

**Remarks of Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Dr.
Paula J. Dobriansky
to the CSIS/PAHO Conference on
"Responding to an Influenza Pandemic in the Americas"
May 24, 2006**

- Thank you Dr. Etienne and Ambassador DeShazo for your work in organizing this very important and timely discussion.
- I would like to express our heartfelt condolences for the loss of Dr. Lee Jong-Wook, Director General of the WHO. He was a dedicated and passionate leader for improving health worldwide. We will miss him as a statesman and a dear friend.
- We in the Western Hemisphere are fortunate that we have not yet had a case of avian flu in our region, and that we have the opportunity to learn from other countries' experiences before the virus reaches our borders.
- Avian influenza has spread to some 51 countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, led to the deaths of at least 124 people and resulted in the culling of millions of birds in an attempt to stop the disease from spreading further.
- While human cases of avian flu are limited, and there is no evidence yet of efficient human-to-human transmission, if this does begin to occur, the worst-case scenario would be the deaths of millions of people, and the crippling of economies.
- Avian influenza is not merely a health issue. It is an economic issue, a social issue, and a security issue.
- Disease knows no borders. Therefore, the United States is focused on strengthening the international response capacity. For example, we are spending \$66 million to develop international stockpiles of health supplies to contain animal and human outbreaks; over \$36 million to support the work of international organizations such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health; and \$41 million for international research activities worldwide.

- I am pleased to announce that the first stockpile of anti-virals has been positioned in Asia for possible use in the region in response to a potential pandemic influenza outbreak.
- In fact, Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt announced the establishment of the U.S. stockpile yesterday at the World Health Assembly in Geneva.
- President Bush has made preparedness for avian influenza a priority. He announced the Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza at the United Nations in September 2005. This partnership involves over 90 countries and 9 international organizations including the Pan American Health Organization, the World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Organization for Animal Health among others.
- The International Partnership seeks to bring together key nations and international organizations to improve global readiness by:
 - elevating the issue on national agendas;
 - coordinating efforts among donor and affected nations;
 - mobilizing and leveraging resources;
 - increasing transparency in disease reporting and surveillance; and
 - building capacity to identify, contain and respond to a pandemic influenza.
- Its core principles include:
 - a commitment to transparency in reporting and immediate sharing of epidemiological data and samples with the WHO and the international community;
 - rapid reaction to the first signs of accelerated transmission to contain outbreaks of highly pathogenic influenza strains.
- The International Partnership works in a manner complementary to and supportive of multilateral organizations and is not meant to duplicate their purpose. The International

partnership is meant to support them in achieving their mandates.

- Twelve countries from the region participated in the first Partnership meeting in Washington last October.
- Also, with the World Bank and the EU we organized a donor's conference in Beijing in January, where partners pledged almost \$2 billion dollars for international actions against avian flu. The United States pledged \$334 million, the largest single amount from any donor.
- The second meeting of the International Partnership will be held in Vienna, June 6-7. I will head the U.S. delegation, and we will assess the progress made, push for follow-through on the Beijing donor pledges, suggest specific steps to take to improve global preparations, and urge the engagement of countries which have not yet been affected by the virus.
- The leaders of this hemisphere are taking concrete steps, in coordination with the Pan-American Health Organization, to draft preparedness plans for every country in Latin America and the Caribbean. Every nation in the region has developed at least a draft plan for preparing and responding to avian influenza.
- The challenge for the region now is putting those plans into action; and, for those countries with draft plans, the challenge is to finalize them. The United States is ready to help.
- Of our \$334 million pledge for international cooperation, we will dedicate at least \$7.4 million to support direct efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean such as developing rapid response plans, implementing those plans, building surveillance and laboratory capacity, and launching communication strategies.
- Under the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), we are also working closely with Canada and Mexico to coordinate a North American response in the event of a pandemic.
- President Bush, President Fox, and Prime Minister Harper discussed avian flu during their SPP Summit in Cancun in March. They endorsed cooperative activities by all three

governments, and established a coordination mechanism to ensure action. I will represent the U.S. on that body.

- We have also worked with Central American countries and the Dominican Republic in completing self-assessments on their preparedness.
- We were pleased to participate in a briefing for the Ambassadors from the Organization of American States on the need for regional cooperation in combating avian flu.
- The U.S. Southern Command is working with the Global Emerging Infections System, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Gorgas Memorial Institute of Tropical and Preventive Medicine in Panama to engineer and implement domestic and international influenza surveillance/early warning systems in the region.
- We also know that our own preparedness will help contain the virus in the hemisphere. We have allocated \$3.8 billion this year to prepare for a potential influenza outbreak, and have requested an additional \$3.4 billion.
- President Bush launched the U.S. National Strategy in October of last year. Our National Strategy has three basic goals:
 - To stop, slow, or otherwise limit the spread of a pandemic;
 - To mitigate disease, suffering, and death; and
 - To mitigate the impact to critical infrastructure and the economy.
- Our efforts are built around a three-part framework of:
 - Preparedness and communication;
 - Surveillance and detection; and
 - Rapid response and containment.
- On May 3, the White House released the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy

for Avian and Pandemic Influenza.

- The Implementation Plan provides guidance to all federal departments and agencies, to state and local governments, to businesses, and to communities and individuals.
- The State Department leads the international engagement efforts for the US government. The international efforts are a major component of the Strategy involving numerous agencies including the US Agency of International Development and the Departments of Health and Human Services, Interior, Agriculture, Defense and others.
- To lead this effort, we have established the Avian Influenza Action Group under the leadership of Ambassador John E. Lange. The group reports to me and coordinates all international action on avian influenza
- We believe it is necessary to share our experience with other countries that are finalizing their national plans. Our National Strategy, Implementation Plan and other information can be found at WWW.PANDEMICFLU.GOV
- In closing, avian influenza is a global problem that requires a global solution in order to protect our families our communities our nations and our world.
- We will continue to work closely and actively with our neighbors and partners in this hemisphere, and around the world, to better prepare, detect, and respond to this threat.