EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC CORPS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, last week, several Congressional colleagues and I convened the first House-Senate Conversation between Congress and the African Diplomatic Corps on African issues. This historic event was opened by me, House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights Ranking Member DONALD PAYNE, Senate Africa Subcommittee Chairman CHRISTOPHER COONS and Senate Africa Subcommittee Ranking Member JOHNNY ISAKSON. We were joined during the event by Representative KAREN BASS and Representative BOBBY RUSH.

Democratic Republic of the Congo Ambassador Faida Mitifu presented a comprehensive overview of the African diplomatic corps on the African Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA, and trade, agriculture and food security and energy and infrastructure. She also joined us in presiding over this session.

Too often, we in Congress have only brief encounters with the African diplomats in Washington, and a fuller, ongoing interaction would be of help to both Members of Congress and diplomats in building U.S.-Africa relations that are mutually beneficial.

In our Subcommittee hearings, we conduct oversight on issues of concern involving U.S. policy—often regarding individual countries. For troubled countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe, such U.S. policy oversight is critical. However, the issues we are covering today require interactions that are more detailed and more sustained. Trade, agriculture and energy are important matters that call for the kind of discussions that go beyond an office visit or even today's dialogue.

It is the hope of our members and the diplomatic corps that we can use this initial event as the beginning of ongoing discussions on how to make AGOA more broadly beneficial for the nearly 6,400 covered items, for example. We need to better understand how to overcome the obstacles to successful U.S.-Africa agricultural trade. One comment was repeated by several diplomats: further delay in passing legislation to extend AGOA's third-party fabric provision will send damaging mixed signals to investors.

Africa's population of approximately 1 billion people has a growing consumer base that is capable of being a larger player in global trade. One out of every three Africans is now considered to be in the middle class. This rising middle class will enable both economic and political development in Africa. For the United States and other developed nations, these developments benefit us as well by providing an enhanced market for our products and allowing African countries a larger tax base that will lessen the need for foreign aid. More robust African economies are beneficial to the entire global economy.

We also have to work more effectively to help African nations produce more energy for themselves and developed world consumers such as the United States. As Ambassador Mitifu pointed out in her opening statement, current trends indicate that less than half of Africa's population will have access to electricity by 2050. She and her colleagues called on our government to support such projects as the Grand Inga Dam project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which would contribute 39,000 megawatts for a continent-wide electricity grid.

A major theme among the comments and questions by the diplomats who participated in this event was concern about security and a desire to partner with the United States in combating terrorism, trafficking in persons, the international drug trade, piracy and other criminal activity that affects the continent.

As we all know, the United States faces a reduced ability to fund programs at previous levels. Consequently, we are working to ensure that the funds we do have are used as efficiently and effectively as possible. In order to maximize these goals, we must have a better idea of the actual needs of African societies. In everything we do together, there must be collaboration and the goal of mutual benefit. A win-win situation is sustainable, but programs aimed at only one beneficiary are not.

Deciding for Africans what their needs may be is not an appropriate strategy. We need African governments to be stakeholders in whatever programs we fund, and that will not be likely if they are not consulted in advance. Better program targeting requires partnership, and we hope this session is part of the creation of an enhanced partnership between us.

U.S. POLICY TOWARD ZIMBABWE

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on November 2, our Subcommittee held a hearing to examine the current U.S. government policy toward the Republic of Zimbabwe and to consider how our policy toward this southern African nation may develop in the years ahead. Zimbabwe is considering a new constitution that will lead to the elections in 2012 that had been postponed from this year.

There has been mutual hostility between the United States government and the Zimbabwe government of Robert Mugabe since that country became independent in 1980, although Assistant Secretary of State Johnnie Carson said in his testimony that the relationship worsened with the extra-legal seizures of white-owned land in the 1990s. Mugabe and his supporters blame America for not supporting its liberation struggle, while the United States has criticized Mugabe's government consistently for human rights abuses, especially against its political opponents. With U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe Charles Ray encouraging U.S. businesses to invest in Zimbabwe last month, it would seem that U.S. policy is in the midst of a transformation.

Following independence from Great Britain in 1980, Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's policy of political reconciliation was generally successful during the next two years, as the former political and military competitors within ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front and the rival Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African Peoples Union began to work together. Splits soon developed, however, and PF–ZAPU's leader, Joshua Nkomo was removed from government.

When PF–ZAPU was accused of initiating a rebellion due to the removal of Nkomo from the cabinet, government military forces began a pacification campaign primarily in his base in the Matabeleland area, which resulted in as many as 20,000 civilian deaths.

In part through its control of the media, the huge parastatal sector of the economy and the security forces, the Mugabe government managed to keep organized political opposition to a minimum through most of the 1990s. Beginning in 1999, however, Zimbabwe experienced a period of considerable political and economic upheaval. Opposition to President Mugabe and the ZANU–PF government had grown, in part due to the worsening economic governance issues. At one point, one U.S. dollar was worth more than 2.6 billion Zimbabwe dollars. Following the seizure of white-owned commercial farms beginning in the 1990s, food output capacity fell 45 percent, manufacturing output dropped by 29 percent and unemployment rose to 80 percent.

The opposition was led by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which was established in September 1999. The MDC led the campaign to handily defeat a referendum that would have permitted President Mugabe to seek two additional terms in office. Parliamentary elections held in June 2000 were marred by localized violence and claims of electoral irregularities and government intimidation of opposition supporters. Still, the MDC succeeded in capturing 57 of 120 seats in the National Assembly.

The last four national elections—the presidential election in 2002, parliamentary elections in 2005, harmonized presidential and parliamentary elections in March 2008, and the presidential run-off in June 2008—were judged to be not free and fair by observers. In the March 2008 elections, two factions of the opposition MDC, known as MDC–T to denote Morgan Tsvangirai's faction and MDC–M for the group led by Arthur Mutambara, gained a combined parliamentary majority. Mugabe was declared the winner of the June 2008 run-off election after opposing candidate Tsvangirai withdrew due to ZANU–PF-directed violence that made a free and fair election impossible. Mark Schneider, Senior Vice President for the International Crisis Group, told the Subcommittee that as many as a third of MDC

Parliamentarians have been arrested since the 2008 election.

Negotiations subsequently took place, and in September 2008 the three parties signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA), a power-sharing agreement under which Mugabe would retain the presidency and Tsvangirai would become prime minister. In February 2009 Tsvangirai was sworn in as prime minister, and new cabinet ministers and deputy ministers from the two IvIDC factions and the ruling party also were sworn in. According to Dewa Mavhinga, Regional Information and Advocacy Coordinator for the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, stated that key state institutions remain unreformed despite the change in the composition of the government.

There is serious contention within the ruling party for the right to succeed President Mugabe once he leaves office, and added to the division within the opposition, politics in Zimbabwe is in flux to say the least. Paul Fagan, Regional Director for Africa for the International Republican Institute, testified that the ''imminent constitutional referendum and national elections have the potential to graduate the crisis in Zimbabwe from a steady but manageable simmer to boiling over.''

It is in this environment that the United States faces the challenge of examining our current policy and determining how it might best be adjusted. I appreciated hearing from our witnesses on how the U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe may change to help that nation reach the desired goals of democracy and good governance. Sharon Cromer, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development's Africa Bureau, told us that her agency is finalizing a democracy and governance assessment that ''highlights impediments and opportunities for us to promote democratic institutions in Zimbabwe.'' We eagerly await the release of that assessment for its impact on U.S. policy in Zimbabwe.

COMMEMORATING THE CIVIL AIR PATROL'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. MICHAEL T. McCAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Civil Air Patrol. Born on December 1, 1941 in the days before the horrific attack on Pearl Harbor, the Civil Air Patrol is comprised of patriotic Americans whose flying skills and bravery have come to the rescue of this great nation again and again.

In World War II, as German U-boats sank American ships along our coasts and threatened our war effort, thousands of volunteers from the Civil Air Patrol risked their lives to safeguard our shores and deter the enemy's efforts. These ''sub chasers'' spotted 143 German submarines, attacking 57 and sinking 2.

This volunteer force was so successful that after the war President Harry Truman signed a law making the Civil Air Patrol a benevolent, non-profit organization. Congress followed suit and in 1948 permanently established the organization as the auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force. Its three primary missions, as established by law, are emergency services, cadet programs, and aerospace education.

Today the Civil Air Patrol educates young people about aviation and aerospace and encourages them to engage in civic and military leadership. It continues to save lives by participating in 90 percent of the Air Force's inland search and rescue missions. And when it comes to natural disasters, volunteers of the Civil Air Patrol can be counted on to assist more than 1,600 communities across America. They also work with the American Red Cross on humanitarian missions, coming to the rescue when other means of transportation are not available.

In the last year, Civil Air Patrol volunteers participated in 1,016 search and rescue missions and helped save 113 lives. This volunteer organization leads the way for similar groups around the world and sets an example for other countries who wish to have the same success. We can be proud that America's Civil Air Patrol is the gold standard for search and rescue, aerospace education, and emergency services operations.

So today we not only congratulate the Civil Air Patrol on 70 years of outstanding service, but we also thank them for coming to the aid of this great nation time and time again. Their bravery and civic leadership serve as a beacon of pride to the grateful Americans they serve.

THE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT 2011: TRUTH, TRENDS, AND TIER RANKINGS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on October 27 of this year, I held a hearing to examine the State Department's 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report. This annual report to Congress was first mandated by legislation that I sponsored, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, known as the TVPA.

In 1998, when I first introduced the TVPA, the legislation was met with a wall of skepticism and opposition. People both inside of government and out thought the issue of human trafficking was merely a solution in search of a problem. For most people at that time, the term trafficking applied almost exclusively to illicit drugs or weapons. Reports of vulnerable persons—especially women and children—being reduced to commodities for sale were often met with surprise, incredulity or indifference.

One major objection to the bill, especially from the Clinton administration, was the naming and ranking of countries based on compliance with the establishment of common-sense minimum standards—clearly articulated prevention, protection, and prosecution benchmarks—enforced by sanctions and penalties against egregious violators.

Fortunately, reality won out over ignorance. Although it took two years to overcome opponents and muster the votes for passage, the TVPA was finally signed into law with strong bipartisan support. This support from both sides of the aisles has continued through subsequent reauthorizations, and has been essential to the ongoing successes by the United States Government in combating modern day slavery both at home and abroad.

However, the battle is far from over. According to the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking—created by the TPVA—more than 12 million people worldwide are trafficking victims. Other estimates put the number of victims as high as 27 million. Today we know that human trafficking is the third most lucrative criminal activity in the world. According to the International Labor Organization, ILO, human traffickers make profits in excess of $31 billion a year.

At the hearing, we were fortunate to receive testimony from three State Department witnesses to examine both the substance and the diplomatic activity that is behind the Trafficking in Persons Report. The Report, which is written by the Trafficking in Persons Office currently headed by Ambassador Luis CdeBaca, summarizes the rankings and performance of each country and provides detailed recommendations as to how each country can improve its efforts. But more than a source of comprehensive, concise knowledge about the fight against human trafficking around the world, the TIP Report has been an incredibly effective diplomatic tool.

The Report has been a catalyst for improvement—often dramatic improvements—in the efforts of governments to address human trafficking within their borders and regions. With a combination of encouragement, persuasion, and sustained pressure via sanctions imposed by the United States, countries around the world have created or amended over 120 laws to combat human trafficking, and, in the past three years alone, an estimated 113,000 victims have been identified and assisted worldwide.

Individuals within each country can use the Report to assess their government's commitment and to lobby their government to take specific measures. The G/TIP Office also coordinates technical assistance and aid for many of the countries wishing to improve their anti-trafficking response.

The result has been a worldwide anti-trafficking surge, largely dependent on the credibility, accuracy, and faithful implementation of the Report, including the Tier framework.

We turned our attention to ensuring that the Report retains these essential attributes and to assess whether it is fulfilling its purpose.

In 2003, Congress added a special watch list to the Tier rankings to allow countries an opportunity to address serious shortcomings in their anti-trafficking efforts before being placed in Tier III and subject to sanctions. When it became apparent that this Tier II Watch List was becoming a permanent parking spot for some countries, Congress added a requirement to the 2008 reauthorization that the President either downgrade or upgrade any country that had been on the Tier II Watch List for two consecutive years. Obviously, the direction in which the country is moved is to be based on whether requisite measures were taken to meet the minimum standards.

The President can waive the requirement to move a country off of the Tier II Watch List for up to two years if the country has a plan to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards and designates sufficient resources to carry it out. But this waiver should only be applied in the most extreme cases as countries have had since 2009 to undertake this effort.

Consequently, it is with concern that I note the President has determined 12 countries

need yet another year on the Tier II Watch List.

Some of these countries—China and Russia—have been on the Watch List for 7 and 8 years, respectively. Uzbekistan has been on the list for four years. I look forward to discussing with our witnesses today exactly why the Administration is convinced these countries need yet another year to get their acts together.

The Report shows that, of the 23 countries on Tier III, the full sanctions envisioned by the TVPA will be applied to only three countries—Eritrea, Madagascar, and North Korea. Partial sanctions will be imposed on seven countries, and thirteen countries will have no trafficking sanctions imposed whatsoever.

Some may argue that being on Tier III is punishment enough, but Congress envisioned tangible repercussion for countries on Tier III. Those who work on the front lines of human trafficking know all too well that a law is useless unless faithfully implemented.

THE 2011 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, last week I held the first oversight hearing on the IRF Report since I chaired a hearing on the 2006 Report in December of that year. It is one of a series being held by this subcommittee that is examining this critically important issue. In June of this year, we held a hearing on prioritizing international religious freedom in U.S. foreign policy in the context of amending the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, known as IRFA. We have also examined freedom of conscience and religion in the context of China's and North Korea's overall abysmal human rights records.

A study conducted by Dr. Brian Grim of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, who testified before this Subcommittee in June, found that almost 70 percent of the world's population lives in countries with high or very high restrictions on religion. Although this study was conducted between 2006 and 2009, it was apparent back in the late 1990s that the fundamental human right of religious freedom was under severe attack around the world.

Congress gave expression to our commitment to international religious freedom with the passage in 1998 of IRFA, which concretely established the promotion and protection of religious liberties as a foreign policy goal. I was shocked at the time when IRFA was strongly opposed on the record by the Clinton Administration. John Shattuck, the former Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, claimed during his testimony in this very room that it would establish a hierarchy of human rights, under U.S. law.

I chaired the hearings on the legislation, and I as well as others pointed out that, for example, when we fought against apartheid and enacted laws to mitigate the abomination of racism in South Africa, we certainly did not detract from other human rights policies, it was always value added. Similarly, when we took up the cause of Soviet Jewry, and the Jackson-Vanik amendment was employed with such effectiveness, even though we risked superpower confrontation in order to effectuate the release of Jews who were being harassed and persecuted in the former Soviet Union, it did not detract. It was not a "hierarchy of human rights"; it was all value added.

In like manner, the International Religious Freedom Act was an important addition to the overall effort to defend and promote human rights, by focusing the spotlight on one of the most fundamental human rights. We persisted, and eventually the bill, authored by my good friend and colleague FRANK WOLF, was signed into law.

A critical component of the law is the requirement that the State Department review foreign countries each year and submit a report on the status of religious freedom to Congress. Those countries found to be engaged in or tolerating particularly severe violations of religious freedom during the preceding 12 months are to be designated as "Countries of Particular Concern", CPCs.

In September, the Department of State issued its report for the last 6 months of 2010. The reason for the abbreviated report is to introduce a new reporting cycle that will be based on the calendar year instead of the previous July to June reporting period.

The State Department also notified Congress in September that eight countries had been redesignated as CPCs: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan. These are the same eight countries that previously had been designated by the Bush Administration on January 16, 2009.

Pursuant to the IRF Act, the Secretary must impose new presidential actions, issue waivers, or authorize an additional 90-day extension for such actions against these eight countries by December 12. I and other Members of Congress are strongly urging the Administration not to double-hat sanctions against these countries as has been done previously, but to impose measures that have some teeth and that are likely to produce the desired effect. Any thoughts from our witnesses about what actions should be taken would be both timely and most appreciated.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended several additional countries be added to that list. They include Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam. I also will be interested in hearing from our witnesses as to whether they agree with the Commission that any or all of these countries should be CPCs.

Last week, I chaired a hearing of the Helsinki Commission on the horrendous plight of Coptic Christians in Egypt. In July, the Foreign Affairs Committee accepted two religious freedom amendments that I proposed to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, H.R. 2583. One calls on the Administration to include the protection of the Coptic Christian communities as a priority in our diplomatic engagements with the Government of Egypt, and the other prohibits increased non-humanitarian assistance to Vietnam until its government makes substantial progress toward respecting the right to freedom of religion, among other requirements.

I was also deeply disturbed by the assassination of Pakistan's Federal Minister of Minorities Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti on March 2 of this year. I met personally with Minister Bhatti when he visited Washington, D.C. and was extremely appreciative of his courage and commitment to promote the rights of religious minorities and harmony among all faith communities in his country. His killing was a tragic loss for all Pakistanis, and the ongoing failure of the Pakistani Government to identify his assassins and bring them to justice is a blatant and ongoing severe violation of respect for religious freedom.

In closing, I would like to note that the State Department's Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook, was invited to testify at our hearing and present the report written by her office. Unfortunately, the State Department refused to allow her to appear without another State Department official on her panel. Given the important responsibilities assigned to the Ambassador-at-Large pursuant to the IRF Act, including advancing the right to religious freedom abroad through diplomatic representations on behalf of the United States, our Subcommittee looks forward to the opportunity to hear from Ambassador Johnson Cook when she is allowed to testify on her own.

I thank the distinguished witnesses who have joined us last week.