

the American people and the American economy.

Thank you, Mr. President.

RECESS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 1 p.m., recessed until 2:01 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. Scott).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

UKRAINE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today is International Anti-Corruption Day. As the United States works to support good governance and anti-corruption efforts around the world, I wish to highlight one country, Ukraine, where these efforts are vital to the future viability of that state. The U.S. Congress has stood by the people of Ukraine since the Maidan demonstrations in November of 2013.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed two landmark pieces of legislation that are now law. This sent a clear signal to Kiev, Moscow, and the capitals of Europe that the United States stands squarely for the development, democratic aspirations, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine and its people.

However, Ukraine's political leadership must also continue to hold up its end of the bargain. Ukraine is a country that has been plagued for many years by weak democratic institutions and rampant corruption. This internal threat of corrupt institutions poses the greatest long-term threat to Ukraine's future.

Ukraine's reformers have made some progress. Last year Ukraine ratified an association agreement with the EU, which includes extensive commitments to governance reforms. The Parliament adopted a broad package of anti-corruption laws and established a set of institutions to fight corruption. The government made changes to the tax and budget codes and is starting to clean up its banking system. The government has also made reforms of the energy sector a top priority, adopting legislation to harmonize its natural gas markets with the EU's and raising tariffs to incentivize more efficient energy usage.

Importantly, on Monday, November 30, a new special anti-corruption prosecutor was appointed with the backing of the civil society, which is a big step forward in the fight against corruption.

Despite progress on these fronts, much work remains, and the political commitment to combat corruption among Ukraine's leaders is uneven. I acknowledge the pressure faced by the government. We all want to support Ukraine's positive path, but the Ukrainian people need more concrete

anti-corruption results—not just legislation, not just commissions, as important as these are, but actual results.

For example, there remain thousands of allegedly corrupt officials in the judicial branch, where judges and prosecutors are susceptible to bribes. While corruption in Ukraine's legal system cannot be resolved overnight, I urge Ukrainian officials to take measures that would remove these most egregious violators from the judicial branch and prosecutorial ranks and to retrain those who are not corrupt to build the next generation of jurists.

The Government of Ukraine has taken positive steps in this regard, including the establishment of a constitutional commission tasked with recalibrating the checks and balances between the judiciary and the rest of the government. In September, the commission submitted new draft amendments to the Constitution on the justice system. However, concerns remain regarding the independence and integrity of the judicial institutions, including the newly established institution, the High Council of Justice, or HCJ, which has been called the "gatekeeper to the court system."

It is critical that the civil society and watchdog organizations are empowered to continue their work of holding the HCJ and elected officials accountable to ensure that any weakness in the checks and balances of the judicial system are not exploited for personal gain.

I am also concerned about the process for vetting the current pool of judges. The Government of Ukraine is developing standards for judicial reappointment, which will be conducted by the HCJ. This process will test the political will of both the Government of Ukraine and the HCJ itself. Unfortunately, initial results are not positive. As of June of this year, the HCJ had received 2,200 complaints of judicial misconduct. Of this number, only 47 judges were disciplined and none were dismissed.

Ukrainian citizens expect a clean government that abides by the rule of law. In July, I wrote to President Poroshenko, urging him to make anti-corruption reforms a priority by considering the appointment of a special anti-corruption prosecutor and special anti-corruption courts. While the government recently selected a special anti-corruption prosecutor with the backing of the civil society, the government must now ensure that this office remains free from state influence and interference to fulfill its mandate to root out corruption within Ukraine.

I commend President Poroshenko for listening to the demands of civil society and amending the composition of the selection committee to include two candidates backed by civil society, which led to the selection of Nazar Kholodnytskiy. This was a step in the right direction. However, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine itself is still woefully understaffed,

which impacts its ability to fulfill its mandate to prosecute corrupt acts. I call on the Government of Ukraine to ensure that the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine is fully staffed and prosecuting cases without delay.

Polls show that most Ukrainians confront petty corruption in their daily lives, and our focus on corruption at the national level should not diminish the importance of programming that addresses corruption at the municipal and local levels. The Government of Ukraine must invest in training and education to identify and root out petty corruption in higher education, health care, and law enforcement. A clear commitment to attacking corruption in health care, education, and law enforcement within a measurable framework will pay dividends for citizens across the country and will help to restore faith in Ukraine's democratic institutions.

The United States is prepared to make a long-term commitment to Ukraine and, along with our European partners, we can provide support to Ukraine's efforts to tackle corruption within the judiciary, the civil service, and law enforcement while preparing these institutions to attract and retain talented individuals who are committed to eradicating graft and entitlement.

I firmly believe that Ukraine could be a case study for how a country with the political will can work with the international community to root out pervasive corruption, but that political will must manifest itself concretely and soon. When you look at public opinion polls in Ukraine, fighting corruption is the Ukrainian people's No. 1 demand. On this International Anti-Corruption Day, I look forward to supporting Ukraine's leaders if they are willing and committed to answering this demand.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for such time as I might consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BURUNDI

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am here today to speak a bit about Burundi—something the Presiding Officer is familiar with.

I had occasion to be in Burundi at their request some 16 years ago. At that time, the President's name was Buyoya. He is not there anymore; they have changed Presidents. There is something going on there on which I

think the State Department has dropped the ball one more time in not interpreting, not understanding what the people of a country want: their self-determination.

Despite its history of outside interference, civil wars, and social unrest, Burundi has emerged as a largely cohesive society, overcoming the ethnic divisions that plagued it in the 20th century, back at the time when I was first there.

On April 3, I led a congressional delegation of six Members to Burundi, where we visited with President Nkurunziza. President Nkurunziza is in the middle of his second elected term in office. We talked to members of the Parliament, had really intimate relations with the members of the Parliament. We actually prayed together. We met together, and we got to know them quite well.

We saw continued growth as a democracy and signs of movement toward a diversified economy under the leadership of President Nkurunziza. He announced on April 25 that he would run for President again and was met by increased protests and criticism from the international community, primarily led by us. Our State Department, the United Nations, and a few other countries seem to think they know more about an independent nation than they know. So they were criticizing him for running for office again.

Here is the problem: A provision in their Constitution says that no one can run for the Presidency of Burundi more than two times. The problem is that he was not elected the first time; he was appointed by Parliament. So essentially, yes, he was elected once, but he hadn't been elected again until this recent election. But, again, why would we even want to get involved in it?

On May 4, Burundi's Constitutional Court ruled that President Nkurunziza's first term did not count because he was picked by Parliament rather than elected by the people. That was followed by a failed coup, which took place right after that.

Leading up to the Presidential elections, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union urged "all Burundian stakeholders to respect the decision of the Constitutional Court, when delivered." So now we have the African Union, we have the courts, and we have the people in an election talking about the fact that, yes, he is qualified to run a third time—all except our government, which wants to impose its desires on another country.

On May 29, six of us were in Burundi. We voiced our support for the decision of Burundi's Constitutional Court and called on the international community to support the court's ruling.

President Nkurunziza won his reelection for President on July 21; he got 69 percent of the vote. Instead of working with Burundi and its people, the international community has been denouncing the election and stepped up pressure on the newly elected government

via sanctions and withdrawal of support. The United States suspended military training in July.

That is one of the things we do around the world that are really working now—a train-and-equip program, going to the country and working with them, helping to train those individuals. Of course, when that happens, we have the allegiance of those countries. If we don't do it, we can be sure that China or somebody else is going to do it. It is something that works. We withdrew that training. We are creating vacuums that are going to be filled by people who might be prone toward terrorism.

We suspended the military training. We announced that Burundi will no longer benefit from the trade preferences under the African Growth and Opportunity Act beginning in 2016 and sanctioned four individuals who have contributed to the turmoil, including threats to peace, security actions that undermine democratic institutions, and human rights abuses.

I am concerned that the responses by the United States and the international community will do more harm than good in terms of finding a resolution to the current political crisis. Young people are going to be denied jobs. They are not going to have the economic opportunities to participate.

According to a New York Times article written on December 5, the violence seems to have shifted from what appeared to be government-sponsored to rebel-sponsored. "There have been more assassination attempts, more grenades tossed at government property and more random shootings . . . all thought to be the handiwork of the opposition."

Yesterday, December 8, nearly 100 Burundian protesters who opposed President Nkurunziza during the months of violence in Bujumbura were released from prison.

We have to continue to support and stand with the people of Burundi and their growth as a democratic nation. The United States and international community should support and encourage a political resolution, not drive division and further unrest.

While the violence and the loss of life that has occurred in Burundi can't be condoned, the situation could have been much worse if it were not for the actions taken by President Nkurunziza, the opposition forces, and the people of Burundi.

I have been working to bring all parties together to resolve their differences and was encouraged by comments made at Burundi's National Prayer Breakfast by President Nkurunziza and the representatives of different political parties about looking forward and not looking back. There was tremendous applause.

These countries on the continent of Africa meet in small groups on a regular basis, in the Spirit of Jesus, actually, and they have the National Prayer Breakfast now. Except for the out-

side interference, peace has been settling in and people are living with the decision they made—of course, 69 percent of them having voted for this President.

I echo Uganda's President Museveni's—whom we are very close to—confidence that a lasting solution to the conflict in Burundi will be found. I encourage all sides to meet together in Kampala or have a meeting there as soon as possible to begin resolving political differences. I consider President Museveni a friend. I believe he is the leader who can facilitate efforts to find a lasting solution to the political situation in Burundi. The way forward begins first with putting the elections behind us and acknowledging that Pierre Nkurunziza is the President of Burundi; second, an immediate agreement by all sides to work together to end the violence and to provide the time needed to resolve differences in Kampala, and this also includes the international community, which I charge to take positive actions to help enhance peace versus merely demanding it through punishment; and finally, beginning all-inclusive meetings in Kampala under the leadership of President Museveni from Uganda.

I understand the fears that Burundi may regress toward ethnic violence, but I do not agree that it is a likely outcome of the current situation. We are going have to work on Burundi and not isolate it and its people. Only by working together to maintain stability and calm can we avoid widespread bloodshed, and the harshest critics are predicting that will come true.

I know there are some good people there, but I have intimate relations with the leadership in many of the countries. I see what we are doing that is wrong. I remember that the same group of people—the United Nations, the State Department, and France—got involved in Côte d'Ivoire when President Gbagbo had won a legitimate election. It was rigged by someone who wasn't even from Côte d'Ivoire.

I have been making several critical speeches on our involvement. It seems like we seem to want to impose our ideas on other countries when it is not to their best interest. I want everyone to be aware that this is a problem that is real.

PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I just found out that supposedly the big party that is taking place in Paris—it is interesting. For those people who are not familiar with this issue, the United Nations puts on a big party every year. This is the 21st year that they have done this. It goes back to the Kyoto treaty and to the fact that through the United Nations they have been trying to develop some type of a thing where global warming is coming and it is going to be the end of the world.