

American

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President Bush Reflects on the Progress He's Seen in Africa

President receives distinguished humanitarian award from charitable group

By Merle D. Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Bush says he has experienced a number of uplifting moments during his two-term presidency, but none more powerful than witnessing a new and more hopeful era dawning in Africa.

"Over the past eight years, it's been moving to watch courageous Africans root out corruption, and open up their economies, and invest in the prosperity of their people," Bush said at a November 12 charity dinner. "The United States stands with these leaders as partners and friends and allies in hope through the work of the Millennium Challenge Account."

The Millennium Challenge Account, created in 2003, seeks to reduce poverty by significantly increasing economic growth in recipient countries through a variety of targeted investments.

At the 2008 Bishop John T. Walker Memorial Dinner, Africare awarded its Distinguished Humanitarian Service Award to Bush for the work done for Africa by his administration and family as "a labor of love." The award and dinner are in memory of Bishop John T. Walker, the first African-American Episcopal bishop of Washington and a longtime chairman of Africare's board.

The annual dinner is held to benefit Africare, a U.S.-based charity that works to improve the lives and livelihoods of Africans by addressing needs in food security, agriculture, health and HIV/AIDS.

"Bishop Walker understood that disease and poverty and injustice are great challenges — but he also knew that the people of Africa have the talent and ambition and resolve to overcome them," Bush said.

U.S. policy toward Africa has been one of partnership, not paternalism, because Americans believe in the potential of the African people, Bush said.

In February, Bush traveled to Africa with the first lady, and in Tanzania he signed a five-year, nearly \$700 million Millennium Challenge Compact. Bush said President Jakaya Kikwete called the compact a source of pride — "making it possible for the people of Tanzania to chart a

brighter future."

Bush emphasized that Kikwete said the compact made it possible for the Tanzanian people to chart their own future.

"It's uplifting to see people freed from hunger and thirst," Bush said.

Obama Team Severely Restricts Role of Lobbyists in Transition

Teams established to review federal agencies for incoming officials

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President-elect Obama's transition team is implementing a set of rules designed to severely limit participation of federal lobbyists in what transition co-chairman John Podesta describes as "the most open and transparent transition in history."

Under the ethics rules, announced November 11, the transition team cannot accept financial contributions from federal lobbyists or gifts from special interest groups. Anyone hoping to work on the transition cannot have lobbied in the policy field to which they are assigned within the past 12 months or be involved currently with any lobbying work.

Those assisting with the transition also are prohibited from lobbying the Obama administration for the next 12 months on matters on which they work during the transition.

These rules "are the strictest, the most far-reaching ethics rules of any transition team in history," Podesta told reporters in Washington November 11. He said the rules continue Obama's prohibitions against lobbyist contributions to his presidential campaign and are part of his pledge to "change the way Washington works and to curb the influence of lobbyists."

Podesta, who co-chairs the Obama-Biden Transition Project and served as President Clinton's White House chief of staff from 1997 until 2001, said Obama is imposing tough rules "to stop the revolving door in Washington," by which U.S. officials have used the contacts and expertise they gained through government work to advocate for special interests once they have left federal service.

Lobbyists have developed a bad reputation among the American public because they are seen as cashing in on their government experience after they leave government jobs to lobby for powerful companies and groups.

However, former lobbyists have challenged the notion that their colleagues are "intellectually promiscuous" hired guns, pointing out that every cause and interest has its advocates, including trade associations, consumer groups, universities and state governments.

AGENCY REVIEW TEAMS TO HELP ASSESS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Podesta said those observing the Obama-Biden transition "will see a transition of government that is efficient, that is organized, that is bipartisan and more open and transparent than others before."

In his November 11 briefing, he announced the transition's agency review teams, which collect information from more than 100 federal departments, agencies and commissions, as well as the White House, to help senior Obama administration officials and appointees "make strategic policy, budgetary and personnel decisions prior to the inauguration."

The teams will be briefed by Bush administration officials about ongoing programs, projects and operations. President-elect Obama then will "render judgment as a result of and after those briefings occur, and he's had a chance to meet with his key advisers."

Podesta said Obama "wants to ensure that we hit the ground running on January 20 [2009]," but also recognizes there is only one president at a time, and until the inauguration, "President Bush is the leader of our government."

Bush's offers of support and assistance to the transition team show that "here in America we can compete vigorously in elections and challenge each other's ideas, yet come together in the service of a common purpose once the voting is done," Podesta said.

"I think we should all take pride in the fact that we once again displayed for the world the power of our democracy and reaffirmed that in America anything is possible when we come together as one nation."

Asia-Pacific Nations' Summit to Focus on Global Economic Recovery

Free trade, open investment key to confronting financial crisis

By David McKeeby

Staff Writer

Washington — Progress toward free trade and open investment is essential to address the global financial crisis and will take center stage when President Bush joins other leaders at the November 22 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' conference, says a top U.S. official.

"We need to work together to make the case for free trade and increased investment flows, to ensure that there is a firm foundation for tomorrow's recovery," Ambassador Patricia Haslach told journalists in a November 10 briefing on the meeting.

Leaders from the 21-member body will meet November 22 in Lima, Peru, to discuss the financial crisis, as well as to assess APEC's progress toward economic integration aimed ultimately at creating "a free trade area of the Asia-Pacific," Haslach said. That goal that must not be disrupted by tightening credit, slumping stock markets and flagging consumer confidence, she said.

"There is a tendency to react by putting brakes on overseas investment, by having second thoughts about economic openness, by talking about putting up barriers in hopes of protecting jobs. We must firmly reject such an approach," Haslach said. "A robust trade and investment agenda will positively contribute to our ability to address this truly unprecedented global crisis."

The meeting follows a gathering of APEC finance ministers in Trujillo, Peru, November 5-6 that discussed the crisis and a scheduled November 15 meeting of leaders from the G20 leading economies in Washington.

The United States is among nine G20 nations that are also members of APEC, along with Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia and South Korea.

"Trade and investment have been the key drivers of economic growth and development in our region, and we need to stay on track," Haslach said. "There are a lot of challenges out there, but we think that this is still the best path toward prosperity for both the developed and the developing economies within APEC."

APEC has helped economies across the region, Haslach said, by building new partnerships to reduce transaction

costs among regional businesses and spearheading regulatory reforms to make APEC member nations more attractive to investors. Members will take stock of both initiatives, Haslach said, as well as explore ways to reduce food prices in the region by encouraging trade in food commodities and new investments in biotechnology.

APEC's member economies include nearly 3 billion consumers, accounting for 60 percent of global gross domestic product, as well as 60 percent of U.S. exports, Haslach said, making the body a premier venue for America's economic engagement with the region.

"At a time of economic anxiety, APEC's work proves that globalization is not something to be feared, but rather an opportunity to be seized," Haslach said.

Human Rights Provide Framework for Principled Journalism

Two journalism professors aim to inspire students to promote human rights

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Improved knowledge of human rights is giving young reporters an additional tool as they approach a variety of stories, says Peter Spielmann, founder of the Human Rights Reporting Seminar at Columbia University's Graduate School for Journalism, one of the most respected journalism schools in the United States.

Spielmann, a veteran journalist who launched the seminar in 2000, told America.gov: "I think that, at most, 20 percent of my work has had some human rights aspect, even if I didn't think of it in those terms at that time."

Looking back on his career, Spielmann, who is currently an editor and supervisor on the Associated Press' North America Desk, said it was the crisis in East Timor during the late 1990s that really raised for him the question about the effect principled journalism could have on dangerous, abusive situations. That crisis also inspired Spielmann to develop the Human Rights Reporting Seminar.

"The militia situation in East Timor benefited from fairly prompt and dramatic media coverage," Spielmann said. The Australian government was impelled by the publicity, he said, to send a peacekeeping force that helped disband the militia and to encourage the Timorese government to pursue a truth and reconciliation process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRINCIPLES

"Human rights give reporters a litmus test, a framework to work with," Spielmann said. "It gives you a broad perspective. When you get into these confusing, individual situations, you have some principles to fall back on — some commandments, as it were."

Those "commandments," he said, are the broadly agreed upon values as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

Spielmann, who worked as an AP correspondent at the United Nations for five years, said reporters also should be guided by other major documents defining human rights, such as France's Declaration of the Rights of Man, the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the British Magna Carta.

"These establish standards against which government, corporations, entities like the United Nations, and other institutions can be evaluated. Are the people in their care receiving their civil, political, social and cultural rights?"

Spielmann said he devoted one session of his seminar to the trauma journalists must face when covering wars and other violent events. Here again, human rights knowledge helps.

"I think if you have in mind a number of principles that you believe in, it helps you to live through the exposure to difficult and disturbing situations.

"It helps, I hope, that despite what you are seeing in front of you, there is such a thing as decency; there are moral principles that one can argue for and try to uphold and even enforce, if it gets to that," he said.

DEVELOPING A PASSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Although he still advises graduate students, Spielmann turned over the Human Rights Reporting Seminar to Bill Berkeley in 2006.

As a journalist, Berkeley has worked mostly in Africa and covered events dealing with genocide, torture, summary killings, state tyranny and state terror for major newspapers and magazines. He also worked for several years for a human rights organization investigating human rights abuses in southern Africa. He has written two books about Africa and is working on another about Iran.

"A major objective for the class for me is to turn students on to great journalism on human rights and great reporters

who have written profoundly on the subject," Berkeley told America.gov. "The major thrust of my course is to get students fired up and give them a sense of the power of the stories and the possibility of storytelling."

Apartheid in South Africa initially triggered Berkeley's interest in human rights.

"I was somebody who found racism profoundly offensive but also fascinating. I was drawn to the struggle going on in the 1980s in South Africa," he said.

Berkeley said the work of journalists can and does reach decisionmakers who can make a difference in world affairs and the area of human rights. He noted the satisfaction he felt when former U.S. President Bill Clinton read and praised Berkeley's book explaining the Rwanda genocide.

"As dispassionate and cynical as they claim to be, ultimately what motivates many journalists is the fantasy of saving the world," Berkeley said.

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