



**State Department Briefing  
October 2, 2015  
New York, NY**

**Bathsheba N. Crocker**  
Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs

***US Priorities at the 70<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly***  
Co-sponsored by the Institute of International Education

**Mark Lazar:** My name is Mark Lazar, I am the IIE [Institute of International Education] vice president for global scholarship and learning programs, and it is really a great honor for me to be able to be here today and welcome you all. It's usually Peggy Blumenthal who does it, who is our senior counselor to the president. Peggy has really been someone who is a mentor to me my entire career, and so it is an honor for me to be able to try to fill her shoes a little bit. I just really wanted to welcome everyone on this great week. It has been a fabulous week for IIE. We had our gala on Tuesday night celebrating a lot of our programs and the work that we do. We honored John Sexton and NYU for their work to globalize higher education, we honored Milton Glaser, a famous designer for the "I love New York" design and many other things. He was a Fullbrighter in the 50's to Italy. So—and right now in DC we have our first ever IIE Summit for Generation Study Abroad going on. This is a great initiative that IIE is taking to double study abroad by the end of the decade. This is the first ever summit with over 600 attendees—and just a fabulous occasion—and that's actually where Peggy is today, and Daniel Obst who many of you might also know, is the person really behind Generation Study Abroad. So I just want to conclude with thanking Assistant Secretary Crocker for coming out this week. I know it is an incredibly busy week for her, with everything going on at the UN General Assembly, so it is just great to have her. And, just welcome to everyone. Thank you.

**Patricia Ellis:** So, thank you so much Mark for IIE's very warm hospitality once again. We really appreciate partnering and, of course, meeting right across from the UN, how appropriate—beautiful view. We are here today for our annual briefing following the president's address to the UN, and we are very lucky to have the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, Bathsheba Crocker, back with us for the second time. Last year when she came, I think she had just been on the job, what, like four days?

**Bathsheba Crocker:** Five days—something like that—

**Ellis:** Five days. It was very brave of her [*Laughter*], and so it must have been okay because she agreed to come back! And we are very happy to have her here to discuss US priorities at the 70th UN General Assembly session. I'm Patricia Ellis, president of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. It's always great to be back in New York. We promote women's leadership and women's voices in pressing international issues of the day. So, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the diplomats with us. I think the Ambassador of Vietnam is with us, thank you for joining us. And, of course, our friend, Rosemary DiCarlo, former Deputy US Ambassador to the UN. And if I've missed anyone, you're all welcome. [*Laughter*].

So before I say a few more words about our speaker and then we start the program, I just want to mention two events we have coming up. One is on Monday—Monday morning!—so, we hope you will consider getting up for this because it is a hot topic, "Women on the Front Lines: Special Operations", it is about the new women in the Rangers, and women in combat. And the speaker is Gayle Lemmon. She is a great speaker, she has a new book called "Ashley's War" and it is about women in the special ops, and it's going to be excellent. And then on the evening of October 29th, we will be co-sponsoring an event

with JFEW, a SUNY program, on “Elevating Women’s Voices, NYC Building Global Partnerships” with the commissioner in the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs, Penny Abeywardena—I hope I’m pronouncing that correctly. So we hope that they’re going to be great events, and we hope that you can join us. Put them on your calendar now.

So it is my great pleasure to say a few more words about Assistant Secretary Crocker. As I mentioned, she assumed her position last September and she has had a very impressive career both at the State Department, teaching, and at think tanks. So prior to becoming Assistant Secretary, she was a senior advisor to the Secretary of State, as principle deputy director in the Office of Policy Planning. She was chief of staff to the Deputy Secretary of State, she also worked in the legal counsel’s office. She worked on the National Security Council as the executive assistant to the deputy national security advisor. In the NGO world, I did want to mention, that she worked as a senior policy and advocacy officer for international affairs at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. I’m going to stop there, she’s done so many things—but, I’m sure you understand, we want to use the precious time that we have since she has a very busy schedule. So, please join me in welcoming Assistant Secretary Crocker. *[Applause]*.

**Crocker:** Great. Well, thank you very much Pat, for that always kind introduction. This was one of my favorite events last year, in my first week, so I was happy to accept the invitation to come back and I thank you all for coming out on this extremely horrible, freezing day, actually. We had a great discussion here last year—there was so much going on last year in the context of the UN General Assembly and US participation and priorities there, and just in the world generally. If anything, this year has been even more busy and high pressured, and lots of very high level geo-politicking going on during this week of UNGA, as everyone will have seen. So, I’m sure we will have a chance to get into some of that in the discussion in a few minutes. But I wanted to spend a few minutes also walking through how the US approached this year’s General Assembly high level week—the priorities we brought into it, and what we were hoping to achieve—as a sort of frame for the discussion. And then we can see where the questions and comments take us.

We have, for several years now—and I think we’re getting a little better at it every year—aimed to use the venue of UNGA for more than just diplomatic speed dating as we say, and more than just the set pieces that everybody is very familiar with—the speeches to the General Assembly and other things—but to really take advantage of the opportunity that this venue provides once a year. And it is kind of amazing, Rosemary will be familiar with this, with how much every year we add on more and more to the UNGA schedule. More side events, more high-level summits, more bilateral meetings, more ad-hoc multilateral meetings to address particular crises. And although it doesn’t always seem like it from the outside—because there is so much activity—in fact, we have tried to frame it strategically. We came into UNGA last year with a lot of pressing priorities including ISIL, and Iraq, and Ebola—and we made some real strides on some issues: the launching of the anti-ISIL coalition, the creation of the UN Mission for Emergency Ebola Response, and several high-level meetings on issues like foreign terrorist fights and on Ebola in the Security Council, and also some General Assembly meetings.

This year has only been more intense. We had a lot more high-level visitors this year than UNGA had been used to, including the Pope, as everybody will know. But it was the 70th anniversary—it is the 70th anniversary—of the UN here, so that meant some leaders who don’t typically come to the high-level week actually did come this year, so that just made everything a little bit more frantic and intense. We also obviously had the Sustainable Development Goals Summit launched just in the weekend before the high-level week, which meant that everything started a little bit earlier, that the leaders were around in New York for longer, and that there was just this hugely high powered weekend—with everything from Beyoncé in Central Park to a three day summit at the UN with lots of plenary sessions and interactive dialogues among other things to sort of kick off the week—and then we launched into the high-level week on Monday.

This year we entered the UN General Assembly with four sort of overarching themes and one really urgent priority, which won’t come as a surprise. On the four themes we really focused on renewed

commitment to UN Peacekeeping—and I'll talk in a little bit more detail about what we did under these in a minute—expanding efforts to counter ISIL and violent extremism, climate change, and the sustainable development goals. And then the one really pressing crisis obviously is the one that has been in the news all week—and for many, many, many months and unfortunately years now—is the complex and rapidly evolving political and humanitarian aspects of the Syria crisis, including the refugee crisis. Again, there has been lots of activity on that, you will have seen some of it and we can certainly talk about some of it in the discussion session in a bit. Over this week, you've seen the objectives highlighted, you've seen these objectives highlighted in the activities that the President and Secretary of State and other senior officials took part in, and I'll note just a few of those here.

First, for obviously now, it took us three years to negotiate the successor goals to the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs]. But, they were launched last weekend—the Sustainable Development Goals—it has been known as the post-2015 process. And now also we are calling them the Global Goals. But, they were formally adopted by over 150 heads of state last Friday. And then there was a three-day summit around that with lots of side events. These goals are ambitious, there are many of them—there were 8 MDGs, there are 17 Global Goals and 169 targets—and we haven't even developed the indicators yet. The process leading up to the development of the goals was quite different from the MDG process—it really was a very broad-based and inclusive process that involved everything from surveys of citizens around the world, to a lot of engagement by experts, and academics, and civil society, and implementers, as well as governments. So it wasn't just a government—and it certainly wasn't just a donor-driven process.

And although I think the US might have aimed for having something less than 17 goals and 169 targets, ultimately we are 100% committed to this agenda, and we were very clear about that in statements and all the events we participated in over the last weekend. That includes its universality, so as we go forward in the process and the focus now turns to implementation of the global goals, we will be focused both on implementation from the perspective of what that means internationally, but also what it means domestically, because we are committed to holding ourselves accountable in the United States for achieving the global goals as well. And I would just note that together with the financing for development agreement in Addis—was agreed in July—we now have really set out sort of a different model of development, which is as much about policy, enabling environments—and the mobilization of domestic and private resources—as it is about official development assistance, or the kind of old model of development. And so it presents some real opportunities for us globally, and I think for anyone who followed the events over the weekend, you will have seen the enormous excitement around the launching of these goals. It will all come down to implementation.

Moving on to the second theme of the week. On Monday, you may—some of you may—have seen that the President hosted the Leader's Summit on Peacekeeping. It was a gathering of about 50—just over 50—heads of state designed to respond to the growing and changing demands of peacekeeping. We have never seen more peacekeepers in the field, historically, than we have now—over 120,000 serving in 16 peacekeeping missions around the world, and we are asking more and more of these troops. They are getting more complex mandates, they are operating in more complex and dangerous environments. The Vice President—and the resources at the disposal to the United Nations have really not kept pace with the changes we have seen in the last twenty years—the Vice President sort of launched this effort last year, when he hosted a summit on peacekeeping at UNGA last year. We have then been engaged in intensive outreach throughout the course of the year with the aim of using a summit hosted by the President this year to really garner some new pledges and commitments to UN Peacekeeping. And the response that we got was frankly extraordinary. It highly surpassed our expectations both in number of countries that participated and also in the types of pledges that we got. I'll just—sort of, at a top level—run through some of those. We had pledges of about 30 infantry battalions, more than 15 police units, approximately 40 helicopters, 10 field hospitals, and 15 engineering companies. And overall we calculated it was over 40,000 new troops committed to UN Peacekeeping. Why does this matter? Both because it broadens the base of countries that are engaged—really engaged—in UN Peacekeeping operations, but it also—we put a high premium for purposes of seeking pledges for the Summit on helping

the United Nations to fill gaps—current gaps—in existing UN Peacekeeping missions, but also to help it fill some of the higher-end capacities that are not typically available—or are not always as available as we need them to be—and that's where it becomes really important that we got things like helicopters and medical hospitals, and engineering units committed at the Summit.

The US also made commitments at the Summit, among other things, the President—on the day of the Summit—released a new presidential policy memorandum on peacekeeping, which updates the guidelines to US agencies on how we engage with and support UN Peacekeeping operations. It was the first such guidance issued by the United States in 20 years, so it was fairly significant—the process that we went through over the last year—and that we were able to do that ourselves. And the US also made some specific commitments at the Peacekeeping Summit—which I'm happy, if anyone wants details about that—to go through in the discussion.

On counter-ISIL and countering violent extremism, the President hosted another Leaders' Summit the next day. So we kept people busy with a lot of Leaders' Summits this week on countering ISIL and violent extremism—and nearly 60 partners, just over 60 partners now that we have in the anti-ISIL coalition—participated at head of state level at that event. And there was also robust participation by civil society and by youth, and it was an event that—sort of the first half of it—was spent looking at where we are in the counter-ISIL effort, and then the second half was spent looking at our collective efforts on countering violent extremism, and there were some new pledges made in that area. Also on Tuesday—later that same day—Secretary Kerry hosted a meeting of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, which was our fourth UNGA theme. That meeting was focused on sustaining momentum as we head into Paris in the beginning of December where the conference of the parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will meet, and where our hope is that we will get a durable lasting agreement on climate change that applies in a fair manner to all countries in the world.

And lastly, before we open it up to questions, I might highlight a little bit of the work that we did this weekend trying to address the humanitarian situation in Syria. I don't need to tell this group that the refugee crisis in Europe, especially as it is impacting Europe, is something that has been front and center in the news. But we have been more broadly both focused on and providing an enormous amount of support around the humanitarian crisis that exists because of the Syria conflict, which is only becoming more acute all the time. And we took the opportunity—again we sort of seized the opportunity that UNGA presented now to try to have meetings in a bunch of different formats. Both bilateral meetings—and you will have seen that the Secretary of State, for example, met several times with Foreign Minister Lavrov, and that the President saw President Putin. But we also engaged with our G7 partners, the Secretary engaged with his Transatlantic partners at the annual Transatlantic Dinner. And we—through various events—some of which were already scheduled—like an event on an SDG related event that became much more about the current refugee crisis but had already been set up to look at the question of refugees and migration and its connection to the Sustainable Development Goals.

And then there was a G7 meeting that the Germans hosted on Tuesday night, which brought together both G7 countries and emerging donors to call for global action on the ongoing refugee crisis. And also in particular—to shed some light on the continuing funding gap that we have for the UN humanitarian agencies that are trying to address on the ground the humanitarian crisis in Syria, and the neighboring countries that are hosting refugees—there's about a 60% funding gap between what the UN has asked for and what it actually has. And so we tried to use the meeting to help them plug that gap in part and the meeting itself mobilized almost \$2 billion to help respond to the crisis. It's a good number, but it's not nearly enough and we all need to do more. And I think those of you who have been paying attention to the refugee crisis, which I'm sure all of you in one way or another will have also seen that the US has also made our own commitments around upping quite substantially in the coming years—but even a little bit this year—the number of refugees that we are taking in in the US, including Syrian refugees, obviously.

But, ultimately, everybody is also focused on the fact that one can't take these issues in isolation and these are good announcements to have been made—but without addressing the underlying crisis in a

sustainable way—it's almost just a Band-Aid. So we need to continue to address the urgent humanitarian crisis in the UN, and the US is very focused on that. We remain the largest humanitarian donor to the Syrian humanitarian crisis—as we generally are on all humanitarian issues—but we have been likewise focused on the political situation this week that blew up substantially in the middle of the week. I happened to have the opportunity of attending with Secretary Kerry and Ambassador Power, the Russian-hosted ministerial on counterterrorism in Syria on Wednesday. And I have to tell you that it felt like kind of a historic Security Council session—it almost felt like going back in time—and it really was high politics on the Security Council. And so, I think it's not necessarily—I think, in a way it's not coincidental that all of this unfolded at the same time that we were all here. And I think it reflects both the continued importance that countries like Russia place on their position and role on the Security Council in trying to make use of that venue. But I think more broadly, kind of, everything I've been talking about here reflects the continuing relevance of the UN, both as the UN itself, but then also as a venue for trying to push multilateral action on a whole range of priorities, which is certainly what we've tried to do this week.

I have not really talked about all of the bilateral meetings. I can only tell you that they are as numerous as ever and so—but you will have seen reported in the press—many of the meetings that both the Secretary and the President did. And as I said, we—Rosemary will be familiar with this, but we often refer to UNGA as speed dating for the diplomats—and it does sometimes feel that way if you look at the Secretary's schedule on any given day, or any of the senior officials' schedules—it's just back to back to back to back. But as I noted at the outset, we are trying to use all of those opportunities as strategically as we can and really use them to advance the things that we came up here to advance, and so—it's not just—it doesn't just feel like a bunch of set piece stuff that has to be done but there's actually a purpose to be to the activities. So I think I'll stop there.

**Ellis:** Great. Well, thank you. You did cover a lot. And I'm going to start on the issue on everyone's mind: Syria. Particularly, everyone's talking about—we need to find a solution to Syria and—we heard from President Obama, we heard from President Putin—who has not been that the GA meetings in ten years—and everyone says they're committed to a solution. However, President Putin supports Assad, and other countries, such as the United States, do not—and so then we have the fight against ISIS and so can you kind of—and the Russians have started bombing in Syria—so can you bring us up to date on what's happening in these talks between Secretary Kerry and the Russian counterpart? I mean, do you see any prospects for making any kind of progress on this since it's a common goal, and there was a whole summit on fighting ISIS and stepping up our counterterrorism efforts—where do things stand? Just a small question. *[Laughter]*.

**Crocker:** Just a small question. Let's start with an easy one. *[Laughter]*. I mean I think as a starting point—the important thing—is that we are still talking. But we are—I think it's safe to say as the US and Russia—approaching this challenge from very different vantage points. And I think part of the test and the effort going forward will be to see whether, in fact, the Russian intentions are counter-ISIL intentions that we can work collectively towards. But, you know, we have a difference of opinion—a deep difference of opinion—as to what that means. Because from the Russian perspective, at least as it has been apparent so far, that means propping up Assad and having Assad himself, and the Assad regime, play a role in defining how counterterrorism efforts unfold in Syria. And for anyone who followed the remarks that both the President and the Secretary made on numerous occasions this week, including the Secretary's remarks before the Council on Wednesday, you will have seen that the US holds a very different position on Assad. And it has been clear that Assad has to go, and has no future in Syria, and cannot be a viable partner whether on counter-ISIL, or anything else. And so we, for now, are continuing to talk and engage.

The actions that the Russians took militarily this week seem anyway at first blush to belie the idea that this is all about countering-ISIL, because the bombing appears to have been in areas—at least in part—that are controlled neither by ISIL nor the al-Nusra front. And again, the Russians have been fairly clear and consistent about what they view to be the importance of the role of the state in the counterterrorism effort. At the same time, you will have heard Secretary Kerry speak very forcefully on Wednesday, and

at other points, about the need for a political transition and the need to get the political process back on track. And the fact that collectively we all need to come in very strongly behind the UN efforts—and the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary General Staffan de Mistura—to try to get that political process back on track. But you know a little bit we have to test the proposition and, so far, I wouldn't say that that proposition is looking enormously promising in terms of the Russians and the US seeing eye-to-eye on every piece of it. But, at the same time, you did see, at the very sort of top level—top line level—the Secretary and Foreign Minister Lavrov both made commitments the other day when they came out, including the Russians, on the need for a political transition process ultimately. And so we will be doing everything we can in the coming—the Secretary did a lot of work on that this week with various partners—and we will continue to be pushing as hard as we can to see if we can get some juice behind the de Mistura plan, he has a plan to get some working group set up and try to get some confidence building measures underway between the parties, and continue to sort of push at that level and then the really sort of high strategic level.

And we will continue the counter-ISIL campaign that we have under way, we had this huge summit on Tuesday as you noted. There are over sixty countries that are part of the coalition and have been carrying out operations and will continue to carry out operations. And if the Russians ultimately are serious about wanting to join an effort on counter-ISIL that does not include propping up the Assad regime then, you know, maybe we will have a way forward.

**Ellis:** Just following up on fighting ISIL, I mean what progress has been made and—I mean, it seems like the situation is really pretty difficult right now, and are there new strategies—are there new plans to do anything differently or step things up? What progress has been made since last year's summit?

**Crocker:** So I'm going to punt a little bit on that question, because it's not exactly my area and I don't want to, sort of, get anything wrong as it were. But what I could do is point everyone both to some of the statements that were made, including the President's at the opening of the Leaders' Summit on Tuesday, as well as the Secretary's remarks on Wednesday where he actually laid out in a part of his speech some very specific points of progress that have been made in terms of taking territory, and other things. I think you've also seen more countries join the anti-ISIL campaign. We have seen even this week the French, and others, carrying out bombing activities against ISIL, and so it is a very concerted effort.

But, and I think you know, there are some—there have been some signs of progress on the ground as a result of that effort. But everybody acknowledged this week that there is a lot more work to be done. And there was a very direct link also made, both in the Leaders' Summit on countering ISIL and countering violent extremism, in the President's remarks before the General Assembly, and in many of the remarks that were made over the course of the weekend on the SDG front, that ultimately so much of this comes back to questions around governance and institutions and human rights. And so there's a pretty direct link from the countering violent extremism efforts, and all of those questions that also come up in the SDG context, and that was sort of a big theme that underlay a lot of what was going on, but again ultimately it points—a lot was going on this week—but again, sort of ultimately points back to this whole question of can we get a viable political process really back on track in Syria, because it's hard to see ultimately how you really make progress—sort of sustainable progress on the counterterrorism front—unless you have some kind of a viable political process and sort of some understandable future in terms of a government and institutions and those kinds of things.

**Ellis:** Just a few more things, and get your questions ready. You talked about all these bilaterals, the ones that got the biggest publicity were Putin and Castro. But could you tell us about any others that were significant for the US or any that you might have participated in.

**Crocker:** Well, I mean, again, there are so many and sometimes it feels as if the Secretary met with every country in the world although it wasn't quite that. There were some meetings, just to note a few different issues maybe that came up in different meetings, there were some bilateral meetings with the

Iranians and also with the P5+1 partners, to talk about some of the questions around implementation of the Iran nuclear deal, and so those were significant.

The Secretary, as I noted, annually has an opportunity to have a dinner with—it's called the Transatlantic Dinner—but it's with the NATO and the EU partners. Their issues on the table would have been everything from Syria, to Ukraine, to the refugee crisis. The Secretary did a number of—he met with, I think, the Greeks and the Turks. And there was some discussion around the crisis, or the negotiations, in Cyprus.

There were—I think there was one multilateral meeting, and then also in a number of bilateral meetings—efforts to look at the situation in South Sudan. So, you know, it really kind of runs the gambit. And some of these meetings take place in bilateral settings and some of them take place in multilateral settings that aren't quite as well known, so he meets, for example, the Secretary met this year with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers to discuss a number of issues of mutual concern around, you know, everything—again, from the South China Sea, to climate change. The President met with Modi on Monday which was a very big meeting that included a heavy focus on climate change, but also a number of other issues that we are working on with the Indians. So again, it was a big week. And a lot of different, a lot of opportunities to discuss this full range of issues, many that we haven't even talked about.

**Ellis:** So on climate change, what are the causes to be optimistic with the lead up to Paris? And, I mean, a number of people have—a number of countries—have been making statements including China, about things that they might be doing in the future, but—and I'll just ask my other question—and then please get your questions ready, because I will get to everyone. And this is about Mahmoud Abbas's announcement that the Palestinians weren't going to be bound by, you know, the agreements with Israel any longer. So how surprised and disappointed was the US by this?

**Crocker:** Okay, so let me take on that first the climate change. And I don't, I mean, again I feel like I'm sort of preaching to the choir here with Rosemary directly across from me, but anything that involves an intergovernmental negotiation in the UN context—there is always, you know, one has to build a healthy degree of—well anyway—we can't always be sanguine about how—about the outcome. Having said that, there are some encouraging signs. The sense that I get from the meeting that took place this week in the context of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate was that there was a very optimistic mood, and that there is a lot of feeling of goodwill and momentum heading into Paris. But there are a lot of serious hurdles still to overcome in the negotiations. A number of countries—many countries around the world, as you noted—have now made their announcements on their national commitments. We're still waiting for some other countries to do that in advance of Paris. And I think, in the category of reasons to be optimistic, one might also place the fact that we have a number of multilateral framework negotiations successfully under our belts already this year. It started with a non-binding framework agreement on Disaster Risk Reduction that was concluded in Sendai—in Japan—in March.

And then we had the Financing for Development Agreement in Addis in July. And then we had the Sustainable Development Goals agreed—and I have to say on that front—agreed significantly earlier than anyone thought we were going to—so with the Summit at the end of September, believe me—I thought we were going to have that the ink would barely be dry when the Summit started on that agreement. And instead, it was agreed at the beginning of August—which was way faster than any of us anticipated that it would be—so we could actually turn to planning around the summit and also thinking about implementation. None of those, even the non-binding framework agreement on Disaster Risk Reduction, which sounds like something that should be very easy to conclude—even that became highly politically contentious and a lot more difficult than you might imagine that it would be. So there had been difficulties in all of these negotiations, some of them falling along these usual kind of North–South lines and other things that we're very familiar with, and some of them a little bit newer in terms of some of that negotiating dynamics that we're seeing in the G77, but again the fact is that ultimately we were able, successfully, to conclude all of these agreements and the United States is actually pleased with where we came out in all of these agreements.

And so I think that that gives us, you know, a sort of a good framework and momentum for going forward and also gives us a little bit of hope because many of us were viewing this year, because there's so much enormous stuff on the plate for all of us in the UN system this year, in terms of these huge framework negotiations—I haven't even mentioned the fact that there is also one on Internet Governance coming up in December, which is another issue that could get politically contentious. So we were viewing this as a little bit of a test case year for us collectively, and for the UN system, could we still deliver in the same way that we have historically in some of these framework agreements? And so far, the answer has been yes. So again, I think that that maybe gives some room for optimism and, there's going to be so much high level pressure. I think, for example, also the agreement between the US and China that was announced earlier this year, is another sort of thing to put in the reasons for optimism column. And so there will be a lot of high level political will and commitment to getting something real done in Paris. But it's going to be tough and we have seen these things get pretty ugly in the climate space in recent years. But, I think you will now pretty much see all of our collective attention turn to Paris for the next few months and hope that we can conclude a good agreement.

**Ellis:** Okay, let's open it up to questions. So who wants—I'm going to take a few questions together. If you don't mind, like three. At least three, or four. Okay. Rosemary. Judith. You had your hand up over here. Yes. And please identify yourself.

**Question:** Great, and I'll try to speak loudly. Thank you very much Sheba, and I wanted to congratulate you on this incredible effort. You had so many activities and were dealing with so many crises, and you look unscathed today [*Laughter*]. I'm Rosemary DiCarlo, I'm with the National Committee on American Foreign Policy. I agree with you on the relevance of the UN, on the other hand, I'm wondering, after four double vetoes in the Security Council on Syria and now the Refugee crisis, and an extremely radical group that has emerged and is rising—I'm wondering if either in meetings you attended, or even in hallways, was there a lot of talk about—the UN at 70 needs to change—that reform is needed. And I don't just mean about the Security Council adding members, but how the Security Council works, and how the organization works to really address the challenges that we are facing.

**Question:** Judith Duncker, I teach foreign policy at Lehman College. There is a movement afoot right now to select a woman for the next Secretary General of the United Nations. Do we have an interest in having a woman Secretary General, and if so are we doing anything in particular to see that one gets there? Also, has gender taken a backseat amidst all these pressing issues, or is it still a top priority?

**Question:** My question is related to President Obama's meeting with specific countries. There were—I believe he met with four—and just, what were the reasons for picking those related to US priorities?

**Crocker:** Sorry, picking those what?

**Question:** The four countries. I believe he had private sessions with four countries. Like Kazakhstan—sort of independent sessions.

**Crocker:** Oh the President's—yeah, okay.

**Question:** I am Marie Rogers-Bilola, an African journalist here covering international affairs, based in Paris. And I would like to know, what is your assessment—what was the assessment of the MDGs goals moving forward and changing into a new program. Are they successful, and what was the assessment?

**Question:** I'm Barbara Crossette. I'm a UN correspondent for the Nation and also part of a new website called FastBlue. Can I just add to the question about the woman Secretary General—the larger issue of when and what the US is going to consider the UN needs now in a Secretary General—a woman or a man. But, obviously there is a movement for it right now, but after all these men—and we still have a lot of problems—isn't it time for a woman?



**Ellis:** Yes, great just a few things to cover.

**Crocker:** Okay, so on the question of the Security Council and the double vetoes. I mean, Rosemary, you know this as well as anyone. So, it is, I mean it has been, a huge blight on the council. And on us as council members—we don't bear fault for the double veto, we know who does—on those four occasions, I mean it's always, I think, instructive to point out that there have been other things that the council has been able to act on related to the Syria crisis, including on chemical weapons, and on humanitarian access. While we have not been able to get anything effectively done on the underlying crisis and—no one can make any excuses about that—I mean it is a travesty. And I think part of the reason that you see things like the anti-ISIL coalition, which is not a UN hatted coalition, obviously, being stood up, is in part so that, you know, we can continue to address those things that we feel like we need a way to address even if we can't get things effectively done on the council. You will not be unfamiliar—and many people in this room will be familiar—with the discussions that have gone on now for many years on issues of Security Council reform, but also on some of these other questions around kind of working methods, and the use of the veto—and other things—and there were some meetings on the question of the use of the veto, and the French code of conduct proposal, and other things that also took place during the course of this week, and I expect that we will continue to be presented with those kinds of proposals—maybe either that proposal or the other alternative one that's on the table will start to really take on more momentum.

But, I also think this gets back a little bit to what I was talking about trying to test the proposition now with the Russians—I mean they put forward a resolution this week. And so we're now going to have to deal with that in some way. And put to the test a little bit again, whether we're still going to be in a position at least from the perspective of dynamics on the council where we continue to be unable to move forward. It hasn't stopped us from being able to take action on the anti-ISIL front in accordance with international law. But, it has meant that we have effectively been unable to get anything started or restarted on the political front that would really ultimately address the underlying crisis, and again Secretary Kerry and many others in the council spoke really forcefully this week about needing to come in and put all of our weight and support now behind the UN process to try to get something restarted. And I expect that we will see a number of, you know, immediate efforts by the Secretary to continue to continue to talk to Lavrov, and to continue to talk to our other partners to see whether there's a way forward. But, you know, it is—it's just one of the kind of really frustrating realities of the council when it comes to these issues on which—just from the core interests perspective—we do not see eye-to-eye. And the way the council is structured as, you know, with the veto of the permanent five members—it means that alternately the Russians can continue to veto if they—if that's the position that they want to take. It may be that now, given everything that has unfolded this week, the dynamic changes slightly. I'm not saying I think we're going to get a great resolution through next week or anything, but it may be that we are in a slightly different position in terms of how the conversations go on the political front and I think that's exactly what Secretary Kerry will be putting to the test.

There was a bit of noise, in the familiar setting—in the setting that will be familiar to you—around Security Council reform this year. But ultimately, not much really happened that was new in the intergovernmental negotiations much to the frustration of those who want something new to happen in those discussions. There is obviously now a lot of attention being paid to the question of the selection of the next Secretary General including a lot of both member states and external groups that are putting considerable attention on the fact that we are in the 70th year of the United Nations and we have not had a female Secretary General. And the position that the United States takes is that we want the best candidate for the job—that we hope that women candidates will be given equal consideration to male candidates. And, we foc[us]—we tend to place our focus, rather than on either specific tests in terms of must have this, this, or this, or gender, or region—we tend to really place our focus on the qualifications that we think are needed for, you know—to have—to get an effective Secretary General in place and I don't need to tell anyone in this room of how increasingly important this job is in a way—with the world in the state that it's in. It is going to be both, perhaps even more difficult than it should be to come to agreement around a

good candidate because there is a P5 role in that process as well. But it's also incredibly important that we do.

The things that the US tends to talk about—and in fact that the General Assembly largely talked about itself when it just passed its so-called revitalization resolution—tend to focus on management experience of a huge organization, because obviously the UN is a huge organization. The US places a real premium on management reform and budget issues, and our commitment to peace and security, on diplomatic experience—there is an important communication skills aspect to the Secretary General role that we will also be focused on. And—but ultimately—we try not to put too many fine points around a list of characteristics or qualities because ultimately you, you know, we at least, do not want to find ourselves boxed in with having said such—you know, they must have X, Y, Z—because you never know what great person we may not all collectively have yet thought of who might sort of emerge from the fray and turn out to be a really good candidate, but not necessarily meet—might not necessarily be able to check one or the other box that you set out for yourself. So, it's not a wholly satisfactory answer I realize, and I think you'll be familiar that there are—there is—a pretty concerted effort out there to play on the question of it being high time for a female Secretary General.

And I would say, not at all in terms of having moved away from women and girls as a real priority, a continued high priority for the US government and for the administration. It was—on top of everything else that I mentioned—also the twentieth anniversary of Beijing this year, so there was a huge event that was co-hosted with UN women on Sunday, a day-long event and celebration of Beijing +20. The Secretary participated in a meeting—I think it was on Thursday morning—on gender based violence in humanitarian emergencies. But in many different contexts there were also a number of events including around the SDGs—and one of the things that the US was really pleased about on the SDG front was that there was a lot of focus on women and girls woven throughout the SDGs—and so it remains a huge priority.

On the question on the multilateral development goals. You know, I think in general there was a feeling that the goals set out the importance for all of us as a global community—of setting goals and targets for ourselves and having something to measure ourselves against and having a global agreement around—targets that we were trying to reach. And, as you know, there are a number of countries around the world that made significant strides, and *globally* we made significant strides in a number of key areas under the model under the Millennium Development Goals. But I think there was also a feeling as we went into the three years of negotiations around the SDGs that the world had really changed in a myriad of ways since we set out those goals and I think there always had been a feeling from at least some in the South, and in the G77, that the MDG process had been too top down driven, and that it had essentially been a donor-created process to identify these eight goals and then, you know, we sort of were all putting money against meeting those goals and, which is—not to downplay them because again I mean I think—if you look back and take stock of where we got as against the goals—there was really some incredible progress made globally on many of the issues. But, there was a very much of a concerted effort this time among all of us, collectively, to make this process much more inclusive and much more broad based and—so as a going in proposition now for the SDGs—I think there's much more of a feeling of real universal and global commitment to this process—but again it's not only at the government level, but is at the level of citizens and, I think, you know, there was so much focus this weekend on the role of the youth, and on the role of civil society, for example, and a lot of talk about how this is not about us, this is about the next generation. And I think there is a much more global buy-in from the outset of the SDGs than there was from the MDGs.

Now again, we have set ourselves on many more targets and many more goals this time. And that could make things very complicated, and certainly from a communications perspective makes it more complicated. But, I think the shift that you've also seen in the US position—because for example with the MDGs, we may have focused on reorienting some of our international assistance—we did focus on reorienting some of our international assistance to address the MDGs, but we didn't take them on ourselves. Whereas we like every other country now with the SDGs has taken on our own commitment

to meeting the SDGs domestically in the United States, and so as we're talking about implementation now, it's not only the international agencies, and USAID, and the State Department, and the usual suspects—but it's also the domestic agencies that are taking a look at it and what does this mean for us domestically and that really is a huge shift. But, it's not to under play—I mean—I think some of the celebration you saw over the weekend was really a celebration of how far we've been able to get as a global community in meeting some of the MDGs.

And in terms of the President's bilateral meetings that he had while he was here—I mean yes, there was a strategic focus in which meetings he agrees to take. One also has to realize how extremely limited the President's time is when he comes to UNGA, and so, the number of requests that come in for him is enormous and he's only able to do so much and so I think the decision probably tends to follow along the lines of both whether there's a particular priority that is trying to be advanced—so if you look at the bilateral with Modi for example. There was a heavy climate change focus there—as I said—India is one of the countries that has yet to announce its commitments—and so there's maybe a big push around getting India to the right place in advance of Paris, and so that was certainly strategic. And then in other cases, it might also have just been that we are long overdue for a presidential meeting with such and such country. And so you take advantage of both leaders being in town to make that happen at UNGA, as opposed to happening at some other venue.

**Ellis:** So let's take a few more questions before you have to leave.

**Question:** Barbara Rochman. I'm the UN Representative for the New York County Lawyers Association. I'm also with the NGO committee to stop trafficking of persons. So, I'm wondering if you're aware of the controversy that has arisen over upgrading Malaysia in the Trafficking in Persons Report. And maybe you could respond? Because I haven't heard anything except those advocates that say this has happened, but I haven't heard anything on the other side.

**Question:** I'm Emily Green, I'm with the School of Diplomacy and International Relations. I wanted to ask—we've see the international community making youth engagement a priority but how does the US plan to engage the American youth?

**Question:** I'm Carole Seidelman, I'm with Caroletours—it's a tour company. In the humanitarian—was there any discussion of what is going on in Saudi Arabia with freedom of speech? I attended a conference in Paris a few months ago about journalists in jail.

**Question:** I wonder if the US has made any kind of commitment to take refugees into this country?

**Crocker:** Okay, really we'd better stop there because I have a meeting that I have to go to—I'm sorry—but, let me just try to take these.

So on Malaysia and the trafficking of person's issue, I'm not the right person to answer that question. Our press officer is right behind you. If you talk to her and get her information she can find you the right person in the State Department to answer that question, okay?

On youth engagement, I think this is an area that is ripe for probably a little bit more concerted effort in the sense that there's often a lot of rather rhetoric around the need to engage youth. But at the same time I think you've seen a real heightened commitment to that and again as I mentioned—and I'm sorry, I'm going to go through this pretty briefly—but as I mentioned, I think over the weekend especially around the Sustainable Development Goals, there was an enormous amount of both youth outreach and youth engagement including events that were, you know, that featured only young people up on the stage. And a lot of effort to engage via social media and other sorts of outreach efforts. And so I do think—and again even in the development of the goals themselves it was a much more inclusive process that included outreach to youth around the world—and so I do think that a real part of the effort now on the goals—when I'm talking about sort of the global commitment to them in the global buy-in, is making sure that

citizens around the world—there's been one whole public relations effort aimed at getting 8 million people around the world to know about the goals. Something like that. And so—but I think all of that reflects a real effort to get the global citizenry engaged in this conversation and engaged in this effort in helping to hold us all accountable to achieving the goals and then as I also mentioned, even at the countering-ISIL and countering violent extremism event, there was a huge focus on the importance of young people in helping to counter violent extremism, and they were included in the summit, there was a whole section of the room that was just, you know, sort of the young people section of the room, and there was an active engagement of that with this summit as well.

Well on human rights—Saudi Arabia question is really a human rights question, and not a humanitarian question, and so the only thing I would say is that we are entering now the period where of course UNGA is not just one week long, it actually—for better or worse—it will now last through the end of the year including all of the different committees' meetings. And so one of the—the third committee of the UN General Assembly—deals with human rights issues, and so I think a whole range of human rights issues including very much protection of journalists will occur in the context of those discussions and meetings over the coming months. There is going to be, among other things—at UNESCO on November 2nd—a big meeting on protection of journalists at which I anticipate many of these issues will be highlighted. Including, maybe some of the ones that you've been hearing about.

And then as I mentioned a bit in my opening remarks, and as I think you probably see in the press—yes—the US has committed now to take in more refugees—both to increase the number of refugees from Syria that we are accepting into the United States this year, but also as we look forward into 2016 and 2017, the President has made commitments going into those years out—to increase the number of refugees overall, including refugees from Syria that are being accepted into the United States.

**Question:** Is there a number?

**Crocker:** There is a number. There is a number this year, I think, of 1,700 additional—I'm just going to check my notes—1,700 additional. Okay, so this year the number of Syrian refugees is expected to be about 1,700. Next year, the President has directed his agencies—directed his team—to increase the number of Syrian refugees and so next year it's expected we will take in 10,000 refugees from Syria. And the Secretary has also announced that in 2016, the US will accept overall 85,000 refugees which is a bump up, I think of about 15,000 from where we'll be this year. And in 2017 to accept 100,000 refugees so that will be a bump up of 30,000 per year from we are now.

**Ellis:** So I just want to take this opportunity to thank the Assistant Secretary for taking time out of her busy schedule to meet with us, and brief us on what went on. Thank you so much, we really appreciate it. *[Applause]*.