

Press Releases: State Department Releases Annual Fiscal Transparency Report

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 12, 2017

The State Department, on September 12, 2017, released the 2017 Fiscal Transparency Report (the Report) consistent with section 7031(b) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2017 (Div. J, P.L.115-31) (“the Act”). The Report found that 73 of 141 governments reviewed by the Department met minimum requirements of fiscal transparency. The report identified eleven governments found not to meet minimum requirements, but which had made significant progress toward meeting minimum requirements.

The Department evaluated the public availability, substantial completeness, and reliability of budget documents, as well as the transparency of processes for awarding government contracts and licenses for natural resource extraction. The Report can be found on the Department’s website at <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/ifd/oma/fiscaltransparency/>.

Fiscal transparency is a critical element of effective public financial management, helps in building market confidence, and underpins economic sustainability. It fosters greater government accountability by providing a window into government budgets for citizens, helping citizens to hold their leadership accountable and facilitating better-informed public debate. Annual fiscal transparency reviews provide opportunities for dialogue with governments on the importance of fiscal transparency.

The Report describes the minimum requirements of fiscal transparency developed, updated, and strengthened by the Department; reviews 140 governments that were originally identified as recipients of assistance in the 2014 Fiscal Transparency Report, plus Equatorial Guinea; assesses those that did not meet the minimum fiscal transparency requirements; and indicates whether governments that did not meet those requirements made significant progress during the review period of January 1 – December 31, 2016, to publicly disclose national budget documentation, contracts, and licenses, which are additional to information disclosed in previous years. The fiscal

transparency determinations may change from year to year due to updating and strengthening minimum requirements of fiscal transparency as required by law, changes in governments' performance on public financial management, or new information coming to the Department's attention. As a result, some governments may fall short of these requirements, despite in some cases maintaining or even improving their overall level of fiscal transparency.

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Press Releases: Acting Assistant Secretary of State David M. Satterfield Travel to Astana, Kazakhstan for Talks on Syria

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 12, 2017

Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David M. Satterfield will travel to Astana, Kazakhstan on September 14 and 15, 2017 to lead the U.S. government observer delegation in the next round of Astana Process talks on Syria. Acting Assistant Secretary Satterfield will reinforce U.S. support for all efforts to achieve a sustainable de-escalation of violence and provision of unhindered humanitarian aid.

The United States, however, remains concerned with Iran's involvement as a so-called "guarantor" of the Astana process. Iran's activities in Syria and unquestioning support for the Assad regime have perpetuated the conflict and increased the suffering of ordinary Syrians.

The United States also participated as an observer during the previous round of Astana talks in June.

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Press Releases: Nepal: Millennium Challenge Corporation Signing Ceremony

Notice to the Press
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 12, 2017

Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Acting CEO Jonathan Nash will welcome Nepali Minister of Finance Gyanendra Bahadur Karki in the Treaty Room of the U.S. Department of State for the signing of a new \$500 million MCC compact with Nepal on Thursday, September 14, 2017, at 12:30 p.m.

The ceremony will formalize MCC's Nepal Compact, which will spur private investment and economic growth to reduce poverty, and support regional connectivity in South Asia. The compact is in recognition of the progress Nepal has made in establishing rule of law, advancing economic freedom, and investing in its people. The Nepali Government will contribute an additional \$130 million to support the compact investment – the single largest up-front country contribution in MCC's history.

Compacts are MCC's largest grants, and country partners are chosen through a competitive selection process among the best-governed poor countries.

The ceremony will be open to the press.

Pre-set time for cameras: 12 p.m. from the 23rd Street entrance

Final access time for writers and still photographers: 12:15 p.m. from the 23rd street entrance

Media representatives may attend this briefing upon presentation of one of the following: (1) a U.S. Government-issued identification card (Department of State, White House, Congress, Department of Defense, or Foreign Press Center), (2) a media-issued photo identification card, or (3) a letter from their employer on letterhead verifying their employment as a journalist, accompanied by an official photo identification (driver's license or passport).

For further information about access to the event please contact the Department of State Office of Press Relations at (202) 647-2492. Media with further questions about the signing ceremony may contact Laura Allen at AllenLM@mcc.gov.

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[Press Releases: Joint Statement of the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission Defense and Security Cooperation Working Group](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 12, 2017

The Security and Defense Working Group of the U.S.–Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission met on September 8, 2017, in Washington, DC. The

Working Group noted the historic events leading up to this meeting that have enhanced Georgia's ability to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The 2017 NATO-Georgia Commission meeting in Brussels on February 16, chaired by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, emphasized NATO's strong commitment to Georgia's security and territorial integrity, and helped Georgia improve its defense capabilities as it advances on its path toward NATO membership. In 2017, the United States and Georgia signed a General Security of Information Agreement, creating the basis for future exchanges and ushering in a new era of practical cooperation. The United States will continue to work with Georgian leadership to improve Georgia's military readiness and resilience within the framework of the Memorandum on Deepening the Defense and Security Partnership. The sides will also continue to build on the success of Exercises NOBLE PARTNER 17 and AGILE SPIRIT 17, which increased the scope of cooperation and improved interoperability.

The sides exchanged perspectives on the regional security situation and reviewed updates to national strategy documents in response to emerging challenges. Georgia reviewed its National Military Strategy update and the implementation of its Strategic Defense Review. The United States briefed the National Defense Strategy and the new South Asia policy, announced by President Trump on August 21. The sides underscored the importance of a durable and strategic approach to defense and security cooperation that increases the security of each country and strengthens regional stability and global security.

The sides reviewed the Noble Partner 2017 exercise, which was the largest multi-national military exercise ever held in Georgia, and which included troop contributions from Georgia, Armenia, Germany, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The exercise further enhanced Georgia's readiness and interoperability with the NATO Response Force (NRF) by improving its ability to conduct multinational mission command and control; and provided an opportunity to measure transportation, sustainment, and training infrastructure to support a multinational operational scenario.

During his July 31-August 1 visit to Georgia, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence stated that the United States stands by the 2008 NATO Bucharest statement, and strongly supports Georgia's aspirations to become a member of NATO. The Vice President also noted that Georgia, a key strategic partner, already exceeds NATO's goal of spending two percent of gross domestic product on defense.

Each side confirmed its commitment to the full implementation of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, which advances Georgian preparation for NATO membership; and affirmed the additional cooperation activities discussed in Brussels to prepare Georgia for membership. The sides expressed commitment to strengthening Black Sea security cooperation, and recognized Georgia's role as a special partner in the region.

The United States expressed appreciation for Georgia's significant contributions to NATO's mission in Afghanistan. The sides honored the significant sacrifices of fallen and wounded Georgians and Americans, notably

Sergeant Mdinari Bebiashvili who was killed in Afghanistan in August.

The parties discussed prioritization of Georgia's defense budget and U.S. assistance to help fill critical capability gaps, and strike a balance between global deployments and territorial defense. The United States acknowledged Georgia's role as a strategic partner in the region, and as a steadfast partner promoting stability and security around the globe.

The sides discussed the security environment in the occupied territories of Georgia. The Georgian side updated the working group participants on the threats and challenges on the ground. The United States stressed unwavering support for Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The sides reiterated calls for Russia to withdraw its forces from Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali regions, in accordance with the 2008 ceasefire agreement. The United States expressed strong concern about ongoing so-called "borderization" and closure of crossing points. The United States also reiterated its support for bringing the perpetrator of the May 2016 killing of Georgian citizen Giga Otkhozoria to justice.

The parties discussed the breadth and depth of the U.S.-Georgia defense and security partnership; and agreed that bilateral defense cooperation will help enhance the readiness and self-defense capabilities of the Georgian Armed Forces. The sides committed to deepening cooperation in the areas of defense readiness; counterterrorism; border and maritime security; defense and security institutional reform, with the aim to jointly analyze gaps in current security system and adapt to elevating hybrid threats and challenges; information sharing; counter-narcotics; law enforcement; civil emergency and crisis management, to achieve the shared goal of increasing Georgia's resilience.

The parties welcomed the arrival of a Drug Enforcement Administration Country Attaché in 2016, a key milestone in deepening our counter-narcotics cooperation. Both sides are committed to preventing, detecting and combating the transnational flow of narcotics through Georgia.

The parties agreed that Georgia's best security asset is its continued pursuit of democratic and economic reforms. The sides noted Georgia's progress in this regard, particularly highlighting the remarkable progress in defense reforms, which has been exceptional over the past year. The United States expressed its continued support for Georgia in this effort. The United States also emphasized the importance of apolitical law enforcement and security agencies, as well as the importance of checks and balances, to a strong democracy. The sides underscored Georgia's remarkable reform progress in its 26 years since regaining independence; and look forward to continuing the close partnership that has developed between the United States and Georgia.

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Kevin O'Keefe and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura Cooper co-chaired the U.S. side, joined by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs James

Walsh, Acting Deputy Counterterrorism Coordinator Raffi Gregorian, and representatives from across the U.S. government. First Deputy Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani and First Deputy Defense Minister Lela Chikovani co-chaired the Georgian side, leading a broad interagency delegation, including the Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia, David Rakviashvili, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Shalva Khutsishvili, and the First Deputy Chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Georgian Parliament, Irakli Beraia.

The U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission remains the primary mechanism for organizing and prioritizing the broad and deepening cooperation between Georgia and the United States. The Commission includes four bilateral working groups on priority areas identified in the Charter on Strategic Partnership: democracy; defense and security; economic, trade, and energy; and people-to-people and cultural exchanges. For more information, please visit <https://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/gg/usgeorgiacommission/>.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Tillerson's Call with Mexican Foreign Secretary](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 11, 2017

The following is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Secretary Tillerson spoke by telephone this evening with Mexican Foreign Secretary Luis Videgaray. The Secretary offered his condolences for the loss of life and the devastation caused by the earthquake in Mexico and from

Hurricane Katia. The Secretary emphasized to Foreign Secretary Videgaray that the U.S. government stands ready to assist our neighbors in Mexico during this difficult time. They also discussed other issues of bilateral and regional importance, including Central America, Venezuela, and combatting transnational criminal organizations.

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