

December 23, 2010

Friends and Colleagues:

Happy Holidays! December has been yet another busy month in the multilateral world, for me including a 10,000-mile official trip during which I never left the United States! The purpose was to help lead official U.S. participation in the commemoration of the inscription of the [Papahānaumokuākea](#) Marine National Monument as a [UNESCO World Heritage](#) site. This remote chain of Hawaiian atolls and surrounding waters is the first American site to be added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 15 years, and the first American site inscribed for both its natural and cultural significance.



Papahānaumokuākea's coral reefs are home to more than 7,000 marine species.

The inscription of Papahānaumokuākea is a good recent example of multilateral engagement yielding direct and tangible benefits to the United States and the American people. In pursuing World Heritage status for Papahānaumokuākea, the United States advances the protection of this precious resource, and promotes the cultural and natural heritage of Native Hawaiian peoples.

Also this month the United States is serving as [President of the UN Security Council](#), a rotating honor and responsibility that all members of the Council take very seriously. For the United States, it is an opportunity to refocus attention on crucial challenges to global security. In that light, on December 15 Vice President Biden assumed the chair of the Council session that adopted three important resolutions related to [Iraq](#) that will help Iraqis realize a better future and help us draw down our military presence in favor of civilian engagement.

December also saw a visit by UN Security Council Representatives to Washington, where they had a series of substantive meetings on the Hill, with policy leaders, and most notably, with the [President himself](#). The President took the opportunity to discuss with the Permanent Representatives key global security challenges while stressing the contribution of multilateral diplomacy.

I also draw to your attention an innovative, interactive session of the Council chaired by Ambassador Rice and focused on youth. Titled "*Your World, Your Future: Voices of a New Generation*," the December 21 session included questions and comments for the Council from young people from around the world, submitted by email or as a video. The event was broadcast live [online](#). The Council of course has also been extremely busy with a variety of crises, from North Korea to Cote d'Ivoire to Somalia. U.S. leadership remains the critical factor in seeing the Council play the role that it must in multilateral diplomacy, and we remain committed with our colleagues in New York and elsewhere to fulfilling our leading role.



Youth voices were featured in the December 21 session of the UN Security Council

As you can see, in spite of the approaching holidays, December has been a very active month for multilateral diplomacy. Looking just a bit further ahead, many of you will have noted the recent Department [announcement](#) that the United States will host UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day events in May 2011. The events will highlight efforts to support and expand press freedom and the free flow of information in the digital age.

A broad array of media professionals, students, and citizen reporters will gather in person and virtually to discuss themes of new media and internet freedom, including the challenges and opportunities faced by media in our rapidly changing world. In order to pull off this massive project, we are partnering with UNESCO and a wide range of NGOs, including some of you. Those of you who are interested in finding out how you can participate or play a role should not hesitate to send us word [here](#). I'm sure you would agree that these events and the discussions are particularly timely in light of WikiLeaks and the debate concerning access to information.

I would like to close this edition of the newsletter with a quick note on the recent release of the First [Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review](#) (QDDR). The review, a key priority for Secretary Clinton, has been in development for well over a year, and represents a groundbreaking effort to reconsider how the United States employs its civilian resources to advance America's interests around the world. I strongly encourage you to read the review, which contains significant references to strengthening multilateral diplomacy, including by bolstering the capacity of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, elevating multilateral affairs within regional bureaus, and better linking multilateral diplomacy with both regional and functional bureau priorities.

Once again, my sincerest appreciation to all for your interest in and commitment to multilateral engagement and foreign affairs. If you have yet to [register for](#) our IO updates, I invite you to do so, and as always, I welcome your [comments and feedback](#).

Best wishes, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year,

Esther Brimmer