



Sarah Obama, step-grandmother to US President Barak Obama, reacts with members of her family yesterday in the hamlet of Kogelo in western Kenya during a press conference that followed media announcement of Obama's apparent victory.

PHOTO: AFP

World leaders hail Obama

AFP, Paris

World leaders yesterday hailed President Barack Obama's sweeping re-election, with allies pledging to deepen cooperation with the United States on fighting the world economic slump and maintaining security across the globe.

Congratulations poured in from across the world, including fellow UN Security Council members Britain, China, France and Russia as well as its staunch Middle East ally Israel and Obama's ancestral home in Kenya.

Russia President Vladimir Putin, whose relations with Washington have often been frosty, sent a telegram congratulating Obama on his victory over Republican challenger Mitt Romney.

"We hope that the positive beginnings that have taken hold in Russian-US relations on the world arena will grow in the interests of international security and stability," Russian news agencies quoted Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying.

Moscow is ready to "go as far as the US administration is willing to go,"

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency.

In Beijing, Chinese President Hu Jintao, who himself is handing over power at a Communist Party congress starting this week, noted "positive progress" in Sino-US relations over the past four years despite tensions over issues such as trade and territorial disputes involving US allies.

China will "look to the future and make continuous efforts for fresh and greater progress in the building of the China-US cooperative partnership," foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who at times appeared to have tense relations with Obama, also joined the well wishers.

"I will continue to work with President Obama to ensure the vital security interests of Israel and the United States," said Netanyahu, who had appeared to throw his support behind Romney during the election campaign.

Iran, facing Western pressure particularly from the United States as

well as archfoe Israel over its controversial nuclear drive, has yet to comment on Obama's win.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said he was looking forward to working again with his "friend" Obama on several fronts, including kickstarting the world economy and finding a solution for the escalating Syria conflict.

"There are so many things that we need to do: we need to kickstart the world economy and I want to see an EU-US trade deal," Cameron said.

"One of the first things I want to talk to Barack about is how we must do more to try and solve this crisis," he said, referring to the near 20-month conflict in Syria that world leaders have so far failed to resolve.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas urged the US leader to pursue peace efforts while Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said he hoped that Obama's reelection would mean the creation of a Palestinian state in the next four years.

Direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians have been on hold since September 2010.

Obama triumphs in Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1
Election Gala Open House and, along with embassy officials, cast their token votes.

The event started at 6:00am and the result was declared around 10:00am by the US Ambassador in Dhaka, Dan W Mozena. The event continued till 1:00 pm after the delivery of speeches by Romney and Obama, projected at the venue by large-screen TVs through CNN.

In 2008, Obama defeated his rival Republican candidate John McCain by a margin of over 250 votes in a similar mock vote in Dhaka.

In his immediate reaction over Obama's triumph, Mozena told reporters that the US presidential polls had been successful and termed it a "victory of democracy".

"I have tears in my eyes listening to the speeches of Governor Romney and

President Obama. Both pledged to build bridges and that's what democracy is all about," he said, adding that "Bangladesh, too, knows the joys and demands of democracy".

Speaking at the Election Gala, the US envoy earlier said, "Building a strong democracy is a never ending process; it is a continuing work in process, a process that is ongoing at this very moment in America and here in Bangladesh."

"Bangladesh, too, has heard and benefited from the voice of the people," he said.

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, who went to watch the Election Gala around 8:00am, left the place angrily after an embassy official wanted to see his invitation card at the gate of the hall room. Another official then requested the minister not to leave the venue, but Inu did not oblige him.



PHOTO: STAR

US Ambassador Dan W Mozena speaks to the press at The Westin in the capital after Obama's victory in the US presidential election. The US embassy in Dhaka organised a mock voting at the hotel for 300 invited guests and embassy officials and set up a large screen to show the news coverage of the election result.

PHOTO: STAR

US President Barack Obama

1961

August 4

Born in Honolulu, Hawaii to a white American woman and a black economist from Kenya



1983

Studies political science and international relations at the University of Columbia

1985-1988

Social worker in the black districts of Chicago. Becomes a Protestant

1988-1991

Studies law at Harvard. Becomes first black president of the Law Review

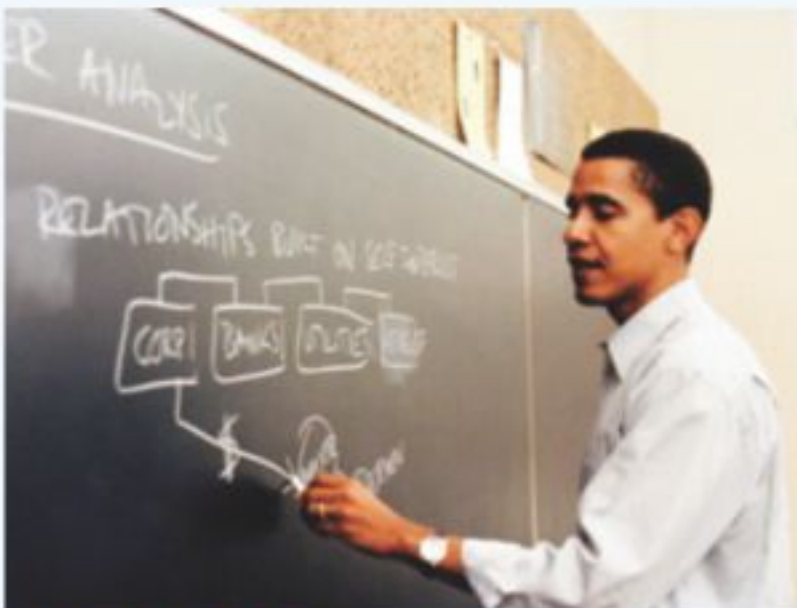
1992

Marries Michelle Robinson. They have 2 daughters, in 1998 and 2001



1992-2004

Attorney and law professor at the University of Chicago



1997-2004

Elected to the Illinois senate

2000

Fails in his bid to become a Democrat candidate for the House of Representatives

2005-2008

Elected to the US Senate, representing Illinois

2008

June
Becomes the Democrats' presidential candidate, beating Hilary Clinton



November
Becomes the first black president of the United States, with 53% of vote

2009

Wins Nobel Peace Prize

2010

March
Approves a historic health care bill extending medical insurance to almost all Americans

July

Signs into law the most sweeping financial regulations since the 1930s

2011

May

Gives the order for the US raid that kills Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan

2012

September 6

Wins a second Democratic presidential nomination

November 6

Wins presidential election against Mitt Romney



Romney concedes defeat

FROM PAGE 1
"His supporters and his campaign also deserve congratulations," he said, in a brief address at his election watch party in Boston.

"I wish all of them well but particularly the president, the first lady and their daughters."

It was a quick, underwhelming end to an 18-month campaign that began on a farm in New Hampshire, survived brutal Republican infighting during the party primaries early this year and a barrage of negative attack ads by the Obama camp, and rose to give the incumbent a

serious scary weeks before the election.

Romney was neck-and-neck with the president for a considerable part of the campaign, but despite repeated trips to swing states like Colorado, Ohio, Florida, Virginia and Iowa, Obama held on to leads in the battlegrounds, which eventually became the challenger's undoing.

"This is a time of great challenges for America and I pray that the president will be successful in guiding our nation," Romney said, to modest cheers and applause.

Several members of

Romney's senior staff stood next to the stage, many stone-faced and somber, as the Republican nominee addressed his supporters.

Romney returned to a theme that he began injecting into his stump speeches in the closing two weeks of the campaign: the need for greater bipartisanship in Washington.

"At a time like this, we can't risk partisan bickering and posturing," he said.

"Our leaders have to reach across the aisle to do the people's work and we citizens have to rise to the occasion."

Romney also thanked

his wife Ann, his tireless surrogate on the campaign trail whom he called "the love of my life."

"She would have been a wonderful first lady," he mused, to loud applause.

Romney's comments were brief and basic, and it was not immediately clear if he had written a concession speech.

Earlier in the day, when asked by reporters on his campaign plane whether he had two speeches ready to go for Tuesday night, he said he was confident of defeating Obama and had penned a 1,118-word victory speech.

Victory of love

Obama's Kenyan family celebrates his win

AFP, Kogelo, Kenya

Singing and dancing, the ancestral village of Barack Obama celebrated yesterday the re-election of the son of their soil, who won because he knows how to "love all people", his grandmother said.

Crowds stayed up throughout the night in Kogelo, a small village in western Kenya nestled in the hills about 60 kilometres from the blue waters of Lake Victoria, until the results showed Obama had won.

"The reason why he has won is because God has given it to him," said Sarah Obama, 90 this year and the third wife of the paternal grandfather of the president, who has said he regards her as a grandmother.

"Secondly he has got the knowledge to love all people, he doesn't have the knowledge of division, that is why he has won," she added, speaking in the Luo language to reporters on the lawn outside the family home.

Weary from an all-night vigil but happy at the win, people cheered to welcome her -- known popularly as "Mama Sarah" -- and in support of the victory.

"It was tough this time, nothing like last time," said 35-year old Calvin Odinga, a chemist. "But we were so happy Obama made it."

In Nairobi, Prime Minister Railda Odinga praised a win he said would "reignite faith worldwide, but especially in Africa, in the restorative capacity of democracy to deliver change and discard entrenched divisions."

President Mwai Kibaki offered his own congratulations in a statement to Obama. "Kenya, as always is proud of our association with you," he said.