### Department Press Briefing – October 26, 2021

**NED PRICE, DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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MR PRICE: Good afternoon. A few things at the top, and then I look forward to taking your questions.

This morning at the U.S.-ASEAN Summit, President Biden announced the U.S. intent to provide up to $102 million in new initiatives to expand the U.S.-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. As President Biden said, “The relationship between the United States and ASEAN is vital for the future of all one billion of our people.” The U.S.-ASEAN Futures initiatives reflect this administration’s deep commitment to ASEAN’s central role in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.

This new funding includes the intent to provide up to $40 million in new efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures Initiative, up to $20.5 million for a new U.S.-ASEAN Climate Futures initiative, up to $20 million to promote economic growth and opportunity through a new U.S.-ASEAN Economic Futures initiative, and up to $21.5 million to support the Billion Futures initiatives, including programs that promote education, English language learning, and gender equality and equity. In addition, President Biden expressed his commitment to expanding our formal engagement and cooperation with ASEAN via ministerial-level meetings on health, energy, the environment and climate, transportation, gender equality, and women’s empowerment.

Next, today, on Intersex Awareness Day, we recognize the voices and contributions of intersex communities in the United States and around the world. Too often, intersex persons are subjected to violence, to discrimination, and abuse solely on the basis of their sex characteristics.
We recognize these obstacles and are clear in our commitment to support intersex people. We further recognize the hard work of intersex activists, intersex human rights organizations, and allies who work to promote and to protect the human rights of intersex persons globally.

As President Biden and Secretary Blinken have made clear, it is the policy of the United States to pursue an end to violence and discrimination on the basis of gender, of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. The Department of State is committed to promoting the freedom, the dignity, and equality of all persons, including, of course, intersex persons, and we will continue to do that.

And then finally, I want to share some news that is very exciting for one member of our team, but perhaps – well, I am confident it is much more bittersweet for the rest of us. This week will mark the last week in the office for Gladys Boggs. Many of you know Gladys. She is a senior employee in our Press Office. She is retiring after 44 years of government service – 44.

Having joined the State Department Press Office in 1986, Gladys is truly a walking embodiment of this institution. She is widely recognized for her deep experience and expertise as well as her strong sense of professionalism and collegiality. And during her 35 years of press work, serving eight presidential administrations, 12 secretaries of state, and 17 State Department spokespeople – and I am lucky, consider myself lucky to be included in that last category – Gladys has made her incredible contributions to this institution.

Across well over 2,000 press engagements during her career, Gladys has played an integral part in promoting U.S. foreign policy around the world and explaining these goals and why they matter to the American people. Her achievements are a testament to the value of our public servants, and we are grateful for Gladys and for her service. Gladys’s experience is truly irreplaceable, and while we will, of course, miss her, we also send her our best wishes for what is an indisputably well-earned retirement. Thank you very much, Gladys.

Matt.

**QUESTION:** Here, here. I'm going to say a couple things. For those of us who have covered this building for a long time, Gladys has really been an indispensable and also omnipresent figure, personality who's been around. Anyone who has gone up to the seventh floor, the eighth floor, the Ben Franklin Room, or at the UN in the days when we were still at the Waldorf, spent hours of...
time in the service elevators with Gladys, waiting to go up to various photo ops, knows how important a role she played. And so congratulations to her, and thank you for your kind words for her. And I'm sure that Shaun and the association will have something more to say about her and her retirement.

**MR PRICE:** Indeed.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, she really was – is still —

**MR PRICE:** Is. Is.

**QUESTION:** — an institution —

**MR PRICE:** Yes, always will be.

**QUESTION:** — and has dealt with a variety of characters over the years, including myself, but also my predecessors. Anyway, so thanks again for your remarks about her.

I wanted to start with Sudan, because I understand – maybe other people understand it too as well – that Special Envoy Feltman had a call with the Egyptian foreign minister either late yesterday or today, and I'm just wondering if you can tell us what that was about. Did it involve any kind of questions that the U.S. might have about General Burhan's planned or maybe planned visits to Cairo? What do you understand, if anything, about Egypt's role in what happened in Khartoum?

**MR PRICE:** Well, let me start by saying, Matt, that we have been entirely unequivocal in our condemnation of the events over the past 36 or so hours. We made very clear yesterday that the anti-democratic actions of the Sudanese military – it subverted the constitutional declaration of 2019, but in some ways, more importantly, it has subverted the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people. And the Sudanese people have reaffirmed those democratic aspirations even in recent hours. We saw the Sudanese people peacefully take to the streets to make clear their – the fact that they seek a restoration of civilian-led democratic leadership.

But it has not only been the United States that has been unequivocal in our condemnation of these events. We've joined nations and organizations from across the world in expressing
That includes the African Union, it includes the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, France, Germany, Canada, and the UK, Sudan’s neighbors as well. To get to your question, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan have also called for de-escalation and dialogue.

Since the events of late Sunday night our time, Monday in Khartoum, Secretary Blinken, the Special Envoy Jeffrey Feltman, our Assistant Secretary for our African Affairs Bureau Molly Phee, and many others in this building and across this administration – they have been working the phones nonstop. They have been in touch with counterparts from the region, including Sudan’s neighbors – and you alluded to this, Matt. We have been in touch with governments in the broader Middle East. We have been in touch with our allies and partners all over the world, including Europe and elsewhere. So the Secretary has had calls. The special envoy has had a number of calls. Molly Phee has had a number of calls as well.

When it comes to the Secretary, we’ll be in a position to read out some of those engagements, but this has been a priority for the leadership in this building to see to it that we work with the international community to effect what it is that we are trying to see: an immediate release of all political actors detained in connection with these events, a full restoration of the civilian-led transitional government, and a refraining from any violence against peaceful protesters, including the use of live ammunition. And we strongly condemn recent reports of violence against peaceful protesters.

Our goal at this stage, Matt, in terms of all of these conversations, is to establish a common position with our allies and partners, and I think you’ve seen at least the initial iteration of a common position emerge, including from many of the countries and organizations that I just ran through. There has been a strong condemnation of the military takeover. There has been a call – a broad, unified call for a restoration of the civilian-led transitional government. There has been a call by many countries and international organizations for those detained, including Prime Minister Hamdok, Minister of Religious Affairs Mofarih, and others from the civilian government who have been detained, for them to be released, and of course, a strong, universal call for the military to refrain from violence against peaceful protesters seeking nothing more than the restoration of their democratic aspirations.

**QUESTION:** Right, but I just – my question was about Feltman, Special Envoy Feltman’s call with Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry. Do you have anything specific to say about that call —
MR PRICE: The —

QUESTION: — or anything specific to say about what role Egypt might have played in encouraging or discouraging General Burhan’s actions?

MR PRICE: Look, we’re not going to be in a position to read out every call, but as I’ve said before, we have engaged with a number of our partners, including Sudan’s neighbors, to establish a common position and to make sure that the Sudanese military hears our collective voice very clearly.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, do you have a common position with Egypt right now?

MR PRICE: Well, so Egypt – and I will just note here what Egypt has said publicly; I will leave it to our partners in Cairo to speak for their position – but what they’ve said publicly is they’re working to ensure stability, security. They are closely following these events. They are looking at the safety of the Sudanese people. So we are working closely with our Egyptian partners, just as we are with other neighbors.

QUESTION: Well, that’s fine, but that is a far cry from your absolute condemnation, demand for the immediate release of all political actors, an end to repression, suppression of protests. So can you say at this point – honestly, can you say if the Egyptians are on board with your position?

MR PRICE: Matt, I’m not going to speak for other countries; I will just speak for the United States.

QUESTION: Last —

MR PRICE: And we are speaking with partners, with allies around the world, including Sudan’s neighbors, to establish a common position and to do all we can to see to it that democracy is restored in Sudan.

QUESTION: Last one. In terms of consequences beyond the – since yesterday when you announced the suspension or the pause in the 700 million in ESF, has there been any movement on suspending or not suspending – I saw the USAID statement that their humanitarian assistance will continue, but, of course, that wouldn’t be affected by – or humanitarian aid is not affected by the – any kind of restrictions. So has there been any movement or developments in terms of assistance?
MR PRICE: Well, so I want to be very clear on that point – and we've had an occasion to speak to this in other contexts recently – but we always differentiate between bilateral assistance and humanitarian assistance, the latter category going to support the people – in this case, the Sudanese people. And State and USAID, we maintain a significant humanitarian portfolio and a growing development portfolio.

When it comes to Sudan in this past fiscal year, the fiscal year that ended at the end of last month, the United States provided $60 million in bilateral health and development assistance to Sudan, focused on supporting democracy, supporting human rights and governance, food security, civic engagement, conflict mitigation, and global health assistance. In addition, we provided more than $400 million – $438 million to be precise – in lifesaving humanitarian assistance to Sudan in the last fiscal year. The $60 million of bilateral health and developmental assistance and all lifesaving humanitarian assistance, that is not subject to the current assistance pause.

The assistance pause at the moment, as we evaluate the next steps for Sudan programming, implicates the $700 million in emergency economic support funds, or ESF funds, that we spoke to yesterday.

All of this assistance – and we spoke to this at some length yesterday – is, of course, providing consistent with the applicable restrictions, including those restrictions that have been in place on Sudan since the military coup which was applied to Sudan in 1989 when the former Bashir regime rose to power.

QUESTION: Could I ask —

MR PRICE: Sure.

QUESTION: — a follow-up on that. Prime Minister Hamdok, has the United States have any – has the United States had any contact with him since the coup – since the takeover?

MR PRICE: We are pressing for the prime minister's release. We are pressing for the release of other civilian leaders who have been detained since the start of the military's takeover. Communications, I should say, in Sudan have been difficult, especially in Khartoum. There have been internet blackouts. There have been restrictions when it comes to phone usage.
communications has – communications have been difficult. We don’t have any discussions with Prime Minister Hamdok or other members of civilian government to read out, but we are continuing to press every appropriate lever for their release.

**QUESTION:** Do you – the – General Burhan was saying that he’s been well treated, that he’s at his home. Do you have any indication of whether the prime minister has been treated well?

**MR PRICE:** I will say what I said yesterday, and that is now that the prime minister, now that other members of the civilian-led transitional government remain in military custody, it is the military’s responsibility to ensure that they are treated well, to ensure their safety, to ensure their security, to ensure their health. I don’t have any updates to provide, but we are watching very closely to see to it that the military does just that.

**QUESTION:** Just one —

**QUESTION:** Do you know —

**MR PRICE:** We’ll finish up with Shaun and we’ll —

**QUESTION:** Just one – sorry, just one briefly. The role of Omar al-Bashir, the idea of handing him over for – on the charges that he’s been accused of. Is the United States hopeful that he will still be handed over? Is that something that’s come into doubt because of this?

**MR PRICE:** Look, we are in the very early hours of this. It’s just been over a day. So these are questions that will have to be decided in the coming days. Certainly, we look to and we have supported holding members of the former regime, including Omar al-Bashir, accountable for past wrongs.

Said.

**QUESTION:** I just wanted – on Shaun’s point, I mean, do you know where – his whereabouts?

**MR PRICE:** Do we know where Omar al-Bashir is?

**QUESTION:** Or HamdoK’s —
MR PRICE: Hamdok’s whereabouts.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR PRICE: Look, it is —

QUESTION: Or whether he really is in (inaudible).

MR PRICE: It is not for us to speak to these questions publicly. It is for us to underscore the point that the military has a responsibility now that he remains in their custody, now that the Minister of Religious Affairs Mofarih and others remain in their custody, the military has a responsibility to ensure they are treated well, to ensure they remain in good health, and to ensure their security.

Yes.

QUESTION: The UN Secretary-General Guterres has, in response to the situation in Sudan, talked about “an epidemic of coup d’états”; he’s talking about this broader situation. Obviously, this is happening as – in the time that you guys have – since the Biden administration took power with a focus on democracy and human rights, so I wonder if you wanted to kind of respond to his appeal to big powers, including the United States, for unity at the Security Council to have more effective deterrence. And do you agree that there is a lack of deterrence that seems to be leading to countries or militaries like Sudan, Myanmar, other countries as well, to take these kind of actions?

MR PRICE: Well, I am not aware, and in fact I am very confident, that the secretary-general was making any sort of causal link between this administration and some of the anti-democratic actions that we’ve seen. I think the —

QUESTION: Are you sure?

MR PRICE: The secretary-general, I think the international community, our allies and partners in the international community, would recognize that the United States and the United States under this administration, we have been a forceful and powerful advocate for democracy, for human rights, for universal rights. We have made clear where we stand and with whom we stand in many different fora, including at the UN. As you know, we will be pulling together an unprecedented event in the coming weeks, the Summit for Democracy, where we’ll have a chance with – together with many of the world’s – many of our democratic partners from around...
the world to share experiences, to learn from one another, and to do what we can to beat back the tide of authoritarianism, of repression, wherever it exists.

You are right that we have seen setbacks in countries – in certain countries. Sudan is the latest of that. But when it comes to Sudan, when it comes to Burma, when it comes to other countries where we have seen worrying trends, no country has done more, no country has said more, no country has afforded more to the people in terms of humanitarian assistance and humanitarian aid than the United States.

And so whether it’s Sudan, whether it’s Burma, whether it is countries where anti-democratic forces may be gaining more influence, we will continue to lead that charge. We will continue to work to galvanize our allies and our partners around the world to make very clear where the United States and where those with whom we share interests and values, and that is a large part of the world, where we stand.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Is the U.S. going to impose sanctions on those individuals from the military forces in Sudan? And why don’t you call it or consider it a coup?

**MR PRICE:** So in terms of holding accountable those responsible for what we have seen, what we may yet see, look, we have been very clear that the United States and our allies and partners will use every appropriate tool to see to it that we can help Sudan re-emerge on the path to democracy. To put it – put a finer point on it, we will do everything we can to support the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people and to see to it that we can do everything to help them achieve and to realize those aspirations, which have been set back, of course, by what we have seen the military do over the course of the past 36 or so hours. When it comes to what we call this, this is very clearly a military takeover.

Yesterday we spoke about the historical context here. What is true is that we are closely monitoring the events in Sudan. We know that the military has hijacked the democratic transition. These actions to seize power are unacceptable. They are a contravention of Sudan’s constitutional declaration, which, along with the Juba Peace Agreement, is the agreed framework for the democratic transition. These are the documents that embody the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people, and that’s why we are standing by them.
Now, when it comes to this particular term, the coup, Sudan has been subject to the military coup restriction in section 7008 of the department’s annual appropriations act, and it has been subject to those restrictions, as I mentioned yesterday, since the Bashir regime came to power undemocratically in 1989. Sudan will be subject – continue to be subject to those restrictions until the Secretary determines that a democratically elected government has taken office, and that’s what we’ll continue to support.

Yes.

QUESTION: One more.

MR PRICE: Sure, sure.

QUESTION: When do you think the U.S. aid is going to be returned to Sudan?

MR PRICE: I’m sorry, when did I – when do we think —

QUESTION: The assistance that you mentioned, when do you think it will be returned to them?

MR PRICE: Well, so, to be very clear and to go back to Matt’s question, our humanitarian assistance is ongoing. And even in countries where we have profound, violent disagreements with the government, we continue to support the basic humanitarian needs of a country’s people. What we have paused as we are continuing to assess and to determine our next steps is the $700 million in bilateral assistance.

QUESTION: Hey, Ned, can I just —

MR PRICE: Yes.

QUESTION: I should know this, but the problem is that it changes, but – the interpretation changes from administration to administration. Is it this – is it your understanding that this administration’s legal determination is that it can’t be a coup or it isn’t a coup if the government ousted was not an elected one? Or can a coup replace – can it be a coup if what happens replaces a government that came to power in a coup?
MR PRICE: I am always loath to weigh in legal questions from the podium, but the shorthand answer, Matt, as I understand it, is that according to our analysis, the – what you – the first iteration of what you said is accurate. Because the Bashir regime —

QUESTION: I don’t remember what my first iteration was.

MR PRICE: Because the Bashir regime did not come to power democratically —

QUESTION: And the – and its replacement led by Hamdok was not democratically elected.

MR PRICE: Correct.

QUESTION: So a coup determination is moot.

MR PRICE: That’s correct.

QUESTION: But – so in Burma, you had a situation where Suu Kyi herself was not elected by anyone. So – although the government had been – the state counselor or whatever her title was exactly – she was not elected. She was chosen by them, by her party.

MR PRICE: A party that was brought to power democratically.

QUESTION: So your – so the legal determination is that in that case, even if the figurehead leader is – so, in other words, if it was just Suu Kyi who had been removed, then it wouldn’t have been a coup?

MR PRICE: These are – these sort of ex-post-facto hypotheticals are —

QUESTION: I’ve got to —

MR PRICE: Look —

QUESTION: Well, I mean, I just want to know if you guys have made – if this administration’s rationale for determining whether something is a coup or not has changed from —

MR PRICE: There – there —
QUESTION: — from (inaudible).

MR PRICE: What I will say is there was a coup determination that was conducted in the immediate aftermath of the early February 2021 coup in Burma. This department determined in short order, given the circumstances, the facts, and the analysis of them on the ground, that what had transpired in Burma was a coup.

In the case of Sudan, of course, these are apples and oranges. We inherited – we have a very different situation with the military overthrowing a regime that was not democratically put in place.

Yes.

QUESTION: There are reports now coming from Sudan that Hamdok is in his house. I cannot confirm that, but if it is true, how do you comment on that?

MR PRICE: I haven't seen these reports. It sounds like they're just emerging.

QUESTION: Yeah, yeah.

MR PRICE: We have been calling for the military to release the prime minister, to release the minister of religious affairs, to release other members of the civilian government. I don't want to weigh in until I've seen confirmation of that.

QUESTION: Yes. Now many officials and a lot of people said it is not too late to reverse the course of events in Sudan. But after yesterday's events, do you foresee an active role for al-Burhan in a democratic Sudan? And I want to follow up on that.

MR PRICE: Look, right now, we are focused on helping the Sudanese people achieve a restoration of their democratic aspirations. That is what we are focused on right now. We can tackle questions of what that might look like, what the implications of this are in the days ahead. Right now, we and our allies and our partners, we're focused on, as I said before, a few things; that is, an immediate release of all political actors detained in connection with these events, a full restoration of the civilian-led government, ensuring – doing all we can to protect peaceful protesters, ensuring they are not subject to violence, including the use of live fire and
ammunition. That is our – that’s our focus right now.

Yes, sure.

**QUESTION:** And as the follow-up, please, I will follow up on the question asked before. What happened in Sudan took place the minute a U.S. special envoy left the country, and that says something about your influence, the U.S. ability to influence the event. This is not reassuring to your friends. What implication of that on the U.S. role and influence around the world?

**MR PRICE:** So I want to be clear on a couple points here. Number one, Ambassador Feltman was in Sudan, had been in Sudan in recent days. We were, of course, not given any pre-notification by the military or others that they planned these anti-democratic actions. Had we, we would have made very clear where the United States would and now does stand in response to any such plans.

But there’s something of a chicken and an egg issue here. Ambassador Feltman was in the region. He had been in contact over the course of the previous weeks with many in the region precisely because we had seen indications that Sudan’s democratic transition was potentially running into trouble, that there were individuals who might seek to subvert that democratic path. So these were conversations that had been going on for some time.

We had emphasized that the actions to – any actions to subvert the democratic transition are unacceptable, are a contravention of the constitutional declaration, which, again, along with the Juba Peace Agreement, is the agreed framework for a democratic transition.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** On Iran.

**MR PRICE:** Anything else on Sudan before we move on? Quickly, sure.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. You’ve mentioned department leaders’ conversations with allies in the region and around the world on Sudan. I’m just wondering what direct engagement you’ve had with the military leadership since the takeover. Obviously, Ambassador Feltman was there just before.

**MR PRICE:** So, of course, in the days, weeks, months leading up to this, we had engaged with the full range of political society in Sudan, including the civilian and the military leadership. Since
then, we have been focused on discussing, comparing notes, achieving a unified position with our partners and allies in the region, in the broader Middle East, and around the world.

I am not aware of any conversations that have taken place with the military leadership since the actions of late Sunday our time, Monday in Khartoum. If we feel that it would be constructive, that if it would be useful to help achieve the objective that we and our partners have set out – and that is a restoration of the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people, a restoration of the civilian-led transitional government – if we feel that engagement, direct engagement with a military leader would be useful, we wouldn't shy away from doing that. But at this point we haven't done that yet.

Yes, Iran, sure.

**QUESTION:** On Iran. The process of refueling gas stations in Iran was disrupted by what the government says is a cyber attack. Was the U.S. in any way associated with this attack, or were they aware this attack was going to take place? And if so, is this any sort of warning about returning to the talks in Vienna?

**MR PRICE:** What I will say on returning to the talks in Vienna is that we've been very clear that the path for diplomacy remains open. We continue to believe, our partners in the P5+1 continue to believe, that diplomacy constitutes the most effective means to once again ensure that Iran is verifiably and permanently prevented from obtaining a nuclear weapon. But I don't have any response to the first part of your question.

Yes, Ben.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Ned. I have a question on Taiwan, and then on North Korea. The first is regarding the press release today from the Secretary regarding Taiwan's participation in the UN system. I was just wondering about the timing of the release and whether it had anything – whether it coincided with this 50th anniversary of the UN resolution.

**MR PRICE:** So yesterday, as I believe, was the 50th anniversary of the UN resolution. But the statement made a broader point, and the statement made a point that we support Taiwan's ability to participate meaningfully at the UN and to contribute its valuable expertise to address many of the global challenges we face. That includes global public health, the environment and
climate change, development assistance, technical standards, and economic cooperation as well. We reiterated our commitment to Taiwan’s meaningful participation at the World Health Organization and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and we will continue to support Taiwan’s meaningful participation in such fora.

**QUESTION:** But was there a specific reason why you decided to put that out today, or —

**MR PRICE:** Why we decided to put it out today? It is a statement of our support for Taiwan’s meaningful participation in these institutions. And as you noted, there was an important anniversary.

**QUESTION:** And then on North —

**QUESTION:** Sorry, but “meaningful” is getting a lot of use here. Does that mean – and I realize that you want to go back to strategic ambiguity after the President’s comments last week, but when you say meaningful, does that mean independent of Beijing?

**MR PRICE:** It means meaningful; it means substantive.

**QUESTION:** Well, “it means meaningful and substantive” doesn’t really – it’s – that’s kind of useless. It doesn’t mean anything. What —

**MR PRICE:** It – what it means —

**QUESTION:** No —

**MR PRICE:** What it – what it —

**QUESTION:** “Meaningful” means nothing in this case if you don’t explain what it is you mean by “meaningful.”

**MR PRICE:** What it means is that Taiwan, as a leading democracy —

**QUESTION:** Yes, but does that mean – in your view, does that mean that they get to – that they should participate in UN fora or other international fora as Taiwan, as Chinese Taipei, or as some kind of adjunct to whatever delegation Beijing sends to these meetings?
**MR PRICE:** What it means is that we believe that Taiwan has important knowledge, expertise, insight, and perspective to lend within these institutions in a way that is appropriate and meaningful, and we'll continue to stand by that.

**QUESTION:** The problem with that is —

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MR PRICE:** Said.

**QUESTION:** The problem is is that no one knows what that means, and it just creates more confusion and makes the situation worse. Do you not get that?

**MR PRICE:** Matt, we – we put out an entire statement in the Secretary's name on this yesterday.

**QUESTION:** Sorry.

**MR PRICE:** I think that statement was abundantly —

**QUESTION:** Today, this morning.

**MR PRICE:** — this morning, you're right – was abundantly clear. Said.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) North Korea?

**MR PRICE:** Sure, I'll – yes, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** There have been some press reports that North Korea would send a delegation to COP26 later this week. Does the State Department plan to have any meetings with any North Korean delegation? Are you open to meeting with them if they're there?

**MR PRICE:** I am not aware – first of all, I would have to refer you to Pyongyang to speak to any plans they may have to participate in Glasgow next week. Certainly not aware of any plans that we have at the moment to engage with any delegation from the DPRK. What we have said broadly when it comes to the DPRK is that we believe diplomacy is the most effective means by
which to achieve what it is that our policy review identified as that overarching goal, and that's a complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

We are open to diplomacy, we are ready for diplomacy. We have made clear to the DPRK that we have no hostile intent towards the country, that we are prepared to engage diplomatically with them. We've made that very clear in a series of messages, and we await a response.

Yes, Said.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. I want to move to the Palestinian-Israeli issue, but before I do that, I want to add my name in acknowledging Gladys and what she's done over the years, and I want to wish her Godspeed and the best luck in the road ahead. She will definitely be missed.

**MR PRICE:** Thank you, Said. Yes.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. On the settlements, the Israelis announced on Sunday that – or they – they in fact issued tenders to build 1,300 settlements and seven different settlements, and so on. And all in the past you have expressed your views and you've told us in this room, and on an issue that I ask so many times about, that your position on the settlements is well known. But what message are you sending the Israelis, because I think that Israel feels emboldened by your lack of resolve on this issue?

**MR PRICE:** By – sorry, could you repeat the last part of the question?

**QUESTION:** I said the Israelis emboldened by – they keep doing things. You express that you're – you disagree with these actions, and they go on. They are emboldened by your lack of action.

**MR PRICE:** Said, we've had an opportunity to discuss our position on this in this room and in any number of other occasions. When it comes to what we've heard recently, we are deeply concerned about the Israeli Government’s plan to advance thousands of settlement units tomorrow, Wednesday, many of them deep in the West Bank.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MR PRICE:** In addition, we're concerned about the publication of tenders on Sunday for 1,300
settlement units, for – 1,300 settlement units in a number of West Bank settlements. We strongly oppose the expansion of settlements, which is completely inconsistent with efforts to lower tensions and to ensure calm, and it damages the prospects for a two-state solution. We have been consistent, as I said, and clear in our statements to this effect.

We also view plans for the retroactive legalization of illegal outposts as unacceptable. We continue to raise our views on this issue directly with senior Israeli officials in our private discussions.

Yes.

QUESTION: Wait – let me just – I have a couple more questions on the Palestinian issue —

MR PRICE: Okay. Sure.

QUESTION: — if I may. But I wanted to ask you: Are you engaging with the Israelis? Is the Secretary of State talking to Mr. Lapid, for instance? Is Michael Ratner, or Ratner, who is acting as the chargé d'affaires, is he talking to anyone? (Inaudible.)

MR PRICE: We are engaging with our Israeli partners at very senior levels conveying this message.

QUESTION: All right. Now on the issue of the human rights organizations —

QUESTION: Hold on a second, Ned. Sorry, just on settlements, you say that you've been clear and consistent in your view, but you, in fact, haven't. This is the strongest statement that you guys have made about settlements, directly about settlements, since I think – well, that I've been around, that I've been – that I've heard.

Prior to today, you have only said that you oppose any unilateral measures that could damage the prospects for a two-state solution. This is —

MR PRICE: And that statement always ended —

QUESTION: When —
MR PRICE: — and that includes settlement activity.

QUESTION: Including – but you have not said we strongly oppose the expansion of settlements, and you have – and we are – you are – this is the strongest that you have been. Was there a decision – was there a decision made that you had to be – that you had to start getting tougher on this?

MR PRICE: Matt, our messaging on this is —

QUESTION: Not your public messaging.

MR PRICE: Our public messaging on this is consistent with what we are seeing transpire. So —

QUESTION: Well, fine. It might be —

MR PRICE: It only stands to reason that our public messaging may shift over time.

QUESTION: Okay. All right.

MR PRICE: Said.

QUESTION: Yes, going back to the six human rights organizations, now I know that you issued a statement last Friday and you responded to the issue last Friday. But then you also said that we have to go – if we have further questions we have to go to the Israelis. Is that it? I mean, just – is that the end of it? You’re just asking journalists and inquirers to go back to the Israelis and have them explain? Are you convinced that the Israelis have a reason that these organizations are tied to terrorism? Or in fact, are they telling the truth when they say – and I know Matt asked this question yesterday – that – are telling the truth when they say they shared – they shared that information with you? And do you have any plans to meet with these organizations like the European Union did?

MR PRICE: So, Said, we remain in close touch with our Israeli partners on them – on this. As you may know, there is an Israeli delegation that we’ll be meeting with to discuss this set of issues. Broadly speaking, we believe that respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and a strong independent civil society are critically important to democracy and to responsible and responsive government. And these are conversations that we look forward to having with our Israeli partners.
Yes.

**QUESTION:** Are you – do you have any plan to meet with any of those six organizations, any American official, whether in the West Bank or anywhere?

**MR PRICE:** I’m not aware of any plans. We don’t have any meetings to preview in Jerusalem at this time.

**QUESTION:** Can I just follow up briefly?

**MR PRICE:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Do you see any impact on U.S. – the U.S. relationship with Israel? Will there be any repercussions if the Israelis go ahead with this despite the concerns expressed?

**MR PRICE:** Look, these are concerns that we have discussed at very senior levels, at the most senior levels, with our Israeli partners. Our Israeli partners know where we stand, and we’ll continue to engage with them in our diplomacy on this.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** On Cuba.

**MR PRICE:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** President Diaz-Canel has said that the U.S. is fomenting the protests by dissidents (inaudible) for mid-November. Diaz-Canel said this behavior by the U.S. is not new. What’s your comment on it, and how is it affecting the review of the Cuba policy by the Biden administration?

**MR PRICE:** Look, the Cuban people’s protests, peaceful protests on and after July 11th and with the upcoming plans for November 15th, the Cuban people are voicing their concerns about freedom, about democracy, and the failures of that very regime, the Cuban regime, to meet their own needs, the needs of the Cuban people. We support, as we have said, the rights of the Cuban people and people everywhere to exercise their freedoms of expression, their ability to assemble peacefully. We call on the Cuban Government to respect these rights and to see this not as an
attack but as an opportunity to listen, to listen to their own people and to do what is right for Cubans and for Cuba.

The Cuban regime is failing to meet the people’s most basic needs. That includes food. That includes medicine. Now is a chance to listen to the Cuban people and to make a positive change. Again, we commend the people of Cuba for peacefully showing the strength of their will and the power of their voice, which, after the protest of July 11th, the government has consistently attempted to silence, including through violent oppression, including through unjust detentions of hundreds of protesters, including through the detention of journalists, of activists, internet censorship, and other tactics that we reject. We stand with every Cuban seeking a government that respects their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**QUESTION:** So the U.S. is not behind – is not, like, supporting these kind of protests?

**MR PRICE:** We stand with the right of the Cuban people and the right of people everywhere to assemble peacefully, to have their voices heard. But what we have seen in Cuba since July 11th, what I suspect we will see mid-next month in Cuba, is a demonstration not of the desires of the United States Government. What we have seen, what we will say – what we will see is a manifestation of the unmet needs, of the unmet aspirations of the Cuban people, and the Cuban people’s clear attribution of responsibility for those unmet needs and unmet aspirations to the Cuban Government.

Let me go to the back. Abbie.

**QUESTION:** Thanks. Twenty-six families of U.S. hostages and American detainees published a letter yesterday saying that they believe the Biden administration is not prioritizing securing the release of their family members. I wondered if you had a general response. And to their calling for action, is there anything within this building that is being done to address their concerns and frustrations?

**MR PRICE:** Well, we work tirelessly to secure the release of Americans held hostage and wrongfully detained overseas so that these hostages and wrongful detainees can be safely reunited with their families. The State Department, our partners across the government, we work closely together on these cases to ensure a focused and coordinated effort that draws on all available government resources and expertise. The families of Americans who are held captive...
available government resources and expertise. The families of Americans who are held captive abroad, we know that they also face incredible hardship as they tirelessly – as they too tirelessly advocate for their loved ones who have been taken away from them.

We remain in regular contact with these families. We are grateful for their partnership. We are grateful for their feedback. We continue to work to ensure we are communicating and sharing information with them in a way that is useful for these families. As you may recall, Secretary Blinken had an opportunity together with Ambassador Carstens, our special envoy for hostage affairs, to meet with the families of Americans held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad, and he reaffirmed during that session earlier this year that the United States is committed to seeking the release of their loved ones. Ambassador Carstens leads the diplomatic strategy for the return, for the release of Americans held captive abroad. That includes any number of tactics, including in some cases direct talks. Of course, any negotiations are coordinated throughout the government at very senior levels as well. And of course, our Bureau of Consular Affairs here at the Department of State also provides support to all U.S. citizens detained abroad.

Yes, Shaun.

**QUESTION:** A different issue. On climate change, Australia overnight unveiled a plan to limit – to zero out carbon emissions by 2050, but not with any near-term goals. Does the United States have any reaction to this? Australia has been seen as one of the holdouts ahead of COP-26.

**MR PRICE:** Well, the point we have made since the very earliest days of this administration, when we rejoined the Paris climate agreement, shortly after that when this administration announced our ambitious climate targets of emissions reductions between 50 and 52 percent in the coming years, we have made clear that every country around the world, but especially countries – industrialized countries that are major sources of greenhouse gases have a special responsibility and a special obligation to the current generation and to future generations to raise our collective climate ambition. That is what we have done. We’ve been heartened to see, including in the context of and the aftermath of the summit that – on climate that the President pulled together, the White House pulled together in recent weeks – we’ve been heartened to see additional commitments.

And of course, we’re on a very short runway to COP-26 in Glasgow, starting – we’ll be heading there next week. And we know that the window for limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius
– we know it’s narrowing. We expect countries that have not already done so to arrive in Glasgow with ambitious commitments that bring us closer to that goal. We believe that all countries should collectively commit in Glasgow to continue strengthening ambition toward a 1.5-degree Celsius limit now and throughout this decade. We've made this point before, but this is the decisive decade, where we think about climate change in terms of years, in terms of decades ahead and its implications, but now is the moment where that if we miss, the window may well close.

So again, many countries have put forward ambitious climate targets. That includes the United States. We have put forward a bold, ambitious plan, not only because it is the right thing to do for our future, not only because it is the right thing to do for our economy, but also because by demonstrating American leadership, we have the potential to galvanize our allies, partners, and countries around the world as well.

**QUESTION:** On Australia again. Do you think Australia's plan is ambitious enough? You said that this decade is crucial.

**MR PRICE:** This decade is crucial. Look, I am not going to weigh in from the podium on any country's specific commitments. What we know is that what we need to achieve is that collective goal of doing all we can to ensure that we don’t exceed that global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius given the stakes.

**QUESTION:** But Ned – I have a quick question on Iran.

**MR PRICE:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Just a follow-up to what Mr. Malley said. He said that – basically he was saying the window was closing. What does that mean? I mean, will there come a point maybe next week, the week after, the Iranians are not on board, that you say, “Okay, no more, no deal”?

**MR PRICE:** Well, look, we have been very clear – and I had an opportunity to reiterate this in the briefing earlier today – that we continue to believe the window for diplomacy remains open. But that is not a window that will be open indefinitely, and it won’t – it cannot be open indefinitely because as Iran continues to advance its nuclear program, as it has distanced itself from the commitments it made in the JCPOA context, eventually the advantages that the JCPOA in the – in its original form in 2015 and implemented in 2016 will be negated by the advances that Iran will
have made in its nuclear program.
So that is why we continue to believe that negotiations, indirect even as they are, need to resume in Vienna as soon as possible. This is not just the position of the United States. This is the position of the full P5+1. We have heard this in public, we have heard this in private from our Russian counterparts, from the PRC, from the Germans, the Brits, and the French as well and the EU, of course, which is playing a coordinating role in much of this.

So we continue to believe that a return to Vienna as soon as possible, again, affords the best chance of securing a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA, which we still think remains possible, and we still think remains the most effective means to ensure that Iran is permanently and verifiably prevented from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

**QUESTION:** But you’re not putting on an expire date or a set date that they have to return by such-and-such date or it’s off the table?

**MR PRICE:** I’m not in a position to offer that from the podium.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MR PRICE:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** How long are you going to wait?

**MR PRICE:** Again, we think that the window is closing. Every day that goes by is another day that Iran is in a position to advance its nuclear program in ways that are concerning. These are not just concerns on the part of the United States. We have heard similar concerns from our partner at the IAEA; we have heard similar concerns from our European allies as well. So we’re not putting a specific timeframe on it, but we are making the point that this is not a process that can go on indefinitely. The window has been open for months now, but it has also been months since the Iranian Government withdrew from the sixth round of talks and has – for reasons that you’ll have to ask them about, they have not been willing to resume a seventh round. We think the seventh round in Vienna should resume immediately if we are going to make swift progress towards a mutual return to compliance.

**QUESTION:** Just to follow up on Sudan, because everybody now is talking that Prime Minister Hamdok is out. Do we expect a call between Secretary Blinken and the prime minister today if
he’s confirmed out?

**MR PRICE:** Again, you’re citing reports I haven't seen. I wouldn't want to speak to them before I'm in a position to confirm them. The Secretary, the special envoy, our assistant secretary, others in this building, others in this administration are prepared to engage, are prepared to communicate in ways that we feel has the potential to help advance our goal, and that is a swift restoration of the civilian-led democratic transitional government, a release of political prisoners, seeing to it that those who are peacefully assembling in the streets are not subject to violence.

**QUESTION:** If you weren’t able to reach out to him that means that he’s not free, in your opinion – if you weren’t able to reach out to him or being in contact with him? How do you define that?

**MR PRICE:** He should be – we have been very clear that should be released from military custody.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR PRICE:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:01 p.m.)

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