries have been the chief electoral device for choosing party candidates. With rare exception, victory in a primary election results in a candidate being nominated by that political party for the general



In this Nov. 4, 2008 file photo, President-elect Barack Obama, left, his wife Michelle Obama, right, and two daughters, Malia, and Sasha, center left, wave to the crowd at the election night rally in Chicago. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, file)

Every four years, Americans elect a president and vice president. Every two years, Americans elect all 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and approximately one-third of the 100 members of the U.S. Senate. Senators serve staggered terms of six years each.

The United States relies on a complex federal system of government, where the national government is central but state and local governments exercise authority over matters that are not reserved for the federal government. State and local governments have varying degrees of independence in how they organize elections within their jurisdictions, but they hold frequent and well-administered elections.

election. In a few states, party candidates are chosen in state or local nominating conventions, rather than primaries, either by tradition or at the option of the political parties.

Once the primary elections or conventions conclude, a general election is held to determine who will be elected to hold office. In the general election, voters make the final determination from among the party candidates listed on the ballot. The general election ballot may also include independent candidates (those not affiliated with a major political party) who gain access to the ballot by submitting a specified number of petition signatures, rather than by the traditional primary method. Furthermore, in some states,

the ballot may include a place to “write in” the names of candidates who were neither nominated by the parties nor qualified by petition. Such candidates may be described as “self-nominated,” and they win election to public office from time to time.

In the United States, elections may involve more than just choosing people for public office. In some states and localities, questions of public policy may also be placed on the ballot for voter approval or disapproval. Measures referred to voters by the state legislature or local board or council — referendums — and those placed on the ballot by citizen petition — initiatives — usually concern bond issues (approving the borrowing of money for public projects) and other mandates or strictures on government. In recent decades, these ballot measures have had major impacts, particularly on state budgets and policies.

In addition to federal, state and local elections held in even-numbered years, many states and local jurisdictions hold “off-year” elections in odd-numbered years. Many jurisdictions also provide for special elections, which can be scheduled at any time to serve a specific purpose, such as filling an unexpected vacancy in an elected office.

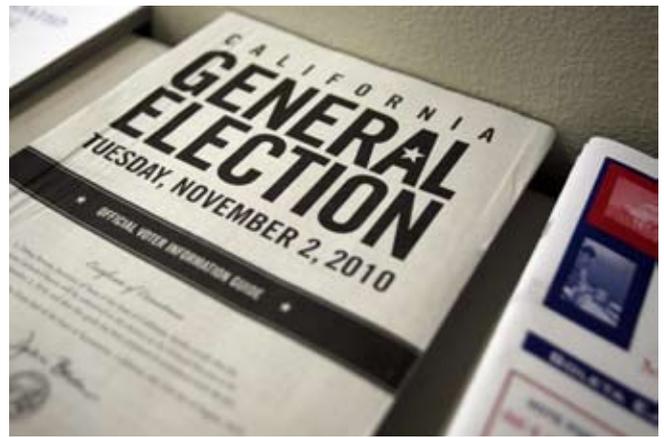
Presidential Elections

Every four years, the general election for U.S. president takes place on the Tuesday after the first Monday of November. Prior to this general election, states hold primary elections or caucuses to choose delegates to the national nominating conventions where the party nominees are selected. These individual state primaries and caucuses typically take place between January and June, followed by the national conventions in the summer preceding the election.

Since the 1970s, the presidential candidates who will be the eventual nominees of the major parties are known before the conventions because they amass a majority of delegates before the primary and caucus season is concluded. As a consequence, the conventions have become largely ceremonial events.

Highlights of the conventions include a keynote speech by a party leader or leaders, the announcement of the nominee’s vice presidential candidate, the roll call of delegate votes by the state delegations, and the ratification of the party “platform” (the document that states its positions on the issues). As a televised political event and the start of the general election campaign, the conventions are an opportunity to promote the party nominees and define differences with the opposition.

The percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots varies from election to election, but voter turnout in general — even in presidential elections — is lower in the United States than in most other democracies. Since 1960, voter turnout has generally declined from 64 percent (1960) to just over 50 percent (1996), although it increased again over the past three elections. There are several reasons for the comparatively low turnout in the United States. In



A voter information guide gives directions for a November 2010 election at a California precinct. (© AP Images)

contrast to some other democracies, a voter in the United States must self-register to be eligible to vote, a process that varies somewhat from one state to another. Another explanation is that voting is voluntary, not compulsory, as in some nations. Because of the high number of elections that are required to fill the estimated more than 1 million elective offices throughout the country, it is also possible that voter fatigue contributes to lower turnout.

Statistics indicate that turnout can drop when the public is content with the political situation, or when polls point to an inevitable victory for a candidate. Conversely, turnout may rise when the race between candidates is considered to be very close or controversial issues are on the ballot.

Candidate Requirements

Each federal elected office has different requirements, laid out in Articles I and II of the U.S. Constitution. A candidate for president, for example, must be a natural-born citizen of the United States, at least 35 years old, and a resident of the United States for at least 14 years. A vice president must meet the same qualifications. Under the 12th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the vice president cannot be from the same state as the president.

Candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives must be at least 25 years old, have been U.S. citizens for seven years, and be legal residents of the state they seek to represent in Congress. U.S. Senate candidates must be at least 30, have been a U.S. citizen for nine years, and be legal residents of the state they wish to represent. Those seeking state or local office must meet requirements established by those jurisdictions.

The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1951, prohibits anyone from being elected president of the United States more than twice. However, the Constitution does not impose any term limits on representatives and senators in Congress, although various political groups over the years have lobbied for such limits. The term limits, if any, applied to state and local officials are spelled out in state constitutions and local ordinances.

Professor Alisher Faizullaev Experiences Fulbright Scholar Success in the U.S.

Alisher Faizullaev, a professor and former ambassador, is a current Fulbright Visiting Scholar to the United States from Uzbekistan. He notes that being a Fulbright scholar “is a huge learning and professional enrichment experience,” which he gladly welcomes:

“Learning is one of the most enjoyable and rewarding human activities, and I greatly enjoy the wonderful learning experience provided by the Fulbright program.”

Although his program includes a semester at Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, in Medford, Massachusetts and Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, in Washington, DC, he has been able to do work at other institutions as well.

He has lectured and conducted seminars and workshops at Tufts, Georgetown, Harvard, Johns Hopkins and the Ohio State Universities. After hearing one of his talks, a professor from the Fletcher School was very appreciative:

“Many, many thanks – for your wonderfully structured, complete, informative, engaging presentation. It was a diplomatic and professional tour de force! I really learned a lot from you.”

Professor Faizullaev, in turn, seeks to learn as much as he can during his time in the U.S. He is auditing classes, participating in seminars and conferences, discussing research topics, writing articles and challenging issues with the colleagues and students at the host institutions:

“With my Fulbright experience, I hope I will be able to implement higher professional standards in my teaching and research practice. During my workshops in America I also tried and tested some new ideas and training techniques and now I intend to use them in my classes back home,” he says.

He has also used his time in the U.S. to have a number of his articles appear in U.S. based publications, including Harvard Law School’s Negotiation newsletter, The New York Times and Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of Diplomacy website.

Additionally, as the director of the Negotiation Laboratory at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent, he remains committed to his students in Uzbekistan: while in the U.S., he continues to work with many of them virtually. By doing this, Professor Faizullaev is able to apply the knowledge he is gaining through his Fulbright program to his work in Uzbekistan, just as he is sharing his own work with those in the U.S.



Professor Faizullaev in front of White-Gravenor Hall at Georgetown University. (Photo courtesy of Alisher Faizullaev)

Professor Faizullaev hopes to set a good example for his students in Uzbekistan and has yet again taken on the position of ambassador – this time, as an academic ambassador:

“Modern scholarship has become a global phenomenon and I wish young scholars in my country to succeed internationally. I am sure that cooperation between Uzbekistan and American universities and scholars will be valuable for both sides and for scholarship.”

Fulbright Foreign Student Program Provides Unique Opportunities for Students from Uzbekistan



Nodirjon posing for a picture during a Niagara Falls visit organized by the International Students' Office at RIT, September 2009. (Photo courtesy of Nodirjon Siddikov)

Many of the educational exchange programs administered by the U.S. Embassy have become very popular as more students seek to expand their academic horizons. One of the newer programs, the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, allows students to obtain a master's degree in the U.S. in a variety of fields. Although it is similar to the Edmund S. Muskie Program, the two programs focus on different academic fields, with the Fulbright program covering the humanities, hard sciences and social sciences.

At a recent information session organized by the embassy, Fulbright alumni Maria Kornakova, Bakhodir Kuziyev and Nodirjon Siddikov reflected on their experiences in the program. Additionally, the alumni spent an hour answering questions from prospective applicants. Maria studied Urban and Regional Planning at Michigan State University, Bakhodir studied Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri—Columbia, and Nodirjon studied Computer Science at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

The three alumni agreed that the process of applying to the program was relatively simple. Nodirjon believes that the statement of purpose is one of the most important parts of the application: "I knew that composing a compelling statement of purpose would help me stand out from the crowd of applicants, so I put considerable time and effort into writing an attractive statement," he said.

Both he and Bakhodir mentioned that one of the most challenging aspects of the process was choosing three universities at which they would like to study. However, Bakhodir believed this was also a benefit: "it helped me to do more research about the various programs and helped improve my statement of purpose."

Picking three universities is not mandatory – and being placed in one of them is not guaranteed – but it does help

applicants demonstrate that they are serious about the program and have put thought into their proposed course of study.

While academics are the focus of the program, participants are able to enjoy many other activities as well. For example, in addition to attending and participating in international clubs' holiday celebrations, Maria also took a two-week road trip around the U.S. with some of her American friends. The trip, she says, "was one of the sweetest things and remains one of my best memories to this day."

Nodirjon joined an aviation club where the members built a flight simulator from scratch. He did things like horse riding, completing a ropes course and attending wine tastings with a host family he found with the aid of the International Students Office. He also took time to share Uzbekistan with his new friends: "For example, involving myself in the local community gave me a chance to showcase my native culture by cooking some of our national food and inviting my friends over for dinner."

The experience and knowledge Bakhodir gained through the program are invaluable to him personally and professionally. "The program brings talent from all over the world to establish friendship ties and share knowledge, which prepares students to take action on global issues like food security. This increases participants' social capital and helped me to develop a new leadership style based on volunteerism. Participation in this program helped me understand the role of U.S. academia in tackling global challenges, become independent, find out what I like most and develop many lasting connections," he said.

The Fulbright Foreign Student Program gives students the opportunity to obtain advanced degrees from a U.S. institution while making new American and international friends, experiencing a new culture and sharing their own. For more information about this program, including application instructions and materials, visit http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/fulbright_foreign_students.html.



Maria at Yellowstone National Park, May 2011. (Photo courtesy of Maria Kornakova)

U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs Visits Uzbekistan



Ambassador Erel and Ambassador Krol present certificates to alumni. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On February 16-17 Ambassador Adam Erel, the State Department's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, visited Uzbekistan to consult with Uzbek officials and educators on means of advancing ties between the Uzbek and American peoples. Throughout his visit, Ambassador Erel highlighted the importance of moving forward quickly: "Building relationships, not just between people but between institutions... is a process that will take a long time. Obviously, we can begin to do a lot of things right away but to see the fruit of these projects will require several years... so let's get started now. We don't have time to wait; the rest of the world is moving forward fast, and the race is won by the quickest."

On February 17, Ambassador Erel and Ambassador Krol attended the opening ceremony of an educational conference organized by the government of Uzbekistan, "Training of an Educated and Intellectually Developed Generation as an Im-

portant Factor for Steady Development and Modernization of a Country." In the keynote address, President Karimov spoke of the great improvements Uzbekistan has seen in the educational sphere. Earlier, Ambassador Erel met with Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov and Higher Education Minister Bakhodir Khodiev. During the meetings, both sides discussed the importance of increasing cooperation in cultural and educational activities and exchanges. Ambassador Erel also met with Uzbekistan media at a press conference at the U.S. Embassy: "Every year there are 50,000 people who we bring to the U.S. or send overseas for one purpose, and that purpose is to promote mutual understanding between the United States and the countries of the world," he noted. "That's what brings me to Uzbekistan today," he continued. "Number one, to participate in a conference dedicated to education and to expanding education cooperation; and number two, to have discussions with officials of the government of Uzbekistan about how Uzbekistan and the United States can work together more closely in developing cooperative partnerships in the fields of education and culture."

Following the press conference, Ambassador Erel attended a reception hosted by Ambassador George Krol. The reception's guest list also included American educators and Uzbek alumni of U.S. government sponsored educational exchange programs. Ambassador Erel urged the alumni to use the knowledge and experience gained from studying in the U.S. to help their country. He presented certificates to alumni who have engaged in charitable work in Uzbekistan. In addition to participating in meetings and attending the educational conference, Ambassador Erel took time to meet with English language students and was able to experience some of the hospitality for which Uzbekistan is famous. Ambassador Erel was ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain from 2007-2011. He has also served in Iraq, Qatar, Yemen, Ethiopia, Syria and Egypt.

U.S. Principal Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs Adam Erel's Remarks for the International Education Conference

Thank you, organizers of the education conference, for inviting me to address this distinguished group. It is great to be here to talk to all of you about educational development and international exchange. This is a subject that is important to the United States, to our students and scholars, to our higher education institutions, and to their peers in Uzbekistan and around the world. It is also an important to enhancing the relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan, and with countries across the region.

This is my first visit to Uzbekistan, and I look forward to learning how the educational system of Uzbekistan has developed and how it serves the citizens of this country. I am sure the American academics attending will learn valuable lessons from the experiences of their Uzbek colleagues. As the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Educational and Cultural bureau in the U.S. Department of State, it is my privilege to oversee the various exchange programs sponsored by the State Department that have as their goal strengthening cooperation between the people

of the United States and people around the world. Our programs of exchange are helping to increase the global knowledge and understanding needed to generate solutions to global challenges. Today, I will make a few remarks about U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia, then more specifically about U.S.-Uzbek cooperation on education, and finally I will discuss the advantages of promoting mutual understanding. First though, let me recognize the significance of this month in our bilateral relationship. On Sunday, February 19, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Uzbekistan. Twenty years ago the United States welcomed the emergence of an independent Uzbekistan, along with the independence of its Central Asian neighbors. Over the past twenty years Uzbekistan has faced significant economic, political and security challenges. The United States has always sought to be a trusted partner in addressing those challenges through consultation, material support, and training based upon principles of mutual respect and mutual responsibility.

U.S. Priorities in Central Asia

The United States is committed to a long-term partnership with Central Asia. Our interests include: encouraging Central Asia's assistance in stabilizing Afghanistan; promoting democracy and respect for human rights; combating the trafficking of narcotics and people; supporting balanced energy policies and the development of energy resources; fostering economic growth and increased opportunities for trade; and, finally, sustaining non-proliferation. We feel strongly that the best way to advance U.S. interests across the region is by enhanced engagement at all levels with governments, civil society, and the people themselves. And so, I am glad to be with you today for this important conference to exchange ideas, and build trust and mutual respect. It is in all of our interests to renew, strengthen and expand our intellectual, commercial and people-to-people ties. Higher education is the natural forum for our nations to build close collaborative ties. Our colleges and universities – from community colleges to major research will need to work together across borders to address the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly interdependent world. Today, the issues that we face in areas such as public health, the environment, economic development, energy, food security, and disaster preparedness cross national borders, and they cross areas of academic disciplines.

The most important task for our educators is to create an environment that encourages innovative approaches to problems, and to teach and support entrepreneurship to move research findings from the laboratory to the marketplace. Universities provide the arena in which government, industry, academic institutions, and civil society can collaborate in all of these areas. It will take the best students and professors, researchers and policymakers in our countries and around the world working together to achieve scientific advances and practical solutions. So we need to foster academic collaboration and innovative partnerships. To achieve this, we need to internationalize our campuses – to teach languages, integrate global topics into the curriculum, and foster openness to other cultures and ways of doing things – in short, to “open minds to the world”. Some of the best ways to do this are to host international students, to make it possible for our own students to gain international experience, and for students and faculty to work with their peers from other countries.

U.S.-Uzbek Cooperation on Education

Let me reiterate, over the past twenty years, the United States has always sought to be a trusted partner in addressing challenges and cooperating with Uzbekistan on the basis of mutual respect and mutual responsibility. During the past 20 years, approximately 4,600 Uzbek citizens have visited and studied in the United States on a variety of exchange programs sponsored by the U.S. government such as the Fulbright Program and the Muskie Program. These kind of educational exchanges, which we support with more than 150 countries around the world, have created a strong cadre of people in each of our countries who understand one another's societies and cultures. Fulbright, Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship, and a wide variety of other American exchange programs offer opportunities for U.S. and foreign students in many areas, including public administration, public health, and English language teaching. Every academic exchange between the two countries builds a closer, stronger relationship of mutual understanding. Every Uzbek student that travels to the

United States acts as an unofficial ambassador of your country, bringing knowledge and understanding of Uzbekistan to countless Americans, similarly, when American scholars are invited to Uzbekistan, they leave with a better appreciation of this country's rich history and culture. Unfortunately, since 2005 the number of students from Uzbekistan studying in the United States has significantly declined. And the number of Americans who study here is still very small.

We need to work together to ensure that more of our students and scholars can study and research side by side – by supporting Uzbeks to study in the United States and likewise cooperating to bring more Americans to Uzbekistan. Let me provide some recent examples of successful collaboration in educational exchanges between the United States and Uzbekistan. Currently, there is a professor from the University of World Economy and Diplomacy doing a Fulbright exchange at Georgetown University in the field of diplomacy. He has helped people across the United States better understand Uzbek history and has provided a richer understanding of your culture. He will return to share his experience at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, and also serve as an ongoing link with his peers at U.S. universities and colleges.

Likewise, last year we had an American teacher at the University of World Languages. While there the teacher established a Writing Center and helped strengthen the English language curriculum for teachers around Uzbekistan. Another American teacher at Urgench University, with the collaboration of Uzbek professors and teachers from around the region, helped make students more competitive for the global marketplace through their improved English. The United States and Uzbekistan also are cooperating in the field of science and technology. In December of 2010 Secretary of State Clinton signed an agreement making Uzbekistan and the United States partners in increasing scientific and technical knowledge through exchanges of specialists, joint conferences, seminars, and collaborative research. As the conference theme suggests, and as is true in all countries around the world, giving students the essential training and tools to develop intellectually will ultimately result in growth and innovation in different sectors of society. Education is the most powerful tool that a country can deploy to insure a prosperous and happy future. Any country that restricts or limits these contacts, or that fails to take full advantage of the various international educational opportunities, is starving itself of the human capital needed for development.

Advantages of Promoting Mutual Understanding

To my mind, no experience can be more transformative, more life-changing, more impactful, or more beneficial to society, than the opportunity to obtain a higher education degree. Higher education is a passport to opportunity and understanding. And that is why the U.S. Government devotes resources and people to trying to help our friends overseas, in Central Asia, and across the globe, by promoting increased partnership and collaboration in education.

Let me conclude by saying that the U.S. wishes to continue working with Uzbekistan and countries across the region on building stronger education partnerships. This will help us to secure a more prosperous future for us all. I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Ambassador Krol Hosts Reception Honoring 20 Years of Diplomatic Relations

Seventy representatives of the Government of Uzbekistan and affiliated organizations, high-ranking U.S. visitors, Embassy officials, and representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce gathered February 20 at a reception hosted by U. S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan George Krol to mark the 20th anniversary of bilateral relations. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Susan Elliott and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense David Sedney attended together with other United States Government visitors from Washington.

The reception marked the beginning of a year-long celebration of the official ties between the two countries, which began on February 19, 1992 when the U.S. and Uzbek governments exchanged notes formally establishing diplomatic relations. In remarks honoring the occasion, Ambassador Krol said:

“On this historic day...let us all once again commit ourselves to this relationship between two great and proud, sovereign and independent republics – a relationship grounded in mutual respect and characterized by genuine partnership between our peoples and our governments. Let us go forward recommitted to the ideals and goals of friendship and cooperation we initiated twenty years ago and which we continue to hold before us.”

Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov, who served as Ambassador to the United States from 2003-2010, as well as Sodik Safaev, former Ambassador to the United States (1996-2001) and former Foreign Minister, participated in the festivities held at the American Ambassador’s resi-

dence. Mrs. Mavlyuda Teshabaeva, widow of former Ambassador to the United States (1994-96) Fatikh Teshabaev also graced the proceedings. A musical ensemble including American embassy members entertained the guests with a selection of classical Uzbek instrumental and vocal works.

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Ambassador Krol’s Message on 20 Years of Diplomatic Relations

On behalf of the people and the government of the United States of America, I am pleased to recognize the anniversary of 20 years of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

On February 19, 1992, our countries established diplomatic ties, and since that time the United States has consistently supported the development of Uzbekistan as a strong, prosperous and sovereign state. Over the past few years our governments have worked energetically to expand bilateral cooperation into many areas of mutual interest—political, economic, security, and the social sphere.

Together we are working to achieve our common goal of facilitating and ensuring durable stability not only in our bilateral relationship, but in the region at large. I am honored to be the American Ambassador to Uzbekistan at this time, and I look forward to our continued success built on mutual respect and mutual responsibility.

U.S. Naval Academy Midshipmen Meet Chai Chatters

On Friday March 16 five midshipmen from the U. S. Naval Academy spoke to approximately 100 Chai Chat Club participants about life at the Naval Academy. The Chai Chatters were very interested in both their academic tracks and their career preparations.

As part of their presentation, the midshipmen explained the rigorous selection process for the military academies, the required scholastic and physical requirements midshipmen must maintain, and touched on the football rivalries between the academies.

They were accompanied by their Central Asian studies teacher Mark Reese, who formerly served in the Peace Corps in Uzbekistan. Mark won the crowd over quickly with a few words in Uzbek. The students presented the Embassy’s Information Resource Center with a Naval Academy flag, seen in the photo taken with

approximately 20 members of the Chai Chat Club.



U.S. Naval Academy midshipmen meet Chai Chatters (U.S. Embassy photo)

Think Tank and Urban Development Expert Dr. Ray Struyk Visits Uzbekistan



Dr. Struyk gives a lecture on the role of think tanks. (U.S. Embassy photo)

As part of the U.S. Speakers Program, U.S. Embassy Tashkent hosted think tank and urban development expert Dr. Raymond Struyk, January 23-29. While in Tashkent, Dr. Struyk spent time at the Center for Economic Research, which was recently named one of the top 30 think tanks in Asia.

Dr. Struyk also spent time with others from the Uzbekistan think tank community, including the Institute on Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research, the Institute of Social Studies, the Center for Political Studies, and the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies. He spoke with each organization about improving its quality of research, providing valuable examples from Germany and South Korea.

In addition to visiting institutes in Tashkent, Dr. Struyk gave a lecture at the U.S. Embassy. His talk, "The Role of Think Tanks in the Transformation of Society, Economy, and State," discussed the role of think tanks and the qualities needed for a successful think tank.

According to Dr. Struyk, think tanks should "widen the debate" by offering alternative approaches to addressing present day problems. They exist to "provide independent analysis" about situations or issues.

When discussing the necessity of a rigorous quality control program, he noted that "reputation is everything for a think tank." Maintaining high quality standards is essential. Other important qualities include: effectively communicating, motivating staff, being inventive, having financial management and using board members' expertise.

During his time in Tashkent, Dr. Struyk also spoke to organizations about urban development and potential challenges cities face when the urban population grows, which is a worldwide trend.

Dr. Struyk specializes in think tank and urban development and policy analysis. He is currently on the Board of Trustees at the Institute for Urban Economics in Moscow and on the Advisory Board at the Legal Policy Research Center in Almaty. Since 2007, he has been a senior fellow at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.



Think tank and urban development expert Dr. Ray Struyk. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Two Uzbek Women Entrepreneurs Successfully Complete the 10,000 Women Program in Glendale, Arizona

To achieve the economic expansion we all seek, we need to unlock a vital source of growth that can power our economies in the decades to come. And that vital source of growth is women.

- Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton



Dr. Christine Pearson, a management professor from the Thunderbird School of Management, teaches a class. (Photo courtesy of Thunderbird School of Management)

Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton has prioritized women's issues, making sure they are fully integrated in the formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Under her leadership, the Department of State and U.S. Embassies around the world work to promote stability, peace and development by empowering women politically, socially and economically.

In order to turn policies and guidelines into real life, U.S. Department of State and Goldman Sachs launched the 10,000 Women Entrepreneurship Partnership Initiative. This program trains women entrepreneurs from developing countries in business skills at the Thunderbird School of Global Management in Glendale, Arizona.

The 2012 10,000 Women program participants included Elena Galimova from Nukus and Gulnoza Kenjaeva from Fergana.

Both women are active entrepreneurs in their local communities and have demonstrated a commitment to continue and expand their businesses in the near future.

During the program, 30 participants from ten countries attended business classes led by world class Thunderbird professors and guest lecturers with real world experience. These classes helped improve participants' business skills in topics such as marketing, leadership, strategy, finance, negotiations, communications and business planning. The program is uniquely designed, allowing participants to learn about business management by meeting with successful business women.

"I have read bestsellers by Sharon Lechter during my university studies but never thought that I would be her student in a Thunderbird class, shake her hand and have dinner at her house; it's definitely one of the highlights I will remember for whole my life," said Gulnoza.

In addition to classes, participants met with alumni and EMBA students at Thunderbird. "Such meetings allowed us to form informal ties and exchange ideas and best practices for promoting businesses, which gave me several new ideas on how to expand my own business," said Elena.

At the end of the program, the women had a chance to apply their newly learned skills to a model of their own businesses. Participants used business plan templates to create short presentations that focused on ways to achieve their key goals.

Both Gulnoza and Elena believe that this valuable experience will help them become stronger entrepreneurs and they want to expand their businesses to create new jobs and advocate further for business women.



A group of 10,000 Women participants take a picture during a break from class. (Photo courtesy of Thunderbird School of Management)

Mississippi National Guard Attends First State Partnership Program Event in Tashkent



Major Henry Palmer listens to a question from a Ministry of Emergency Services representative. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On April 18, the Mississippi National Guard kicked off its State Partnership Program with Uzbekistan by participating in an engineer brigade disaster support information exchange in Tashkent. Six Mississippi National Guard members met with 20 representatives from Uzbekistan's Ministry of Emergency Situations, who traveled from around the country to attend the three day event.

The goal of the orientation visit was to start a conversation and allow the two parties to exchange information oriented on the planning, preparation, training and operations supporting disaster relief. The MSNG shared the lessons learned from three recent and very different events: the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the 2010 Mississippi River flood and the 2011 Deepwater Horizons oil spill.

The conference focused on the engineering aspects of disaster response: "The engineers' response to disasters has a lot to do with pre-planning, preparing for ways to organize our forces, so to speak, and how we do inter-agency coordination. The priority of the work, once we start, is actual relief; the engineer-specific activities and the coordination are very important," said Lieutenant Colonel Gary Ladd, the lead engineer for the event.

Lieutenant Colonel Walter Blankenship, the state partnership program director, set up the events between the MES and the Mississippi National Guard. Before the start of the conference, he was looking forward to working with MES:

"We haven't really engaged with the MES yet, but we're looking forward to engaging with them and learning how they are preparing for disasters and what those disasters are – the major issues they face."

"We want to learn from them and understand the specific issues they're dealing with so we can set up future events and talk about what they want to learn more about," he continued. "We can learn a lot from them about earthquakes... Uzbekistan has much more experience with that kind of disaster."

Part of Mississippi sits on top of the New Madrid Seismic Zone, which has been prone to earthquakes in the past. "We're always preparing for that kind of disaster because it's supposed to happen again: we expect the large earthquake to come... We have a lot to learn about earthquake preparedness," said Lieutenant Colonel Ladd.

He also noted that while the most common emergencies in Mississippi are not the same as those in Uzbekistan, "regardless of the type of disaster, the response is typically the same."

Other specific topics included: task force creation, population evacuation, medical support preparation, provision of humanitarian assistance to the affected population, damage assessment, and re-supply route establishment.

The MES is eager to collaborate and the Mississippi National Guard is looking forward to future exchange conferences, particularly ones where they can invite representatives from the MES to speak and share their knowledge with a wider audience.



Lieutenant Colonel Blankenship talks about the state of Mississippi. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Poet and Writer Christopher Merrill Has Successful Visit to Uzbekistan

Christopher Merrill, a writer and the director of the international writing program at the University of Iowa, spent March 21-28 in Uzbekistan, meeting with students and writers around the country. The Arts Envoy Program gave current and aspiring writers and poets from around Uzbekistan the opportunity to interact with a noteworthy American writer, whose work has been translated into 25 languages. Merrill traveled to Namangan, where he met with students studying English. In addition to poetry readings at the U.S. Embassy and the Sergey Yesenin Museum in Tashkent, he held meetings and poetry readings with writers in Namangan, Samarkand and Bukhara and spoke with journalists in all three cities.

“What has impressed me, both among Uzbek and Russian writers, is the deep passion for writing that all of the writers I met have exhibited... I know what a long and rich literary exists in this country so I hope that in time there will be enough interesting translations of writers here so people in the English speaking world can get some sense of what is happening on the literary level,” he said.

Toward the end of his trip, he led a Chai Chat discussion on American Literature and participated in a press conference with 40 journalists. At the press conference, he told the journalists how much he had enjoyed his time in Uzbekistan: “I feel as if I am in a room with new friends, whom I have met along the way of my travels this past week... What has made my visit to Uzbekistan so special is the chance to not only see beautiful cities like Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent, but to engage in conversations with poets and writers here.”

Although this was Mr. Merrill’s first trip to Uzbekistan, his work has taken him around the world—from the former Yugoslavia to Afghanistan to Malaysia and beyond. “You will see from that list of my work that the writings generally involve traveling to foreign places. I think that is why I was offered the job to run the international writing program at the University of Iowa—I know how to get around airports,” he joked.

Mr. Merrill has published four collections of poetry and five nonfiction books, in addition to poetry translations and a number of edited works. He is currently the director of the international writing program at the University of Iowa and serves on the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. Most recently, in April 2012, President Obama appointed him to the National Council on the Humanities.



Mr. Merrill sees some of the Silk Road sites in Bukhara. (U.S. Embassy photo)



Embassy of the United States of America

3 Moyqorhon Street
5th Block, Yunusobod District
Tashkent, 100093
Republic of Uzbekistan

Phone: (+99871) 120-5450
Consular Section: (+99871) 120-4718, 120-4719
Fax: (+99871) 120-6302

Website: <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov>
Email: Tashkent-IRC@state.gov
Find us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/usdos.uzbekistan>
U.S.Embassy on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/usembtashkent>