

**WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: ADVANCING  
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND  
CIVIL SOCIETY**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

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# **WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: ADVANCING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

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**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 2010**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:07 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Russ Carnahan (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Good afternoon and welcome to the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight. We are here for a committee hearing today on the subject of Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society.

I am going to make a brief opening statement. Then we want to get right to our first panel. We do expect that we may be interrupted by votes some time in the next hour, so we will adjust accordingly and appreciate all of your patience.

In the last decade, we have seen a meaningful shift in momentum surrounding the need for gender equality and especially a growing call for women's voices in the decision-making process from the international arena to local communities around the world. Nonetheless, despite increased momentum around women's empowerment and political participation, there is still much more progress to be made.

Today, while women account for over half of the population, they occupy less than 19 percent of the seats in national parliaments, according to the IPU. In many countries steps have been taken to increase the number of women in government and political life, such as constitutional reform mandating quotas at the national level and the introduction of programs that help female candidates win election to political offices.

Critics claim this doesn't do enough to give women equal voice in decision-making and meaningfully institutionalized gender equality. It levels the playing field but doesn't guarantee greater policy attention or social change.

It is imperative to increase not just the numbers but also the effectiveness of women in political and civil leadership roles. This includes ensuring that women elected to offices and appointed to ministries have real power to enact legal reforms that address the

needs of women, children, and families, which are inseparable from the needs of the community as a whole. It also includes ensuring increased training and education for men and boys to work with women as equal partners and change negative sociocultural stereotypes.

Women face particular challenges, such as equal access to health care, education, economic opportunities, violence, and lack of legal rights in the judicial process. It has been amply documented that they are also disproportionately affected by problems such as climate change and conflict.

These unfortunate realities have put women to the test as keen innovators and leaders. Women bring an important perspective to policy and play instrumental roles in reconstruction and peace-building efforts. Moreover, equality of gender representation is shown to increase transparent and democratic governance. These are benefits the U.S. cannot afford to ignore in an increasingly challenging global environment.

Women in Northern Ireland were essential in initiating the peace process. Women in Rwanda rebuilt their country after the horrific genocide. They currently rank first in the percentage of women in Parliament. Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo are likewise being recognized for their central role in rebuilding, resettling, and opening dialogue.

Last week, national, provincial, and tribal Afghan leaders gathered in Kabul for a peace jirga to outline a path forward for lasting stability in Afghanistan. The rocket attacks launched by insurgent Taliban members at the jirga underscore the dire need for a resolution with the Taliban, especially one that protects and promotes the rights and well-being of Afghan women and girls who suffered disproportionately under the Taliban's brutal rule.

Of the approximately 1,500 Afghan leaders represented at the jirga, about 21 percent were women. This representation was hard won, yet not a single woman was among the five prominent speakers who addressed the jirga on its inaugural day, and all four members of the appointed leadership were men.

Commenting on the involvement of women in brokering negotiations with the Taliban, Samira Hamidi, Director of the Afghan Women's Network, asserted "we have not been approached by the government." Such realities lend legitimacy to claims that the level of women's participation was symbolic at best and certainly insufficient to present a voice for at least half of the Afghan population.

As Secretary Clinton and others have rightfully articulated on several occasions, women's rights are human rights, and women's progress is human progress. The world simply cannot achieve lasting peace and prosperity if half of the population is not allowed or not able to participate fully. For real advancement in women's rights, we must take a comprehensive approach that combats all obstacles—physical, economic, sociocultural, psychological and otherwise—to women's equality; and for this to work we need women at the helm of policy formulation and decision-making.

This administration has taken important steps to raise the profile of women's rights, including empowerment of women to engage politically in their societies. This is exemplified by the White House Council on Women and Girls and the Office of Global Women's

Issues created last year which work to advance anti-discrimination laws and policies that have enabled more women to participate in political, civil judicial life, on gender equality, and mainstreaming of women's issues in government.

Likewise, the U.N. has been a key force in pressing the international community to definitively adopt gender equality principles through various resolutions and now a new composite gender entity still in the final planning stages. In fact, this year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. The resolution stresses the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building and urges increased representation and participation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions that address conflict resolution management and prevention.

Debate over the adequacy of women's involvement at the Afghan peace jirga reiterates both the significance and relevance of gender equality in the peace process. There is a renewed push for gender equality at all levels of policy and development strategy, and it is the job of Congress to conduct oversight of the U.S. and U.N. programs to contribute meaningful progress on these issues. We must take a serious look at our own foreign assistance contribution and ensure maximum effectiveness and transparency.

Everyone benefits when women have equal rights and women have a voice in decision-making at all levels. When women are empowered to engage in the political process, governments are more effective and responsive to their people and nations are more stable, peaceful, and prosperous.

I look forward to hearing the testimony today both from the administration and our private witnesses on the status of their efforts to enhance women's political participation, their analysis of the best practices for increasing levels and effectiveness and how to maximize U.S. assistance.

I now want to recognize my colleague and ranking member, Representative Rohrabacher of California, for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Carnahan follows:]

Chairman Russ Carnahan  
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

Opening Statement

“Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society”

June 9, 2010

In the last decade, we have seen a meaningful shift in momentum surrounding the need for gender equality and especially a growing call for women’s voices in decision-making processes, from the international arena to local communities around the world. Nonetheless, despite increased momentum around women’s empowerment and political participation, there is still much more progress to be made.

Today, while women account for over half of the population, they occupy slightly less than 19% of seats in national parliaments on average worldwide. In many countries, steps have been taken to increase the number of women in government and political life, such as constitutional reform mandating quotas at the national level and the introduction of programs that help female candidates win election to political offices.

Critics claim this doesn’t do enough to give women equal voice in decision-making and meaningfully institutionalize gender equality. It levels the playing field, but doesn’t guarantee greater policy attention or social change. It is imperative to increase not just the numbers but also the effectiveness of women in political and civil leadership roles.

This includes ensuring that women elected to offices and appointed to ministries have real power to enact legal reforms that address the needs of women, children and families, which are inseparable from the needs of the community as a whole. It also includes ensuring increased training and education for men and boys to work with women as equal partners and change negative socio-cultural stereotypes.

Women face particular challenges such as equal access to health care, education and economic opportunities, violence, and lack of legal rights and judicial process. It’s been amply documented that they are also disproportionately affected by problems such as climate change and conflict.

These unfortunate realities have put women to the test as keen innovators and leaders. Women bring an important perspective to policy and play instrumental roles in reconstruction and peace-building efforts. Moreover, equality of gender representation is shown to increase transparent and democratic governance. These are benefits the U.S. cannot afford to ignore in an increasingly challenging global environment.



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Commenting on the involvement of women in brokering negotiations with the Taliban, Samira Hamidi, Director of the Afghan Women's Network, asserted "we have not been approached by the government." Such realities lend legitimacy to claims that the level of women's participation was symbolic at best and certainly insufficient to present a voice for at least half of Afghanistan's population.

As Secretary Clinton and others have rightfully articulated on several occasions, women's rights are human rights, and women's progress is human progress. The world simply cannot achieve lasting peace and prosperity if half of the population is not allowed or not able to participate fully. For real advancement in women's rights, we must take a comprehensive approach that combats all obstacles—physical, economic, socio-cultural, psychological and otherwise—to women's equality. And, for this to work we need women at the helm of policy formulation and decision-making.

This administration has taken important steps to raise the profile of women's rights, including empowerment of women to engage politically in their societies. This is exemplified in the White House Council on Women and Girls and the Office of Global Women's Issues, created last year, which work to advance anti-discrimination laws and policies that enable more women to participate in political and civic life, judicial training on gender equality, and the mainstreaming of women's issues in government.

Likewise, the United Nations has been a key force in pressing the international community to definitively adopt gender equality principles through various Resolutions and now a new composite gender entity still in the final planning stages. In fact, this year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of U.N. Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

The resolution stresses the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building and urges increased representation and participation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions that address conflict

resolution, management, and prevention. Debate over the adequacy of women's involvement at the Afghan peace jirga reiterates both the significance and the relevance of gender equality in peace processes.

There is a renewed push for gender equality at all levels of policy and development strategy, and it is the job of Congress to conduct oversight of United States Government and UN programs to contribute to meaningful progress on these issues. We must take a serious look at our own foreign assistance contributions to ensure maximum effectiveness and transparency.

Everyone benefits when women have equal rights and women have a voice in decision-making at all levels. When women are empowered to engage in the political process governments are more effective and responsive to their people and nations are more stable, peaceful, and prosperous. I look forward to hearing testimony today from both the Administration and the private witness panels on the status of their efforts to enhance women's political participation, their analysis of the best practices for increasing levels and efficacy of participation, and how to maximize U.S. assistance.

I will now recognize our Ranking Member, Representative Rohrabacher, for his opening statement.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman; and thank you for calling this very thoughtful hearing on an issue that needs to be discussed.

Treatment of women is an unmistakable indicator of success or failure, of potential danger or a chance for success in terms of America's commitment to freedom in the world.

Let me note that we have faced many challenges during my 20 years in Congress, and quite often taking a look at what impact these issues were having directly on women throughout the world was an indicator of the significance of those issues. For example, during the 1990s, when the Taliban emerged in Afghanistan, I will just say that there were several of us who were constantly sounding the alarm bell about the Taliban. And I am sorry to say that our administration at that time, the Clinton administration, had had some kind of an agreement with Saudi Arabia, perhaps the Pakistanis as well; and there was some kind of covert support going on for the Taliban.

Those of us who were concerned realized that the Taliban were the equivalent of the Nazis in terms of women's rights; and Carolyn Maloney, a Congresswoman from New York, and myself were very active in trying to raise that issue and specifically saying, look, this is what is happening. If this is the way the Taliban treats women, it is going to come back hard on the United States in many ways, not just to mention that our values are being undermined. And we didn't get very far.

I think that if we had gotten more attention, and we did—and Congresswoman Maloney actually went and tried to organize women's groups in the United States to help direct policy away from the Taliban. Had we been successful at that time, 9/11 might not well have happened.

But we do know that we cannot turn a blind eye to the type of monstrous discrimination and mistreatment of women throughout the world if we expect to move the world forward, and women need to play an active role in not only being the recipients of that but in charting the strategy of how to accomplish that goal.

I would just like to say that we still face many challenges today. In the Muslim world, it is still very, very clear that women are discriminated against and that the United States needs to play a positive role in that direction. But not only—the Muslim world is just the one that is the best example. Everybody likes to sort of pick on that because it is so blatant.

But we have that type of discrimination going on and the horrible mistreatment of women in Africa where we know that the outbreaks of rape are ignored by their governments and just the brutal mistreatment of women. Even in Hispanic cultures we find residues left over from the machismo concepts where women were not expected to play a role in decision-making. In Japan, that type of cultural tradition still has its impact.

So it is up to us and the United States. We are a microcosm of the good things and bad things about the whole world, so it is up to us to try to serve as an example and to try to lead the way.

And, as you said, Mr. Chairman, our commitment to human rights—there is no commitment to human rights unless a large portion of that commitment is to the rights of women. Because, last

time I noted, the human population was made up of at least half women, and so that counts.

So I am very pleased today that you have called this hearing and have drawn our attention to this and to have an honest discussion of this and see what we can do and how each of us can play a role and especially how the role of women in our own country can be expanded in order to meet these challenges to freedom elsewhere.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Next, I want to recognize for an opening statement Mr. Delahunt of Massachusetts, who chaired this committee when I was vice chair. He taught me everything I know.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And you have learned very well, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARNAHAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me congratulate you on this hearing. We had a similar hearing when I did hold the gavel. I don't think we can have too frequent hearings on this issue, because we have to constantly remind ourselves and the rest of the world the importance of the role of women in terms of not just our national agenda but in terms of our international agenda.

I know that you are aware and have supported the International Violence Against Women Act, which I am the lead sponsor on the Democratic side. We have made progress.

My friend from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, indicated that we have to lead. Well, we have to remind ourselves, too, that we have a way to go. But the impressive strides that we have made have really been brought about because of the vanguard of women, with support from men, to break through old concepts and to advance the role of women not just in society but specifically in terms of political leadership.

I came across a statistic that I guess I shouldn't be surprised at. But, as of mid-2009, women, even though they represent 50 percent of the world's population, occupy only 19 percent of seats in national governments worldwide. That is a figure that has to be improved.

And you know here in the United States Congress, what is the percentage of women that occupy congressional seats, whether they be in the House or in the Senate. So we all have work to do.

But we have I think extraordinary leadership with the Ambassador and the Secretary with whom I have worked in the past and look forward to working in the future.

And I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the former Ambassador to Austria who I consider a friend, Ambassador Hunt, who I know is part of the second panel. And, of course, the gentleman from NDI representing the rest of us here today.

But this is a hearing that is important and that serves to remind us of how far we have to go. You know, as Mr. Rohrabacher indicated, in some countries, women endure extreme levels of violence, including systematic rape in times of war and harmful cultural practices, such as genital mutilation and forced child marriage. I remember an article about a 13-year-old girl in Yemen who was married off to an older man and ultimately died from the injuries she sustained when he raped her. Last year, a 12-year-old child bride in the same country died while trying to give birth. You

know, these anecdotes and these tragic examples really should be the only motivation we need to continue to change the course of the role of women in global society.

And with that, I yield back.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I thank the gentleman.

I want to turn to our first panel, which we are thrilled to have with us today.

I want to start with Ambassador-at-Large Melanne Verveer. She is the director of the Department of State's Office on Global Women's Issues, where she coordinates foreign policy issues and activities relating to the political, economic, and social advancement of women around the world. That is a big charge.

Ms. VERVEER. Yes, it is.

Mr. CARNAHAN. She has mobilized support for women and girls' access to education and health care, to combat violence against women, and to ensure that women's rights are integrated with human rights in the development of U.S. foreign policy. She served as chair and co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership, an organization she co-founded which invests in women leaders and seeks to expand women's political participation.

Previously, she was chief assistant to then-First Lady Hillary Clinton in international activities to advance women's rights. She has also helped establish the President's Interagency Council on Women. She has a B.A. and M.A. from Georgetown University and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Women's Foreign Policy Group.

Also on our first panel is Assistant Secretary of State Esther Brimmer. She is Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, leading the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, which strives to advance U.S. interests through international organizations in areas including human rights, peacekeeping, food security, humanitarian relief, and climate change.

Previously, she was deputy director and director of research at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins, where she specialized in transatlantic political and security affairs. She has worked on E.U., Western Europe, U.N., and multilateral security issues and was a member of the U.S. delegation to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 2000.

From 1993 to 1995, she served as special assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, where she worked on U.N., peacekeeping, human rights, and political-military issues. She has a Ph.D. and master's in international relations from the University of Oxford and a B.A. in international relations from Pomona College.

We have two fantastic witnesses today. We are going to start with Ambassador Verveer. We are going to ask you all to stick to our 5 minutes; and, hopefully, we will have some time for questions and then be able to move on to our next panel.

Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MELANNE VERVEER, AM-  
BASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, OF-  
FICE OF GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
STATE**

Ambassador VERVEER. Thank you, Chairman Carnahan, for your leadership on this issue and for convening this important hearing on a topic that is often overlooked and to Congressmen Delahunt and Rohrabacher for your very supportive comments. And welcome, Congresswoman Woolsey.

I am honored to be here this afternoon to discuss the role of women in politics and civil society around the world and the United States' efforts to advance women's participation in the political lives of their societies and ask this my full testimony be placed in the record.

While there have been positive developments in women's political participation, women are still vastly underrepresented globally. While women are half the population, as you said, Representative Rohrabacher, and I can't quarrel with you on that one, they certainly still hold less than one-fifth of the positions in national governments. They are still significantly outnumbered in the chambers of parliaments, in provincial councils, and they are often missing from the negotiating tables where conflicts are to be resolved. All too often, important decisions that affect women and their families and their societies are made without their having even a voice.

When women are discriminated against in the political arena, their experiences, talents, and perspectives are shut out of the policy decisions of our democracies and certainly for our prospects for a better world. Moreover, according to the World Bank, higher rates of female participation in government are associated with lower levels of corruption on the country level.

I have been fortunate to see firsthand how women are making a difference in the political process at the local and national levels. Women's political participation, role in civil society, and government decision-making are key ingredients to building democracy. Democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms. It is a simple fact that no country can progress or prosper if half its citizens are left behind, and progress for women and progress for democracy go hand in hand.

Today, investing in women is at the very heart of U.S. foreign policy. We know that women's participation is essential to addressing virtually every challenge we face as nations and as a community of nations.

We are investing in policies and programs to grow women's leadership capacity in all areas of political participation, decision-making, and civil society. Women must not only be more engaged in governance but they must also be at the table in peace making, peace negotiations, and work on post-conflict reconstruction.

We know that without the voices of women contributing to the delicate process of conflict resolution, peace is less likely to take root. U.S. support for quotas for women in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were chiseled into their constitutions, helped pave the way for women to enter politics and participate in policymaking in those countries at a critical time. The gains that have been made are pre-

carious and must be nurtured and consolidated or women will risk seeing them erased or eroded.

The United States has been extensively engaged in supporting women's political participation in Afghanistan, which my testimony details, and we are particularly focused on the role of women on the reintegration and reconciliation process as it goes forward. And as you have pointed out, Mr. Chairman, in the recently concluded peace jirga, the United States was involved in supporting the participation of women, supporting female jirga participants with the training and skills development necessary to assist them to be effective in their participation as well. But, as you also pointed out, the outcome has been less than satisfactory.

As with Afghanistan, we remain deeply committed in Iraq as well.

Women have key needs that we can go on to discuss in civil society, in governing, and in actively engaging the political process. My testimony details a number of programs our Government is engaged in from the Middle East to North Africa to USAID programs and beyond.

I want to acknowledge the panel that follows me. The NDI, IRI, and the Institute for Inclusive Security have been important partners in this common cause; and we have worked with them extensively.

Women everywhere continue to face challenges and barriers to productive participation and political engagement in government. In countries marred in conflict or cursed with poverty, the obstacles to overcome are even greater. Nevertheless, progress is occurring, although I believe at a pace that is far too slow; and, as a result, we are not adequately tapping one of the greatest resources we have for far more democratic, far more responsive, and far less corrupt governance around the world.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Verveer follows:]

**Testimony before the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and  
Oversight  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs**

**Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women  
in Politics and Civil Society**

**Melanne Vermeer, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC  
June 9, 2010**

Thank you. I am honored to be here this afternoon to discuss the role of women in politics and civil society around the world and U.S. government efforts to advance women's participation in the political lives of their societies. I'd like to extend my thanks to Chairman Carnahan for convening today's hearing to highlight this important issue, which too often goes overlooked. I'd also like to thank Chairman Berman and Congressman Delahunt for your leadership on behalf of women's empowerment. We appreciate the interest the Committee is taking in our work in support of the advancement of women around the world.

I welcome the opportunity to address the topic of women's leadership at today's hearing, as this is a fitting time to take stock of the status of women globally and to recommit ourselves to the cause of women's progress. This year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women that took place in Beijing, where a Platform for Action was adopted by the United States and 188 other countries. This ambitious blueprint for women's global progress served as a call to action on multiple fronts, including advancing women's access to education and health, the right to be free from violence, and the opportunity to participate fully in the economic and political lives of their country. According to the Platform for Action: "Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of the perspective of women at all levels of decision-making, the goals for equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved."

It is also 10 years since the UN Security Council adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, recognizing the important role that women must play in conflict resolution, peace negotiations, and peace building. This year also marks 10 years since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to eradicate poverty around the world. The third MDG -- gender equality-- is integral to the realization of all of the MDGs. Women's political participation is a crucial indicator of women's equality. In sum, these anniversaries provide an added impetus to measure women's progress in many areas, including political participation.

Around the world, women are entering the field of politics and government in growing numbers, yet their gains have been uneven and their leadership often goes unrecognized. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, women hold almost 20 percent of seats in parliaments worldwide, and serve as heads of government in over 20 countries, including in Costa Rica, Bangladesh, Liberia, and Lithuania. While these are positive developments, women are still vastly underrepresented globally. Women are half the population yet they hold less than one-fifth of positions in national governments. They are still significantly outnumbered in the chambers of parliaments, in provincial councils, and they are often missing from negotiating tables where conflicts are to be resolved. All too often, important decisions that affect women, their families, and their societies are made without their having a voice.



When women are discriminated against in the political arena, their experiences, talents, and perspectives are shut out of the policy decisions of our democracies, and prospects for a better world are short-changed. Moreover, according to the World Bank, at the country level, higher rates of female participation in government are associated with lower levels of corruption.

I have been fortunate to see firsthand how women are making a difference in the political process at the local level.

Women in Kuwait struggled for many years to get the right to vote and to stand for office. Several years ago, a Kuwaiti activist told me, "We don't want a skim milk democracy; we want a full cream democracy." The women of Kuwait finally achieved their goal in 2005, but it wasn't until last year that they finally took their place in parliament when four women were elected. Already, they are making their voices heard for the betterment of their country.

In India, approximately 40 percent of all elected representatives in villages and municipal councils are women. More than a million women across the subcontinent have been elected at the local or *panchayat* level, the highest such female representation for any democracy.

The success of India's *panchayats* has often been referred to as a silent revolution within the democratic decentralization process. According to many studies, women-led *panchayats* have provided more public services, from building wells to roads, and they acquired more public funding for local projects. These *panchayats* have improved attention to service delivery such as the water supply, sanitation, and other issues including education. The large presence of women in local governments has brought women considerable gains—both social as well psychological—including enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, which has led to a greater role for women in their households and in the community.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, women who have been committed to building their nascent democracies, exercising their right to vote and to run for office, often do so at great personal peril. Last year, I traveled to a remote province in Afghanistan prior to the elections there. More women were running for the provincial council than the quota allocated. They told me that, despite the threats to their security, they were willing to make the sacrifice to run for office because it is their hope that they can help make life better in their communities.

Women are a vibrant force in civil society, from Iran to Kenya to Chile—and every place else, as they work to advance social, economic, and democratic progress, safeguard human rights, and promote peace. Women in these countries, and the world over, are strengthening democracies and creating more equitable societies.

#### **U.S. Government Efforts to Promote Women and Democracy**

Women's political participation, role in civil society, and government decision-making are key ingredients to building democracy. Democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms. It is a simple fact that no country can progress or prosper if half its citizens are left behind. Progress for women and progress for democracy go hand in hand.

Today, investing in women is at the very heart of U.S. foreign policy. We know that women's participation is essential to addressing virtually every challenge we face as nations and as a community of nations. We are implementing policies and programs to grow women's leadership capacity in all areas of political participation and decision-making. Women are also at the center of the U.S. Government's development work, including the Food Security Initiative and the Global Health Initiative. Women are also integral to our national security. The 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy Report that the Obama

Administration just released notes that “experience shows that countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunity.”

We are investing in policies and programs to grow women’s leadership capacity in all areas of political participation, decision-making, and civil society.

Women must not only be more engaged in governance, they must also be at the table in peacemaking, peace negotiations, and work on post-conflict reconstruction. We know that without the voices of women contributing to the delicate process of conflict resolution, peace is less likely to take root. We have seen, from Guatemala to Northern Ireland to Liberia to Afghanistan, that women can be powerful peacemakers, willing to reach across deep divides to find common ground.

### **Women, Peace, and Security**

While my distinguished colleague Assistant Secretary Brimmer will be going into more depth about UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in her remarks, I just want to underscore the significance it represents in terms of the role of women’s participation in peace and security and our work in critical areas, including in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The Security Council adopted this resolution in order to increase women’s representation at all levels of conflict resolution. As we approach the tenth anniversary of its adoption, it is especially imperative that the international community accelerate its implementation. In areas of post-conflict and transition, it also means that we need to ensure that women gain the skills and access to opportunities to participate in peace processes, political transitions, new constitutions, and the electoral process. U.S. support for quotas for women in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were chiseled into their constitutions, helped pave the way for women to enter politics and participate in policymaking in these two countries at critical times. The gains that have been made are precarious, and must be nurtured and consolidated or women will risk seeing them erased or eroded.

### **Afghanistan**

As we all know, women in Afghanistan suffered the worst kind of oppression under the Taliban. They were denied the right to live as human beings—deprived of access to education, health services, and participation in employment and public life. The Bonn Agreement of December 2001 required Afghanistan to draft and adopt a new constitution. A 502-member delegation of the Constitutional Loya Jirga convened in Kabul in December 2003 to consider the proposed Afghan Constitution. After much debate, they adopted a strong constitution with human rights provisions, including the protections for the rights of women and the establishment of a 25 percent quota for female representation in Parliament. Quotas and reservations are often the only way that women are able to break into the political process. In countries with 30 percent female representation in parliament, quotas have been instrumental. Between 2001 and 2005, Afghan women entered political life at the most senior levels: There were three female ministers in national government, and there was a substantial increase in women striving to assert their rights and seeking legal support. However, since that time, deteriorating security conditions have made the prospect of women’s participation in public life more difficult, and women politicians are often threatened and prevented from engaging in the political arena.

Yet, Afghan women continue to persevere against all obstacles and barriers to progress. They refuse to be victims. Visiting Afghanistan, I saw firsthand how many capable Afghan women risk their lives every day, working alongside men to create a better future for their country.

In recent months, the role of Afghan women in reintegration and reconciliation has been of paramount consideration. At the London Conference on January 28, Secretary Clinton made clear that reintegration of former Taliban can only take place if they reject violence, renounce al-Qaida, and accept all the tenets

of the Afghan constitution, including its commitment to protect women's rights. Afghan women want a process that promotes peace in their country, but they also want to have a voice about the future of their country. The United States has advocated for at least 20 percent women at the Consultative Peace Jirga in Kabul just concluded, as well as follow-on shuras and consultations at all levels. The United States has provided key support for Provincial Council candidates, parliamentarians, and civil society representatives. During my trip to Afghanistan last summer, I announced the Ambassador's Small Grants Fund, which aims to strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of Afghan women-led NGOs. Through this fund, the United States was able to provide support for a pre- Peace Jirga conference for all female Jirga participants, and to provide them with the training and skills necessary to assist them serve as key participants and facilitators in the Consultative Peace Jirga. We are supporting political development programs to train female Parliamentarians and their staffs. We are funding local civil society organizations providing civic education to increase the participation of women and youth in the electoral process. Under the USAID Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society, we are also committed to allocating at least fifty percent of the grants to female-led or female-focused organizations. The challenges remain significant, but our commitment to the women of Afghanistan must not wane.

### Iraq

As with Afghanistan, the United States remains deeply committed to empowering Iraqi women in all sectors of Iraqi society. Despite uncertain security, women have bravely sought a leading role in Iraq's political life. Based on the Constitutional quota for women's political participation, women hold 25 percent of the seats both in provincial councils and in the national Council of Representatives (CoR). In March, only a limited number of women received enough votes in their own right to be elected to the CoR. In other cases, women had to be named to the CoR over male candidates who received more votes. While women for the most part have not played a leading role in the CoR, we believe that the 25 percent quota remains absolutely essential if there is any possibility for Iraqi women to play a leading role in the political system.

The U.S. Government has begun a concerted effort to reach out to women in the provincial councils to help to build their capacity and assist them in networking. The potential for strong leadership of women at the provincial and local levels needs to be nurtured.

Since 2004, the Department of State's Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative (IWDI) has worked through U.S. non-governmental organization partners on the ground in Iraq to build the capacity of Iraqi women. To date, programs under this initiative have trained nearly 10,000 Iraqi women in several key skill areas in support of women's leadership, coalition-building, negotiation, and constitutional rights. In 2008, we expanded our efforts to include areas such as women in justice, women and peace building, and increasing women's political participation, advocacy and leadership.

For example, one of the IWDI programs provides strategic planning training and consultation to existing regional multi-party women's caucuses on how to monitor legislation, identify opportunities to advocate for women's issues, and develop a strategic plan to continue these activities in the future. Through these activities, the North Multi-party Women's Caucus succeeded in their one-year campaign to overturn a passport application procedure that contradicted the constitutional requirement mandating equal travel rights to all citizens. As of May 2009, Iraqi women over 18 years of age can obtain passports without restrictions.

Under one of these programs, in March of this year, we sponsored a provincial council leaders conference which convened in Washington, D.C. for approximately 15 Iraqi women. They represented eight diverse provinces from all regions. Out of their diversity, one common element gradually emerged over the course of the two weeks: they were all determined, dedicated, strong and resilient leaders, who came to

learn from their meetings in the United States, and to learn from each other. One woman who'd become the unofficial spokesperson for the group put it simply, "We all came here leaving our home in Iraq, but are returning with 14 new homes."

Secretary of State Clinton met with the delegation to underscore the important role of women in creating strong societies that are peaceful, stable, and tolerant, and to demonstrate our commitment to building a long-term, multi-dimensional relationship between our two nations.

It is a critical time for women in Iraq. Their fragile gains must be solidified, and we must continue to support civil society to address the issues that remain, including violence against women, healthcare, income-generating opportunities, education and support in rural areas. Women have expressed concern that the gains they have made will be pushed back as U.S. forces are drawn down.

#### **Capacity Building and Training for Women Leaders**

I have learned from the numerous women I have met around the globe that one of the key needs women have is for leadership training programs that enable them to be more effective candidates from national to local levels of elected office. Moreover, because of obstacles to political power, women need stronger and broader networks and alliances to enhance the kind of participation that will enable them to surmount barriers.

Civil society activists require capacity building support for the range of needs that they confront. One of the key ways that women have gained access to power is through their engagement with NGOs. Many have developed the leadership skills and relevant experience to run for office through their engagement with national and international NGOs. Another area of need is capacity building for governance; it is not enough to be elected or to be appointed to government service without the ability to exercise that responsibility effectively. To address this need, the United States has invested in programs to strengthen the skills and leadership abilities of female parliamentarians and other elected officials.

Through our efforts to ensure that women are integral to all aspects of U.S. foreign policy, we have identified opportunities and created synergies to strengthen their ability to tap into opportunities for political empowerment, participation, and decision-making. Many U.S. training, exchanges, and small grants programs are specifically aimed at creating targets of opportunity for women's political participation and leadership development. The State Department regularly brings groups of women from government and civil society to the United States under the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs (ECA) International Visitors Leadership Programs, which are aimed at strengthening participants' understanding of the United States and to grow alliances with American officials and NGO leaders. In fact, a group of 20 women will be traveling to the United States mid-June to take part in a multi-city program under the theme of the "Role of NGOs in Global Women's Issues." These types of exchanges can have a powerful impact on the lives of women. A young woman from Matagalpa, Nicaragua who participated in a program focused on civil society last year told us that the experience changed her life and also motivated her to do more to help her community, in spite of the difficult situation in her country.

The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) currently supports ten programs totaling approximately \$7 million to promote women's political and economic empowerment, participation, and decision-making in the Near East, South and Central Asia, and Africa. From linking civil society and media representatives in Tunisia and collaborating on promoting women's involvement in Tunisian politics; to building networks among female NGOs and male counterparts in Bahrain in order promote women's empowerment in unions and the workplace; to empowering internally displaced women and girls in Sudan to participate more fully in the economic, civic, and educational arenas—these initiatives are expanding the realm of opportunities for women in diverse parts of the globe.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, is committed to empowering women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Through implementation of practical programs in each of the 17 countries and territories in the region, MEPI advances the full range of women's legal, political, economic and human rights. More than half of MEPI's \$584 million total funding is devoted to projects that significantly focus on women's empowerment, and its activities have continued to focus heavily on supporting women and building their capacity to advocate for positive change in these countries. Women are on the frontlines of moderation and they are often the strongest advocates for positive political, economic, educational, legal, and social reform, and MEPI's assistance makes them more effective agents of change. Specifically, MEPI's work has helped women's rights leaders and organizations in the broader Middle East region to become more vocal and better organized, enhancing the ability of these individuals and groups to advocate for their causes. For example, in Kuwait, MEPI programs have focused on empowering women to organize and run effective campaigns at the local and national levels. In 2009, four of the women who received training through MEPI programs were the first women ever elected to the Kuwaiti Parliament.

Consistent with USAID's recently strengthened requirements mandating gender analysis to underlie all strategies and programs in every sector, USAID carries out activities to help build capacity and provide technical assistance to empower women for democratic action in their societies. From the Burundi Policy Reform project, which trained 200 women leaders, including parliamentarians and women from civil society, in conflict resolution and anti-corruption skills, to the Women's Rural Development Societies representing 20,000 women in the conflict zone of Sri Lanka, the United States is making the integration of women, development, and political participation a priority. In addition to women-focused programming, USAID has mainstreamed gender analysis and integration into its \$26 million Reconciliation Program worldwide, demonstrating that security issues are also women's issues. USAID has also launched a new research program on gender and conflict, examining the relationship between gender inequality and the risk of violent conflict around the world.

We are also working with our democratic partners around the globe to further progress on women's political participation. As co-chair of the Community of Democracies' newly launched Working Group on Gender Equality, the United States is taking a leadership role in promoting gender equality and governance. Under the auspices of the working group, the U.S. is developing a women's leadership and entrepreneurship training conference for women from the Caucuses at the end of this year, gathering national best practices and laws on women's rights; and supporting additional training opportunities for female political and economic leaders via exchange programs and on-the-ground training, in conjunction with civil society and private sector partners.

The State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues has just launched the first small grants initiative to fund projects that promote women's political, economic, and social advancement in developing countries. The overwhelming response to our call for proposals is perhaps a barometer of the critical need that exists among female citizen activists in developing countries for this type of funding. The projects, comprised of grants under \$100,000 and managed through our Embassies worldwide—from Ankara to Ulaanbaatar—will help advance self-reliance and foster development for non-governmental organizations, schools, community groups, and local associations to advance women's political, economic and social rights. Projects will support efforts ranging from training women candidates to run for office to helping women take the lead in preserving and strengthening democratic spaces and institutions, raising political awareness, and fostering civic activism. Programs funded will train rural women to exercise their rights, and promote emerging women leaders to improve access to justice and the rule of law. For example, a small grant to an NGO in Benin will be used to train women candidates in communications and management skills and will raise awareness of political parties, community leaders, and the public about the importance of having more women leaders in parliament. We are confident that

these small grants—which are aimed at the local and community level, will both empower the female beneficiaries and produce a multiplier effect among civil society, government, and business communities.

**Conclusion**

Women everywhere continue to face challenges and barriers to productive participation in political engagement and government. In countries mired in conflict or cursed with poverty, the obstacles to overcome are even greater. Nevertheless, progress is occurring, but at a pace that is still too slow.

The State Department and USAID are deeply committed to advancing women's opportunities for meaningful participation in politics and civil society. We embrace the opportunity to continue to promote women's empowerment and participation at all levels of society. Moving forward, we will build on the strengths of our accomplishments, including those in Afghanistan and Iraq; continue to fund projects to enhance women's political and democratic participation; leverage public private partnerships to broaden opportunities for women; and increase our work with the international community to ensure that women are included in peace and security negotiations. We will work in partnership with our Embassies overseas to identify and support emerging women leaders and democracy defenders. This task requires collaboration and leadership at all levels of the U.S. government and with the international community. In this way, more women will be able to take part in the democratic process and serve as examples for future generations. With the support of Congress, we look forward to continuing this collective endeavor. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Chairman Camahan, we are deeply grateful for your support and that of your colleagues, to enable us to achieve our mission.

Thank you.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you very much.  
And now let's turn to Dr. Brimmer.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ESTHER BRIMMER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Ms. BRIMMER. Chairman Carnahan, Ranking Member Rohrabacher, thank you for the invitation to testify today.

I would like to submit my full testimony for the record and this afternoon will just provide a brief summary of my remarks for the subcommittee.

It is an honor to appear before this subcommittee, and I am very pleased to be here with my colleague, Ambassador Verveer.

The empowerment of women and gender equality globally is a top priority for the United States. Despite some progress over the past several decades, for far too many women and girls, for them, opportunity remains out of reach. Women still are the majority of the world's poor, the uneducated, the unhealthy, and the unfed.

We believe to effectively address the empowerment of women and girls globally requires the cooperative efforts of the entire world. International organizations are key partners in this effort, serving to build widespread international support for integrated approaches to address challenges facing women and girls and setting norms and standards to help states meet them.

The United States is working with the United Nations and the U.N. system, along with international partners, to address key issues impacting women and girls worldwide, including violence, political and economic empowerment, increasing access to health care to address maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS, and improving access to quality education.

Given the multifaceted dimensions of these issues and their global scope, it is imperative that the United States and the international community strengthen the institutions and multilateral tools available to address them. The U.S. strongly supports consolidating the U.N.'s four existing gender-related institutions into a single women's agency, headed by an individual of under secretary general rank.

Some of the primary goals for the new entity are to more effectively mainstream gender concerns, promote women's empowerment throughout the U.N. system, and to enhance the U.N.'s effectiveness and ability to better address issues that impact women on the ground globally. We envision that the new women's agency, among other things, would have expertise and perform analysis and research on issues such as gender equality, political participation, economic opportunities, violence, health, disabilities, gender aspects of peace negotiations, and discrimination against women.

The Obama administration is also working multilaterally to address the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, the role of women in peacekeeping conflict resolution and peace building, and combating sexual and gender-based violence. We are committed to the implementation of a series of U.N. Security Council resolutions on these topics, including those we have taken leadership on, such as Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889.

The United States advances a zero tolerance policy for sexual violence against women and children in conflict. Last September, Secretary Clinton chaired a Security Council session and helped lead the unanimous adoption of the U.S.-sponsored Resolution 1888 to strengthen protection of civilians from sexual violence in conflict. The action-oriented resolution was a major achievement for this administration and, more importantly, for vulnerable women and girls globally, because it established a Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, a position now held by Margot Wallstrom, and also established a team of experts to be deployed in conflict zones in order to strengthen the rule of law. We are pleased that Special Representative Wallstrom has begun her work by dealing immediately with the worsening situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This fall, we will mark the tenth anniversary of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution was first adopted by the Security Council to focus on women's peace and security and address the impact of conflict on women and the contributions women can make to solidifying peace.

Last October, through the unanimous adoption of Resolution 1885, the Security Council reaffirmed Resolution 1325; and as we approach the 10-year anniversary we will continue to work toward Resolution 1325's implementation.

Mr. Chairman, before closing, I will briefly touch on several related issues.

I would like to reiterate the administration's strong support for the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Secretary Clinton and members of the administration have said that CEDAW is a priority. We also support working on the empowerment of women as part of dealing with the Millennium Development Goals and supporting work with the U.N. agencies to promote education. And, finally, we were very active at this March's session on the Commission on the Status of Women, and we sponsored resolutions on eliminating maternal mortality and morbidity through the empowerment of women. We have also cosponsored resolutions on women's economic empowerment and the gender composite entity that were adopted by consensus.

Mr. Chairman, I will end there, but thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue; and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Brimmer follows:]



**Testimony of Dr. Esther Brimmer  
Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs  
Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women  
in Politics and Civil Society  
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on  
International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight  
June 9, 2010**

Chairman Carnahan, Ranking Member Rohrabacher, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify.

It is an honor for me to appear before this subcommittee which has demonstrated great leadership in supporting the empowerment of women globally. Your attention and that of Congress to this important issue which impacts billions of women, girls and families around the world is welcome and deeply appreciated.

I am also pleased to be here today with my distinguished colleague Melanne Vermeer, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. The President's decision to create a position of Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues is unprecedented, and reflects the elevated importance of empowering women globally to the President and this entire Administration

In March at the UN Commission on the Status of Woman Secretary Clinton said, "The status of the world's women is not only a matter of morality and justice. It is also a political, economic, and social imperative. Put simply, the world cannot make lasting progress if women and girls in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are denied their rights and left behind."

The Obama Administration truly believes that an investment in women and children is an investment in our own security, prosperity and future and that of the planet. We know that when women and girls have quality healthcare, education and economic opportunities, their families flourish and the communities and nations in which they live advance in terms of development and security.

If you think about it -- what happens to women and girls truly impacts the security of the United States and the international community. We know this because we see that the suffering and denial of the rights of women and the instability of nations go hand in hand.

The global empowerment of women and girls will not happen overnight. It will require persistence and a multilateral commitment to realize change on a global scale. Toward that end, the Obama Administration is firmly committed to working with the United Nations and international partners, including non-governmental organizations, to advance women's rights, freedoms, and opportunities.

**Improving the Lives of Women and Girls Multilaterally and through the UN:**

Over the past sixty years, we have seen visible progress in the empowerment of women globally, from the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco in 1945 which refers to "the equal rights of men and women", to the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946, to the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome document adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Now in 2010 on the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Beijing, we dedicate ourselves to the unfinished agenda of Beijing and to continued efforts at the United Nations and multilaterally with regional, national, and local leaders to realize gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Today, the Obama Administration is working with the United Nations and in the UN system to address violence against women and girls, in particular sexual violence; promote women's political and economic empowerment; increase women's access to healthcare to address maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS, among other health concerns; and improve access to quality education.

#### **Gender Architecture at the UN**

The United States strongly supports strengthening the institutional arrangements at the UN for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Toward that end, we believe that consolidating the UN's existing gender-related institutions, into a single women's agency, is vital for women around the world and the effectiveness of the United Nations.

Currently the UN has four separate organizations, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the UN Development Fund for Women, and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women that focus on aspects of women's issues throughout the UN system.

Creation of the new consolidated entity will lead to better coordination between the UN's normative or standard setting functions, including those performed by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and its operational activities.

Under the leadership of Secretary Clinton, Ambassador Rice, Ambassador Verveer and myself, the United States is hard at work with international partners to reform the UN's gender related institutions. These efforts have resulted in consensus adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 63/311 in September 2009. The resolution calls for consolidating the four existing UN gender-related bodies into a gender composite entity headed by an Under Secretary-General, a status higher than current configurations. We believe this move will elevate women's issues to their rightful status.

The U.S. is taking a leading role in the next stage of the reform efforts. Member states are in the process of negotiating another General Assembly resolution, with the aim of completing negotiations by late June that would establish the entity and help define its parameters, including its mandates, governance structure, reporting lines, and outlines of its staffing and funding. The U.S. has been working closely with Estonia and Tunisia, the co-Chairs of the reform exercise, as well as with the many nations across regional groups who share our desire for continuing the momentum to set up the entity.

The United States, along with international partners, envisions that the new gender entity would have expertise and perform analysis and research on issues impacting women and girls such as gender equality, political participation, economic opportunities, violence, health, disabilities, gender aspects of peace negotiations, and discrimination against women.

The United States along with UN Member states believe that the new gender entity should emphasize field work in order to bring about concrete improvements to the lives of women and girls. Examples of valuable work in the field include providing women with political, legal and jobs skills training; setting up centers to help rape or domestic violence victims or to help women entrepreneurs; setting up or making improvements to schools for girls; and providing help to women who depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

One of the primary goals for the new entity is to mainstream gender concerns and promote women's empowerment throughout the UN system. The United States feels strongly that even after the entity is set up; we must ensure that all United Nations bodies will remain responsible for considering how their policies and programs will affect both women and men.

#### **Millennium Development Goal on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

The United States is also playing a leading role, along with international partners, in supporting empowerment of women, within the UN system, through the realization of the Millennium Development Goal to promote gender equality and empower women. In fact, during the March Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) session, a resolution on women's economic empowerment was adopted that recognizes that investing in women and girls contributes to productivity and sustained economic growth, thereby contributing to the achievement of the MDGs as a whole.

We believe that the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality is a key MDG, in that all of the other MDG's cannot be achieved without it. For example, four of the MDG targets -- on achieving full and productive employment, ensuring universal primary education, eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education, and reducing maternal mortality -- relate explicitly to women and girls.

In March Secretary Clinton said, "That goal (on gender equality) is essential for the realization of every other goal. Today, this principle is also at the heart of the foreign policy of the United States. We believe that women are critical to solving virtually every challenge we face as individual nations and as a community of nations."

As an illustration of how seriously the United States takes the Millennium Development Goal on women, the United States has stepped up to be one of only a dozen countries making a National Voluntary Presentation at the Annual Ministerial Review portion of the UN's Economic and Social Council session later this month on our activities related to achieving the MDG on gender equality. Ambassador Verveer will be making that presentation.

#### **Women, Peace and Security**

The Obama Administration continues to work multilaterally to address some of the most vexing challenges facing women and girls, including the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, the role of women in peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building and combating sexual and gender-based violence. We are committed to the implementation of the series of UN Security Council resolutions on these topics, including those we have taken leadership on, such as Resolutions 1325 and 1888. Resolution 1888 was a major achievement for the Administration, because it establishes a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict as well as a team of experts to support accountability mechanisms targeting impunity for rape as a weapon of war.

This fall we will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution was the first adopted by the Security Council to focus on women, peace and security and address the impact of conflict on women and the contributions women can make to solidifying peace.

Last October, through the unanimous adoption of resolution 1889, the Security Council reaffirmed its landmark 2000 resolution 1325 on women and peace and security, and urging Member States, United Nations bodies, and civil society to ensure that woman's protection and empowerment was taken into account during post-conflict needs assessment and planning, and factored into subsequent funding and programming.

As we approach the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325, the Security Council and the UN and Member States must continue to call for, and contribute to, 1325's implementation. The United States and international community have made it clear that we must no longer delay in effectively addressing the need to increase women's leadership and participation in peace processes. The U.S. is vigorously supporting efforts to implement resolution 1325 at the United Nations in New York.

With this effort in mind, I'd like to make the following points.

First, on April 27 the U.S. and Security Council members agreed to "take action" in October of this year on a revised set of indicators to track progress of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Our hope is that the Security Council can support a final set of indicators in October 2010 enabling the UN to embark on its initial phase of their implementation. The United Nations-drafted indicators are being developed to measure global implementation of the provisions of 1325.

The proposed indicators included in the latest Secretary General report represent an important step towards implementation of UNSC 1325. The U.S. will continue to consult with the UN and other delegations on the further conceptual and technical development of these indicators, to ensure their feasibility and applicability.

The U.S. will participate in an October UN Security Council Ministerial expected to be chaired by Uganda to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, as well as other events on the margins of the UN Security Council session.

The United States is also taking the lead in urging the UN to address the serious gaps that exist in monitoring and reporting of women, peace and security issues. With improved monitoring and reporting, the Security Council and the international community will be better positioned to develop effective strategy, policy, training, and to urge accountability when necessary.

Second, we believe that coordination between the UN office charged with overseeing efforts to implement Resolution 1325 and the office of the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict will be important to address overlapping issues and avoid duplicative efforts. While Resolution 1325's primary focus is on empowerment and increasing women's leadership and participation in peace processes, we must also be mindful of the dire need to in parallel ensure the physical security of women and girls – an area where UN missions can also play an important role.

The United States is also playing a part in fulfilling Resolution 1325's goal to have more women serve as peacekeepers. The Department of Defense recently deployed a team of female Marines to Afghanistan to work on issues related to the impact of the conflict there on women. The U.S. sponsored and is working to pass a resolution in the Human Rights Council condemning attacks on schools for girls in Afghanistan.” The United States has also taken steps to ensure that its \$26 million global reconciliation program, which supports conflict mitigation through people-to-people approaches, promotes the substantive participation of women.

#### **Combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Implementation of UNSCR 1888**

One of the most serious challenges facing the international community is sexual violence perpetrated against women and children.

As we know, abundant information exists about violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations, including the widespread and systematic use of rape. Yet international efforts to address such violence are often hindered by lack of political will and by assertions that the information is insufficient to warrant action.

To address this problem, the United States initiated resolutions in both the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council that call upon States to take specific actions towards ending the use of sexual violence in armed conflict. We believe that effective implementation of these resolutions is crucial.

The U.S. has advocated a zero tolerance policy and has joined with the UN and international community in sending an unequivocal message that sexual violence against women and children in conflict must be stopped.

Last September, Secretary Clinton chaired a Security Council session and helped lead the unanimous adoption of a US-sponsored Security Council Resolution 1888 to strengthen protection of civilians from sexual violence in conflict, building upon US-sponsored Security Council Resolution 1820 that categorized sexual violence as a weapon of war for the first time.

The resolution championed practical ways to counter one of the most abhorrent features of modern war: the use of rape and sexual violence, as a weapon, against women and children. Further, it directed the Secretary-General to appoint the first-ever Special Representative to prevent sexual and gender based violence in conflict situations.

Since UN Security Council Resolution 1888 was passed last September, there has been momentum toward protecting women, girls and other civilians. However we know that we must do more to further advance international efforts to prevent sexual and gender based violence. As Secretary Clinton has said, sexual violence harms not merely single individuals, families, and villages; it also “shreds the fabric that weaves us together as human beings.”

We will continue to work hand in hand with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallstrom, to lead and coordinate efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence against women and children.

We are pleased that Special Representative Wallstrom has begun her work by dealing immediately with the worsening situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At the same time, more work needs to be done on developing frameworks and initiatives for addressing sexual violence issues overall, while attention must be focused on specific countries and regions where atrocities are occurring even as we speak, and where victims of sexual violence are not receiving the critical support and assistance that they need.

As we recognize the progress being made, we are also aware of the long and difficult road ahead, including endemic sexual and gender-based violence, developing links between our current efforts and successful strategies for United Nation peacekeeping missions, such as those in DRC and Liberia, building an enduring team of experts who can work throughout the UN system, and ending sexual and gender-based violence that continues after conflicts subside.

### **Education**

We believe that investing in the education of women and girls is not only the “right thing to do; but it is the smart thing to do.” That is why we are committed to working with the United Nations and the international community in the lead up to 2015 to promote gender equality and the global empowerment of women and the education-related Millennium Development Goals.

The United States is working with key international partners, including the United Nations, and the UN specialized agencies, such as UNESCO and UNICEF, to expand girls’ and women’s access to education in all forms and at all levels.

As we seek to empower women through education, we must think of new ways to reach women and make education and skills training relevant to their lives. Some progress has been made with regard to enrollment in primary school for girls.

According to the 2010 Education For All Global Monitoring Report, the share of out-of-school girls has declined from 58% to 54% and the gender gap is narrowing in primary education in many countries. However we know that one of the challenges is not only enrollment in basic education, but also getting girls to stay in school and creating an environment where they can successfully transfer from primary to secondary school and consider post-secondary options.

We know that literacy is a critical first step for acquiring the skills needed to participate fully in one's society. Of the 759 million adults who lack basic literacy skills around the world, two-thirds are women. UN organizations are helping governments, teachers, funders, NGOs, and students build capacity and address challenges to reaching these adults that lack basic literacy skills. Since rejoining UNESCO, one of our top priorities has been promoting literacy, with a particular focus on girls and women.

To that end, quality providers of informal/non-formal education have played and will continue to play a key role in decreasing the global adult literacy rate. We know that informal education can be more flexible and help reach adults who have long ago dropped out of the formal schools system or who were systematically denied access to school.

As the largest government donor to UNICEF, the United States is supporting efforts to support safe schools, quality education for each and every girl and boy. For example, UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools model which has been implemented in more than 50 countries, utilizes curricula that are specifically inclusive and gender-sensitive.

Where barriers to gender equity exist, UNICEF works with governments to develop alternative education methods that promote gender inclusiveness in education. In Afghanistan, UNICEF has helped establish community-based schools in rural areas that allow for the participation of girls. In 2008, the Government of Afghanistan ran 815 of these community-based schools, with an enrolment of nearly 30,000 students.

#### **CEDAW**

Let me reiterate the Administration's strong commitment to ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Secretary Clinton and other Administration principals have stated that CEDAW ratification is a priority. The Secretary stated that, "The Obama Administration will continue to work for the ratification of CEDAW ... because we believe it is past time, to take this step for women in our country and in all countries."

#### **Commission on the Status of Women**

The United States was pleased with the results of the March 2010 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). We accomplished our main objectives. Common themes in presentations by U.S. Government principals included addressing maternal and child mortality and helping women living with HIV/AIDS; combating violence against women, especially sexual violence; food security for women; and setting up the gender composite entity.

One of the highlights was when the United States and co-sponsors from the various regional groups introduced a resolution on "Eliminating Preventable Maternal Mortality and Morbidity through the Empowerment of Women," which was adopted by consensus with a large number of co-sponsors. CSW member states also adopted a resolution on the United Nations gender composite entity. This was significant, as this meant that the CSW made an affirmative statement in favor of setting up this new entity.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the U.S. approach to women's issues stems from the fundamental principle articulated at 1995 Beijing UN World Conference, that "women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights."

Toward that end our collective efforts to write a new chapter on empowering women will be the tell-tale measure of whether the 21st century is truly one of human and global progress or whether millions of women and girls, representing half of the world's population, will continue to be left behind, undereducated, unprotected, denied economic opportunities and without a voice to advocate for their families, communities and nation.

While there has been measurable progress in improving the lives of women and children, there remain critical goals unfilled, that need greater global attention and global action.

Chairman Carnahan and Subcommittee Members, the Administration looks forward to continuing to work with you and Members of Congress who have already contributed greatly to empowering women globally and addressing one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's most important challenges.



Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Thank you both for your opening remarks. It was a great way to kick this conversation off today.

Speaking of women in leadership, we have been joined by two colleagues, Congresswoman Woolsey from California and Congresswoman Moore of Wisconsin; and I want to recognize Congresswoman Woolsey to start off the questioning.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

As one of the founders of Women's History Month that came from Sonoma County, California, you can know that I take this cause of women's issues internationally very, very seriously. And Secretary Clinton I am so proud has repeatedly said that women's rights are human rights. She is exactly right. Any development, economic, or humanitarian program that does not consider the role of gender is setting itself up for failure; and any country that doesn't take interest in what happens with the women will not take steps forward.

We have proven that already. Even in the United States, women have a long way to go on equal representation. In our own Government, only 74 of the 435 Members of the House are women, more than when I was elected in 1992, that is for sure, but not enough. So I look forward, actually, to the time when women will have an equal voice in government at home and abroad.

I thank you for holding this hearing and letting me be part of it.

For nine Congresses in a row, I have introduced for the United States to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, CEDAW, even going into Secretary Helms' committee when he was the chair and being told to sit down and act like a lady. So, you know, this is important to me.

And now that we have our wonderful Secretary and the two of you, we have Bill Clinton—Barack Obama in the White House—Bill Clinton did pass the ratification forward—and we need to do this. What is holding it up? Can you tell me? I mean, it is the Senate. It is not the House. The House has 132 Members signed on to the letter to the Senate saying, get on with it.

Ambassador VERVEER. Yes, Congresswoman. And you are right, and you have been steadfast. And it is probably the single most frequently asked question I get all around the world, everywhere I go, why has the United States not ratified the Convention Against the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women? Because we are in league with a few other rogue states that haven't done so.

And while it is true that there are countries who have ratified it and yet don't do the best in terms of recognizing the rights of women in their countries, and what is significant about that ratification is that women in those countries are using the ratification of CEDAW in their countries as leverage with their governments in making progress along the way.

So we have it as a priority, as Assistant Secretary Brimmer said. We have been working with many across civil society in the United States who are supporting it. There is a list of treaties and other business before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate in general, but that is where the question has to be lodged.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you.

Dr. Brimmer, do you want to say any more about this?

Ms. BRIMMER. I would just also concur with my colleague, Ambassador Verveer, that similarly I also find the question frequently asked in multilateral fora because I think the world notes that the United States is re-engaging and working in multilateral fora and working toward a world of rule of law and that the importance of treaties is an important component of that. And indeed CEDAW is a priority for us and we are working very hard and we very much want to work toward the advice and consent of the Senate to that particular treaty.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you very much.

Very quickly, before my time is up, it is very important to me that we emphasize maternal mortality. I don't want to take money away from AIDS or any of the other successful programs that we have from the United Nations and from the United States, but we do need to dedicate more funds to maternal mortality. Is there a way?

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, Congresswoman, again, much in agreement with what you said, one of the singular global initiatives of the administration is the Global Health Initiative. It is particularly focused on reducing the rate of maternal mortality. We have just seen the first study in many, many years that show, in fact, this is not an intractable problem. We can make a difference. The Lancet Study. And the hope is that now, with additional resources put toward it, the G-8—Canada is taking the lead in the major initiative in the G-8. The United Nations is focused on maternal and child health in a significant way in light of the anniversary of the Millennium Development Goals with the United States, with other partners. Gates just announced a \$1.5 billion commitment. Hopefully, this is the time to once and for all begin to do something about this terrible problem which wracks much of the world. Women should not be dying every 2 minutes in childbirth.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Next, I want to recognize our ranking member, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Verveer, let me just note that I am pondering your observation that where there is women participation, there is less corruption. I haven't heard that analysis before, and I am going to keep that in mind as I am developing my world view. So thank you for sharing that with us today.

I will just note that I think that we have made progress in the United States, great progress in the United States. I just note, as a Republican from California, we nominated two women to be our gubernatorial and senatorial candidates yesterday, and I don't think that would have happened 20 years ago.

Also, let me note that in the surfing contests that I pay particular attention to in California that there never was a women's part of the surfing competition 20 years ago, and now women are playing a very active role in my sport, in surfing. They are out there.

So these are big steps forward and meaningful things, and they are basic changes in our society.

I have got a serious question to ask you both, because it deals with the decisions that we have to make. I could ask you about whether or not we have to prioritize. We are going bankrupt, and we have to prioritize our spending. I don't have any problem with trying to make sure money that is being expended for particular diseases are expended in a way that women are not shortchanged, because they are susceptible to certain diseases and certain medical problems like with childbirth that men are not. I don't have any problem with that prioritization of that spending.

But let's get down to an issue today that I would like your advice on. We have to determine what we are going to do in Afghanistan. It is still a huge issue. In my whole life, in the last 30 years, Afghanistan has been there. We have to determine whether or not we are going to continue to try to be a presence and a force in that society at great cost to our society both in lives and treasure or we are going to perhaps try our best to do something so that we can walk away but yet they will not be a threat to us. But if we do walk away in that way, what we will be doing is suggesting that the Pashtun culture, which dominates a large chunk of Afghanistan, will remain intact.

Much of our efforts in Afghanistan were aimed at changing the Pashtun culture and their relationship with women. The Taliban are part of the Pashtun culture. Not all Pashtuns are Taliban, but almost all Taliban are Pashtuns.

So what is your advice to us? What is your advice? Should we fight it out in Afghanistan until that perhaps culture and their treatment of women, which is unacceptable by any of the democratic standards that we believe in, should we stay there and fight to change that? Or should we say, look, we cannot change the world, and we are going to cut our losses and get out just so long as they don't become a threat to everybody else? That is the question.

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, Congressman, obviously these are decisions that are going to be made above my pay grade. But let me just concur with what you said at the outset, which is how the treatment of women is often an indicator of danger or perhaps greater danger. And where women are much oppressed in our world, those are among the most dangerous places not just for the women in those societies but increasingly for our own country.

I think, you know, the investment that has been made that you have talked about being a voice for in the 1990s, I worked for somebody in those years who was then the First Lady who was joining you and being in being that voice, talking about the oppression of the Taliban to women there. If you talk to women of Afghanistan, they will tell you, this is not how it always was. This may be part of the culture, but there were times in the 1950s and the 1960s and other times when they remember well how it was. They remember how they grew up.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. King Zahir Shah, who I supported during all of this time period, I wanted to bring him back. It was his wife that led the way to casting off the burkas in Kabul, et cetera.

But let's not kid ourselves. This repression of women is part of the Pashtun culture; and we will have to stay there and fight if we are going to make that our goal, to change that. Advice on that?

Ambassador VERVEER. I would say that we have to continue to support human rights in the ways that we will choose to do that, obviously. But what happens to the women of Afghanistan is a predictor of what will happen, as you so eloquently said, in the future.

Ms. BRIMMER. Ranking Member Rohrabacher, if I may add some additional thoughts to this portion of the conversation, I would also note that the United States is not alone, that the international community as a whole also supports the work in Afghanistan or recognizes the importance of long-term change in Afghanistan; and part of that is enhancing the role of women and girls.

I would just note that there are many different ways of continuing to have international support for change in Afghanistan, and I will give you just one example. If you look at the work and the role of looking at education in Afghanistan, getting girls back into school has been absolutely crucial. And one of the things we actually work at with the United Nations system, particularly with UNICEF, is making sure that there are schools in rural areas and those schools make sure the girls go to school. And there are over 800 of these rural schools where girls are becoming part of the future. I think those are some of the things that can help in the long term in that country.

Thank you.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you very much.

I am going to recognize next in our order is the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Delahunt.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Yes, thank you.

Let me just address this globally. I mean, much of what Mr. Rohrabacher said in terms of Afghanistan I think is the concern that many of us share, that if there should be a decision made to leave, what will happen to any progress that women have made in Afghanistan? I know that is a priority for me in terms of my own decision-making process as far as supporting the continued presence of—or not supporting the continued presence of American troops in Afghanistan.

But putting that aside for a minute, I always make the observation in terms of speaking in terms of violence against women, while it is often characterized as a women's issue, that it is truly a male problem. What initiatives are happening globally in terms of our own foreign policy, in terms of the United Nations, in terms of other nations that prioritize this issue to influence men, boys? Is there any coherent effort to change attitudes that have been inculcated in men as a result of the societies in which they grow and develop?

Ambassador VERVEER. Congressman, let me just start, and then I know that the Assistant Secretary will join in.

Going back to the concern about what happens if we leave Afghanistan, I think it buttresses what this discussion is about today, which is women's enhanced political participation and why it is so important in this reintegration reconciliation process what decisions are made to end this conflict, that they be parties to all of this so that the end to the conflict can come in a way where they aren't thrown under the bus, so to speak, and there are better prospects for the future based on all the other kinds of investments that have been made, social and otherwise.

Violence against women, as no one knows better than you because of all the efforts you have certainly put into IVAWA, is a global scourge; and we have to do better at engaging men and boys in dealing with the problem. The women in Afghanistan, for example, talk about the fact that this issue needs to be part of the education process. There are not just more girls going to school for the first time—we are up near 40 percent now—but certainly large numbers of boys. This needs to be integrated into what they are hearing.

And we have been working with religious leaders, because the context of that society is heavily Islamic, and having the mullahs and the imams take these messages and put them into their Friday services and be influential in that respect makes an enormous difference.

Similarly, we have been funding programs to use men at the village level, even where people are illiterate, to do skits that demonstrate why this is not behavior that should be involved in, that men should define themselves by or be engaged in.

One of the most significant ways to deal with this problem is obviously to prosecute it. It is a crime. It is not cultural. Laws have to be enforced, and we have to make sure there are systems that are based more on impunity than a system of justice that we can ensure that those changes occur. And that is something that we are working on, for example, in the DRC.

So we do need a full range of these tools. There is increased focus on the role of men, religious leaders, other influential leaders on this problem; and I think that is a lot of the way we need to go if we are going to have a different outcome than we see today.

Ms. BRIMMER. Just to pick up on two particular themes from this conversation, Congressman Delahunt, I would like to just note particularly that our series of resolutions passed at the Security Council have tried to stress the importance of dealing with violence against women as a challenge to international peace and security and, hence, the importance of Resolution 1880 and the follow-up to that.

But, again, as you mentioned, it is extremely important that all of society—men and women, girls and boys—address this problem and that we try to bring this idea to many aspects of our diplomatic engagement, raising the importance for men and boys also to be part of the solution.

Most recently, at CSW in March, we actually sponsored a session as the United States—actually in cooperation with France—on the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality; and we think this is a theme that we should continue to raise because all of human society needs to be part of this solution.

Thank you.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Next, I want to recognize Congresswoman Moore from Wisconsin for 5 minutes.

Ms. MOORE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the privilege to sit here with the subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee; and I would just like to say to the Ambassador hello again. I think we have spent a couple of hours today with the distinguished panel and also with a couple of Afghan women, talking about many of

these issues that we are talking about this afternoon. So I really appreciate your diligence. And nice to meet you, too, Dr. Brimmer.

If it is appropriate, I would like to shift the conversation a little bit to Haiti, if that would be okay. I had the opportunity—the challenge, actually—to be with the House Democracy Partnership on the absolute last day of their democratically elected mandate. Literally the entire House of Representatives met with us. Their last session was to meet with us, and two-thirds of the Senate was meeting on their very last day. And we had one woman senator say in tears, we are hungry, we are homeless, we are facing the hurricanes, we have limited potable water, but the worst thing is that we are losing our democracy.

And there was a great deal of assurances, reassurances around the table that the United States would be there to try to help them get polling lists together, to try to make sure that we help them to get an election going by November and to certainly try to avoid an interim government in the case of the President whose term was extended again because of the situation that is in Haiti.

What are we doing, if anything, about trying to empower women to participate in the elections, to field candidacies and to focus on that since we know that women's political involvement is crucial?

Ms. BRIMMER. Good afternoon, Congresswoman Moore. If I may begin to respond to your question, and I expect my colleague, the Ambassador, will also join in. I will take a moment to talk about our work in Haiti indeed leading up to the elections.

As you know, responding to the devastating crisis in Haiti is a major foreign policy issue for the United States. We are by far and away the largest official donor and private donor. The outpouring of private support is also incredibly significant, and it is part of a long-term commitment to addressing the challenges the people of Haiti face. We also note particularly the support of the larger donor community as well toward dealing with the challenges in Haiti.

Indeed, we are coming up to a crucial period with the elections at the end of November, and there are several ways that we are trying to help support the people of Haiti and particularly women of Haiti in playing a role in those elections and taking the next step on their path toward restoring democracy. That indeed if we look at the elections that the mechanisms we are using as international support for the elections in Haiti include our work with the United Nations operations there. There is a peacekeeping operation there, MINUSTAH, which actually is a part of the United Nations system there which will help with the elections.

The United Nations has extensive experience in helping organize elections and in particular has taken on the responsibility of actually using the MINUSTAH forces to get the ballot boxes around the country—physically move them to get them around the country and to help ensure that there are clear voter rolls.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General will lead the U.N. effort there to work on Haiti. Just a few weeks ago, I was in Port-au-Prince to see the operation, to sit down with him and talk about what the U.N. will be doing to support those elections. We think it is important that the elections are held in a safe and secure environment, and we have supported increased police for the operation to make sure those elections are conducted safely.

We also note the cooperation between the United Nations, CARICOM, and the United States to help also get voter rolls and help voters get to the polls and help active participation by women in the process.

Ms. MOORE. Thank you, Dr. Brimmer.

Just a few more seconds. My time is expiring.

One of the things that I have noticed is that there is really no strong public education system in Haiti. And, of course, women suffer from the dearth of education; and I wonder if there is any thought about spawning some sort of universal or public education support for that in Haiti, particularly focusing on women.

Ambassador VERVEER. You know, Congresswoman, in addition to what Assistant Secretary Brimmer said, there is so much focus and we are in constant touch with many of the women particularly in civil society in Haiti. On the emergency situation that still exists, they are desperate to be fully included in the reconstruction process for income generation and for being part of the economic rebuilding. So there has been a lot of focus on that as well as the protection from violence, which is continuing to be a serious problem. And we have been dealing with the United Nations and others who are in a position to ensure that the women are not going to be harmed as electricity is still a problem and their proximity to so many potential problems for abuse are. And those are the two things they raised with us.

We are also working to ensure that we can rebuild even with the fact that the population is so disrupted and displaced, a way to ensure that the children continue to get their education. And that moves forward and that is definitely in process. So we can get a status report on where that is for you and get it to you soon.

Ms. MOORE. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you. We gave you a little extra.

Ms. MOORE. Thank you so much for your generosity, sir.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Ellison, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you Mr. Chairman; and thank you for having this very important hearing today.

My question has to do with women as peacekeepers and, you know, people who preserve the law. You know, in places like the DRC and in other post-conflict areas or current conflict areas, does the engagement of women as part of the instrumentality of peacekeeping have a beneficial effect? Is this being tried in a significant concerted way? Can you speak to this?

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, Congressman, it is not just does it have a beneficial effect. It is absolutely essential. And there was a Security Council Resolution. There is an existing one. It is called, in the jargon, 1325, but it recognized that when it comes to peace and security women have an absolutely intrinsic, critical role they have to play.

And as the chairman said in his opening statement, we saw it in Northern Ireland, we saw it in El Salvador, Guatemala, Rwanda, and so many places in between that when women aren't part of that process that goes forward to end a conflict, what we are working on now in Afghanistan, the way that future is determined will not have the critical issues on the table that will get resolved

one way or the other, and then they will be part of the process to go forward. In fact, the peace will not, in all likelihood, take hold as was anticipated. So we are all working that much harder.

I can't say that any of us have done the best job we could and must do to ensure that women are fully participating. It is what we are striving to do in Afghanistan. There is a whole lot of effort going on presently in the State Department working with DOD, working with USAID in an interagency process and how we can do this better and how we can articulate a significant number of activities that our post should be engaged in to further this so that the outcomes are precisely what you stated in your question.

Ms. BRIMMER. Good afternoon. If I may also note that we are even seeing women playing a larger role in formal peacekeeping operations as well. There are actually two countries that have all-female units that work on peacekeeping issues. One of them is in India, which pioneered the idea in 2007 of having a unit that focused—that was composed of women and that went to work on issues particularly dealing with sexual violence. And we noticed that that unit went to Liberia and actually inspired women in Liberia to join the national police force, and now 15 percent of the police force in Liberia is actually female.

And indeed, President Sirleaf Johnson as well as our ambassador there and the Special Representative of the Secretary General, all women, and actually led a campaign to focus on combating sexual violence in the country, again showing leadership in this issue.

We now have a unit from Bangladesh that is also an all-female unit that has just deployed to Haiti, particularly trying to help secure the refugee camps and particularly trying to deal with gender-based violence in the refugee camps, and we see that as a primary effort.

And I would notice, I would actually like to credit our colleagues in the Defense Department as well that have also looked at this idea and have actually, for the first time, sent an all-female Marine unit to Afghanistan to work on some gender issues there. So it is an important idea of women as peacekeepers, even in our formal peacekeeping structures.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Thank you for that.

Also, when women get into office and are elected officials in Afghanistan, Pakistan, anywhere, what sort of level of intimidation do they have to face that is specific to them being women? They could run into intimidation for any number of reasons. It could be party. It could be ethnicity. But as women, are we finding that when we succeed and women are in office, that they have a special burden to bear in terms of threats, hate crimes, things like that?

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, I think it is probably fair to say that there is a double standard or a different standard imposed on women in political office. And the two women here on the panel can probably underscore that. But it is particularly difficult in areas of conflict. And I think, in 2008, some 10 lives alone were lost by women in the public domain in one kind of elective office or another to send a message to them. And these kinds of horrific messages are sent all too frequently. And whether it is voting when they are deemed that they shouldn't be voting, or when they are actually participating in the process when others deem for them



that they have no part being in that business, these terrible messages are sent.

So, yes, they are much more prone to be attacked in ways that I don't think any of us would take those kinds of personal risks that they do in the name of rebuilding their country and for the democratic principles they would like to see put in place. So we feel, I know we all do and certainly our programs try to certainly work at the security piece, and then also help them build capacity and find ways in which they can protect themselves more and ways that will make them less prone to this kind of violence.

But I have talked to many women in the Afghan Parliament, for example, on the provincial councils. They will tell you hair-raising stories about what they endure every day, many of them going back to see their constituents, not knowing if they will get back to the capital ever again. There is a great price that is paid in the name of a better future and democratic governance, and I think we should keep that in mind always as we try to develop our programs and also help secure them as best we can in the effort that they are making.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Representative.

Next, I will recognize Congresswoman Jackson Lee from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman thank you so very much.

I am reminded of the opportunities that we have had to travel and to see these issues first-hand.

And I thank you to the ranking member for joining the chairman in this important hearing.

To both of the witnesses, Dr. Brimmer and Ambassador Verveer, thank you for your leadership.

Let me try to bust out of the bag. Let me try to achieve some of the knockout punches of Mohammed Ali. I guess I am moved by the presence of a uniquely distinctive audience that is here, seemingly a large number of women. And I cannot imagine that they are here for the lack of interest in this topic.

I am reminded of the Secretary of State's comments as First Lady in the 1990s, Ambassador, when she went to China and said that human rights is women's rights; women's rights is human rights. What a resounding large statement to be made around the world. And then, to paraphrase a statement, the person, the woman that rocks the cradle is the establisher of the civilization that we live in.

And I believe, Mr. Chairman, if I could, in working with you, what should come out of this hearing is a demand, an absolute demand, an imperative demand, a declaration of an emergency that the international act dealing with—the international act of dealing with the violence against women should be passed, and it should be passed now. Because what I am gleaning from both the testimony and the recognition of how vast our task is, is that we are not going forward. We are working hard, but we are not going forward on some of these crucial issues dealing with violence against women. And let me recount and then pose a question.

And all of the questions I came in, I heard Congresswoman Moore speaking about the need for broad-based education. And having been in Haiti—and that is just one example of going into

developing nations where education is not accessible. Certainly Afghanistan.

I do want to thank the Ambassador for holding the discussion at the State Department this morning, a snapshot of women in Afghanistan. And let me applaud you, apologize that I was testifying before a committee dealing with the BP oil spill and was not able to get there.

But let me cite for you Sudan, for example, of course Darfur, which even today women are violated as they are living in camps still; even under the auspices of the peacekeepers and the mandates of the United Nations, women are violated.

The women in Afghanistan, Ambassador, it is interesting that you recount that story. I heard that story almost 4, 5 years ago meeting with Afghan parliamentarians really right after we had written the constitution and they were included. They came and they said—speaking to them in Kabul—they said, I am afraid to go back to my constituency. We know that girls are prevented from going to school even today, even as we try to use smart power to build schools.

Camp Ashraf, an isolated place in Iraq that has Iranians, where the women are violated. Not only the women, of course, the whole community is under siege in Iraq. We have been begging and fighting for those individuals not to be violated, abused, intimidated, and treated in the way that they have been treated by the Iraqi Government.

I would also say to you that I have in my possession a burqa, and I brought it back after some years because at the time I brought it back—and I do believe in choice in many ways. And some have chosen—some women have chosen to wear it. I am not sure the basis, but they say they have chosen.

But when I brought it back, I brought it back to show what was not going to be anymore. I brought it back to say, look what we helped eliminate or to empower women. And we know that today, if we go to Kabul and other places, the burqa is being worn; some it is being demanded that they wear it.

So my question is this: Tell me how important it is that we demand that the international act of—violence against women's act be passed now.

Two, we have something in the faith called backsliding. What is the level of backsliding that is going on in these hot spots around the world, so to the extent that in—and might I compliment the administration overall. But to the extent that we have to gin up the activity of the United Nations, we have excellent leadership there, but you have a tough job at the United Nations. They don't get it. And while we are backsliding, people, women are dying. And I think we need to know in the United States, Congress, what the answers need to be on ginning up, moving, declaring this an emergency, passing that legislation now.

Mr. Chairman, if you would indulge me for the answer. I thank you for your courtesies.

Ambassador VERVEER. This is a very serious problem. It is a global scourge. We have got to do better. I think one of the places where we did make progress over the last several years is in laws being passed in many countries to deal with setting out penalties

and proclaiming once and for all that this was a violation of the law. It is criminal behavior; it isn't cultural behavior.

Unfortunately, in too many places, these laws have not been implemented, and they are not enforced, and the system of justice is not responsive. So we need to build capacity within countries and need to do more to get greater political will to deal with these issues within the countries.

For example, in Afghanistan, they have passed a very strong law now called elimination of violence against women. That law is sitting on the books. It needs to be implemented. It needs to be taken seriously by the government. And the capacity of civil society needs to be built so that they can hold their government responsible and the processes of government are in place to enforce that law. Otherwise, these laws don't mean anything. And that is one of the problems we are dealing with as we look at honor killings and rape as a tool of war and domestic violence and great risk taken in political life, et cetera. So I think we clearly need to develop a more coherent strategy. And that covers every area, from political will to greater resources to civil society, to be able to make a dent.

Now, we have tried to be responsive, and I am sure Assistant Secretary would like to talk more about the role that Secretary Clinton played after going to the DRC and seeing the array of problems that have been created there by the armed bands using rape as a tool of war, concerted tool, to further their goals, trying to get the representative who is now in place to deal with sexual violence against women, and an array of experts to start dealing with this at every level. But these processes are too slow. And I think one of the things in terms of our own leadership is what we can do, as we are all trying to do clearly, but it is not enough, to begin to have a greater impact.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Ambassador.

And I am going to have to hold you at that, because we have been joined by another member we want to have time.

Jan Schakowsky, representative from Illinois, who is also cochair of the Congressional Women's Caucus. I want to recognize her for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate your allowing me to speak for 5 minutes. I do have an opening statement that I would like to put into the record, and I will waive any questions now.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Without objection.

I had a few questions of my own, and hopefully we will have some time for Mr. Rohrabacher to do some follow-up as well.

Let me start, Ambassador Verveer, with you. With regard to the focus the Obama administration has had and with Secretary Clinton, focusing on how we bring these women's issues to the table as one of the important tools of our foreign policy, I would like you to please talk about some of the ways, best practices. You have seen this work in a practical way, but also moving forward, how we can ensure sustainability in these practices? We have touched on that earlier, but I wanted to get you to elaborate some about that because I think that is going to be critical in areas like Afghanistan.

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, I think one of the most fundamental ways, Mr. Chairman, is to ensure that these are integrated throughout the work of the State Department. So that when it comes to women's political empowerment or economic empowerment or freedom from violence, that as the various offices and bureaus are working on their own agenda of issues, to really affix the women's lens, if you will, in terms of ensuring better outcomes on the very issues that they are working on.

We are also in the process of a woman's strategy in terms of strategic and budget integration. And that is going forward, and we are hoping that that will put—putting that into place will create a more sustainable way to ensure that we get better outcomes across the board.

There are areas that may not appear to be ways in which we might proceed but increasingly are making a difference. For example, as you know, there are a series of dialogues the U.S. has been and continues to be engaged in with other countries. We just concluded meetings on the United States-India dialogue. We had the United States-Afghan dialogue. This provides opportunities, because there is great political will today to put these women's issues on the agenda so that, as the leaders of countries come together, these are not marginalized issues or unspoken issues; they are right front and center on the agendas.

With the Indian Government, for example, we were talking about the great success story that the Panchayat system in India where, because of a quota but now well beyond a quota, upwards of 40–50 percent of these village and municipal council-level elected positions are held by women. And there are empirical studies now that show a correlation between the outcomes of their performance and much greater the emphasis within those communities of benefits to the people and greater public resources coming in, not being siphoned off in ways that were previously siphoned off.

There is an effort now with our coming together to take that experience and help build a capacity more broadly regionally, which would obviously be a contribution to enhancing the role of women's political participation at the local level.

So both on the level of procedures within the Department, and then in terms of the kinds of programs we have been engaged in that need to be sustained, I would say it is not an either/or, but a both/and for us to go forward.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I had the pleasure to be with you about a month ago at a roundtable between Members of Congress and women from Afghanistan. They were here in leadership roles. And we saw firsthand, I think, some of the challenges that, even sitting in that room, pushback and uncertainty at best from some of their male colleagues in the government in terms of their involvement going forward. So I think these kind of strategies are going to be critical to our success.

And Dr. Brimmer, I wanted to ask you if you would elaborate with regard to the consolidation efforts for a new gender entity at the U.N. I know those are in process as we speak, but how you think that coordination can better serve the efforts there at the U.N.

Ms. BRIMMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Indeed, as you mentioned, we are currently in diplomatic negotiations to bring together several different parts of the United Nations to create one single new entity dealing with women's issues.

We currently have four smaller entities that work on different aspects, whether it is research on women's issues or running conferences on women's issues, which is very important, but is currently separate from the larger organization, UNIFEM, which works on support for providing technical assistance to women around the globe. This effort would bring all those efforts together and would create one entity that would create a strong voice for dealing with gender issues and gender equality in the U.N. system. And indeed, it would be a tool to actually deal with one of the points that Congresswoman Jackson Lee mentioned in her question, which is, how do you deal with backsliding, how do you make sure to keep these issues on the agenda?

The new entity would be able to work with the big departments in the U.N., Department of Peacekeeping Affairs, Department of Political Affairs, and others, to keep women's issues and gender equality on the agenda as an area for work in the U.N. system. So we think this is an important effort. We would hope to conclude diplomatic negotiations later this month.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you very much.

Ambassador VERVEER. And if I could add to that, Mr. Chairman, the other thing it would do is have a very significant leader at the right hand of the Secretary General to make sure these issues were not ignored.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

I am going to recognize our ranking member again for 5 minutes. I think we can sneak this in before votes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. I would like to get back to the serious question that I asked before, because I honestly would like some advice, and frankly, I didn't get the answer that I asked for. I didn't get an answer from you on that.

We are faced with a major decision now about what we are going to do in Afghanistan. The Pashtun culture is what we have been up against all along. Their culture is to treat women like cattle, basically, and owned by men. And everything that we see is wrong with the most radical of Islamic anti-female beliefs can be centered there in the Pashtun culture.

Now, if we are going to—if we are committed, as long as we are there and we are part of the United Nations group, international group, I understand that we need to do that as long as we are there. Should we stay there and get that job done? Do we have that responsibility with the American military force to basically come in and insist on that change of culture? Because unless they change, that is what I believed all along, and if that was what, if the Taliban were dominated by the Pashtun culture, were going to dominate Afghanistan, it is going to come back and hurt us. I believed that in the 1990s. I don't believe we can ignore that type of violation now.

But what do you say? Should we be staying there and using our military might to obliterate that aspect of the Pashtun culture?

Ms. BRIMMER. I would simply say that the long-term work in Afghanistan will require strong support from the United States and

the international community in many forms. As I mentioned earlier, that the work, both the civilian and military and nongovernmental activities, are all important to helping the Afghans move forward in their own society, and that we as an international community will have to be part of that.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Long term.

Let me give you a short-term thing then. What is being floated right now is, should we be making a compromise with the Taliban, letting the Taliban into the Afghan Government, so that we can make our exit a little bit sooner with a little less bloodshed? What do you say to that? But, of course, the deal that is being made is going to be done at the expense of women's rights.

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, and what the women are saying is, we are not against deals. We are not against bringing an end to the crisis. We are not against bringing those into power who may have been on the other side, as has happened all over the world as conflicts are ended.

But we want to make sure that we are part of the terms of—the negotiated terms to end that conflict. So this is something in the end, as capacity is built and people are engaged in the processes, that they have a fair chance to work it out.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So, not putting words in your mouth then, making sure that that is part of the agreement, we should not make an agreement that does not leave a recognition of the rights of women in Afghanistan—we should not leave that country absent of an agreement that guarantees those rights as we see the rights of women, not as the Pashtuns see the rights of women.

Ambassador VERVEER. Congressman, I will repeat what our leaders have said, which is that, as these discussions and agreements and negotiations and processes go forward, that there are three points that are uppermost in terms of determining the outcome: And that is that there is no deal with al Qaeda; there is no deal for the violence to continue with those people; and the constitutional rights have to be respected.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So the answer is, yes, we shouldn't leave without that. All right. I mean, I am just trying to get a yes or no out of you out of you on a very easy decision that we—it is not an easy decision, but an easy way to delineate there is a decision to be made, and it is a tough decision.

Would you like to add something to that, Doctor?

Ms. BRIMMER. I would join my colleague, Ambassador Verveer, in saying that understanding those main conditions that are part of the situation in Afghanistan I think will be crucial for any decision that would have to be made.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Let me just note that I don't know the answer, either. I am not—I literally was seeking your advice on this, because I am not trying to push either point of view on that. It really, when I see our people being blown apart there and our young people separated, families being destroyed, and men and women coming home with missing legs and/or their parents, mother or father, dead in Afghanistan; it is a horrible price our people are paying there. And yet, at the same time, I understand that if we would leave at a certain point, all these rights that we talk about, our commitment to human freedom and the importance of

women's rights within that concept, would not be well served. So it is a big decision-making where we are placing our values.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I will ponder what we have learned today.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you very much.

Thank you all for being here. We are going to thank our first panel.

And in the interest of time, I would like to introduce our second panel before we break for votes, so that when we come back after we have four votes, we can come back and jump right into questions for our second panel.

Thank you all.

If we could have our second panel come up to the witness table, I would like to do some quick introductions.

I am going to start the introductions with Mr. Ken Wollack. He is the president of the National Democratic Institute, better known as NDI. He has worked there since 1986. He has been serving as president since 1993. He is also a member of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid and is chairman of the board of directors for the U.S. Committee for UNDP. Prior to working with NDI, Mr. Wollack co-edited the Middle East policy survey. He also worked regularly on foreign affairs for the LA Times. He has been actively involved in foreign affairs journalism and politics since 1972 and is a frequent person to be here on Capitol Hill testifying on foreign affairs issues.

He is a graduate of Earlham College and is a senior fellow at UCLA's School of Public Affairs.

Welcome.

Next, we have Ambassador Swanee Hunt. She is chair of the Institution for Inclusive Security. The Honorable Swanee Hunt is former Ambassador to Austria, current president of Hunt Alternatives Fund. She chairs the Institute for Inclusive Security, and founded the Women in Public Policy Program, a research center concerned with domestic and foreign policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Ambassador Hunt is also widely published on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution. She holds a B.A. in philosophy, two master's degrees, and a doctorate in theology.

Next, we have Judy Van Rest, executive vice president of the International Republican Institute, or IRI, a position she has held since August 2004. She serves on the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Women's Campaign School at Yale University. From April 2003 to July 2004, she served as senior adviser for governance for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, where she conducted outreach programs for Iraqi women to assist them in participating in the democratic development of their country, and served as the CPA's director for the Office of Democratic Initiatives, coordinating programs ranging from civic education to women's leadership training. Previously, she served as regional director for the Commonwealth of Independent States Programs for IRI, one of the core initiatives of the National Endowment for Democracy, where she directed nonpartisan democracy building programs in former Soviet countries. She has held a variety of management positions, including at USAID, and is deputy to the Special Assist-

ant to the President for White House Intergovernmental Affairs. She graduated from the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas.

So, again, I want to welcome all of you. We look forward to hearing from you. We are going to take this short break, get in four votes, and we will be right back. Thank you very much for your patience.

[Recess.]

Mr. CARNAHAN. We are back. We will reconvene the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight. Thank you for your patience.

We have done our introductions, and I would like to really turn right away to recognizing Ken Wollack to kick off the second panel. Ken.

**STATEMENT OF MR. KENNETH WOLLACK, PRESIDENT,  
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE**

Mr. WOLLACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the National Democratic Institute, I want to thank you very much for this opportunity to testify about programs that empower women around the world to engage more fully in the political process. I prepared a written statement which I will summarize here, and I hope my longer written statement can be submitted for the record.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. WOLLACK. NDI has been working with political and civic leaders for more than two decades to assist their efforts to increase the number and effectiveness of women in political life. We work in nearly 70 countries, and the vast majority of them have programs specifically tailored to women.

As women's contributions toward a strong and vibrant society are increasingly well documented, there is also growing understanding of why women's meaningful participation is essential to building and sustaining democracy. Women's political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizens' needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace. In other words, having more women in the political process helps democracies deliver. In places as diverse as Timor-Leste, Croatia, Morocco, Rwanda, and South Africa, an increase in the number of female lawmakers led to legislation related to antidiscrimination, domestic violence, family codes, inheritance, and child support and protection.

Only 5 years after the women's suffrage movement achieved the rights of women to vote and run for office in Kuwait, newly-elected female legislators this year introduced new labor laws that would give working mothers mandatory nursing breaks and provide on-site child care for companies with more than 200 employees.

Despite these positive indicators and gains, considerable challenges remain to women's meaningful political participation. And while no ideal environment currently exists to jump-start the advancement of women's political leadership, there are certain conditions that make it easier.

First, women must have reasonable access to positions of power. Second, transparency in political and legislative processes is crit-



ical. Third, citizens must be willing to accept new ideas about gender roles and society. And fourth, women's access to economic resources is essential to breaking down the barriers to women's active participation.

And then there are those very difficult places, such as in Afghanistan, where women, as you said, Mr. Chairman, continue to be disproportionately affected by the legacy of the brutal Taliban regime, and in Burma, where the oppression of and violence against women are well documented.

Quotas, whether mandatory, legislative, or voluntary, continue to be the most effective means for increasing the number of women both in political parties and elective office. But studies conducted by NDI also indicated that quotas in and of themselves have not overcome the many obstacles that women confront, including developing the political will even to meaningfully implement quotas.

There are, in our view, three key components necessary in initiatives to empower women: Build confidence, capacity, and connections. Recently, the Institute conducted an assessment to better understand effective approaches to encouraging women's political participation across regions and to measure the impact of such programs. The research concluded that the best practices include: One, conducting ongoing communications training; two, focusing on building leadership skills; three, uniting women across political party lines, both inside and outside the legislature; fourth, working with parties on internal reform; fifth, training women to train other women; sixth, developing the capacity and preparedness of elected women; seventh, exchanging information and expertise internationally; and, eight, engaging youth to help change socio-political attitudes and behavior.

NDI's Win With Women global initiative, convened in 2003 by our chairman, Madeline Albright, has focused exclusively on strengthening women's roles in political parties which are, after all, the gateway to political power for women. Programs in Jordan and Afghanistan helped women gain their first seats in Parliament.

In Afghanistan, we have trained most of the women candidates for national and provincial elections since 2004 and thousands of candidate poll watchers in all provinces of the country. And in Iraq, the national platform for women supported by NDI brought together women, political, and civic activists to advance the health care, education, employment, and political participation. After the elections now, the national platform will be a tool to hold legislators and parties who signed on to the platform accountable.

An online resource that aids all of our goals is iKNOW Politics, an online workspace in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic available to all who are interested in advancing women in politics. The portal, which has averaged 1.5 million hits a month, is a joint project of NDI, the UNDP, UNIFEM, the Interparliamentary Union, and International IDEA.

The international community, including donor aid agencies, intergovernmental bodies, international financial institutions, and nongovernmental organizations, have focused their attention on and dedicated growing resources to women's development. And with the creation of a new senior level position at the State Department, the Ambassador-At-Large for Global Women's Issues, the

National Security Strategy, along with USAID and State Department funded programs, this administration has given concrete expression to new renewed efforts in this regard.

How a country taps the talents and capacity of its women will, in large measure, determine its economic, social, and political process. It is our hope that new initiatives that focus on such issues as maternal and child health care, women, girls, and literacy programs, micro finance, particularly in Muslim-majority countries, are joined by comparable efforts to promote women's political participation and leadership. It is not an accident that the countries in which these issues are not part of the national agenda are places where women are denied a genuine political voice.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Wollack, if you could just wrap up.

Mr. WOLLACK. I would just conclude by saying, conversely, empowering women politically will help countries develop a democratic institution that can begin to successfully address issues related to security, jobs, human rights, physical well being, and human development.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wollack follows:]

**“Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society”**  
**Statement by Kenneth Wollack, President, National Democratic Institute**  
**before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight**  
**June 9, 2010**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the National Democratic Institute, I appreciate this opportunity to testify about programs that help empower women to engage in political decision-making and civil society at all levels. NDI has been working with political and civic leaders for more than two decades to assist their efforts to increase the number and effectiveness of women in political life. We currently work in nearly 70 countries, creating programs that are specifically tailored to women and ensuring they are a part of every existing program. I appreciate the chance to highlight both the achievements and challenges in the process of integrating and empowering women in political processes.

There is growing recognition of the untapped capacity and talents of women and women’s leadership. In the last 10 years, the rate of women’s representation in national parliaments globally has grown from 13.1 percent at the end of 1999 to 18.6 percent at the end of 2009. Some regions have seen particularly dramatic increases, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of women in parliaments has risen from 10.9 to 17.6 percent.<sup>1</sup>

As women’s contributions toward a strong and vibrant society are increasingly well documented, there is also growing understanding of why women’s meaningful participation is essential to building and sustaining democracy. Women’s political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace.

**Assessment of the economic, security and other benefits of women’s participation**  
**Need for women in peace operations, treaty negotiations, constitution development, and reconciliation and reconstruction efforts**

Women’s meaningful participation in politics affects both the range of policy issues that are considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. Research indicates that a legislator’s gender has a distinct impact on policy priorities, making it critical that women are present in politics to represent the concerns of women and other marginalized citizens and help improve the responsiveness of policy-making and governance. And as more women reach leadership positions within their political parties, these parties tend to prioritize issues that impact health, education and other quality of life issues. There is strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, there is also a corollary increase in policy-making that reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities. Women’s political participation has profound positive and democratic impacts on communities, legislatures, political parties, and citizen’s lives.

In places as diverse as Timor-Leste, Croatia, Morocco, Rwanda and South Africa, an increase in the number of female lawmakers led to legislation related to antidiscrimination, domestic violence, family codes, inheritance, and child support and protection. Only five years after the women’s suffrage movement achieved the rights of women to vote and run for office in Kuwait, newly elected female legislators this year introduced new labor laws that would give working mothers mandatory nursing breaks, and provide onsite childcare for companies with more than 200 employees.

Women lawmakers tend to see “women’s” issues more broadly as social issues, possibly as a result of the role that women have traditionally played as mothers and caregivers in their communities;<sup>2</sup> and more women see government as a tool to help serve underrepresented or minority groups.<sup>3</sup> Women lawmakers, therefore, have often been perceived as more sensitive to community concerns and more responsive to constituency needs.

Women are deeply committed to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and have a unique and powerful perspective to bring to the negotiating table. Women often suffer disproportionately during armed conflict and often advocate most strongly for stabilization, reconstruction and the prevention of further conflict. Peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction and governance have a better chance of long-term success when women are involved.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, establishing sustainable peace requires transforming power relationships, including achieving more equitable gender relations.<sup>5</sup> Women’s peace groups in Uganda, for example, have used conflict resolution training to successfully reduce the level of violence in their communities. In the face of strong resistance from male leaders, women have established cross-community coalitions to open up dialogue and are operating centers to rehabilitate former girl abductees and child soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

Women’s leadership and conflict resolution styles often embody democratic ideals in that women have tended to work in a less hierarchical, more participatory and more collaborative way than male colleagues.<sup>7</sup> Women are also more likely to work across party lines, even in highly partisan environments. Since assuming 56 percent of the seats in the Rwandan parliament in 2008, women have been responsible for forming the first cross-party caucus to work on controversial issues such as land rights and food security. They have also formed the only tripartite partnership among civil society and executive and legislative bodies to coordinate responsive legislation and ensure basic services are delivered.<sup>8</sup>

Around the world, women lawmakers are often perceived as more honest and more responsive than their male counterparts, qualities that encourage confidence in democratic and representative institutions. In a study of 31 democratic countries, the presence of more women in legislatures is positively correlated with enhanced perceptions of government legitimacy among both men and women.<sup>9</sup>

When women are empowered as political leaders, countries often experience higher standards of living with positive developments in education, infrastructure and health, and concrete steps being taken to help make democracy deliver. Using data from 19 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), researchers found that an increase in women legislators results in an increase in total educational expenditure.<sup>10</sup> In India, research showed that West Bengal villages with greater representation of women in local councils saw an investment in drinking water facilities that was double that of villages with low levels of elected women, and that the roads there were almost twice as likely to be in good condition. The study also revealed that the presence of a woman council leader reduces the gender gap in school attendance by 13 percentage points.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Analysis of the major preconditions for increased participation**

Despite these positive indicators and gains, considerable challenges remain to women’s meaningful political participation. And while no ideal environment currently exists to jumpstart the advancement of women’s political advancement, there are certain conditions that make it easier.

First, women must have reasonable access to positions of power. Political leadership is often centralized and informal. Holding a formal position, even an elected position, does not necessarily lead to greater influence, as the real leaders do not always hold formal titles. Power in democracies is further built on

relationships that often have existed many years. In countries where women's public roles are only beginning to develop, women's absence from this history can present significant barriers. However, by giving women the tools they need to lead, creating the opportunity for advancement and helping build networks of like-minded men and women, and ensuring that women's legal rights are firmly entrenched, a pathway to power can be developed.

Next, transparency in the political and legislative processes is critical to the advancement of women in political and civil society. The lack of openness in political decision-making and undemocratic internal processes are challenging for all newcomers, but particularly for women. Similarly, the complex hierarchies in political parties and legislatures represent a barrier to many women who enter politics at the local level and aspire to rise to other levels of leadership.

Moreover, there must be the willingness of citizens to accept new ideas about gender roles in society. There are still many countries that discourage women from competing directly with men or consider childcare and housekeeping to be the exclusive domain of women. As such, it is common throughout the world to see women activists supporting democratic activities at the grassroots level, yet to see few women in leadership positions, thereby creating an absence of women from whom to draw for higher levels of political leadership. Concerted efforts must be made to raise awareness of gender inequality and the ways in which stereotypical gender roles create both formal and informal barriers. The support of male political leaders is also a key ingredient in creating a political climate that encourages women's political participation.

The ability of women to attain financial autonomy or access to economic resources is also necessary for their greater participation in political life. Worldwide, women's lower economic status, relative poverty and discriminatory legal frameworks are substantial hurdles to overcome. Because women control and have access to fewer economic resources, they are often unable to pay the formal and informal costs associated with gaining a party's nomination and standing for election.

#### **Strategies for increasing women's participation**

Quotas – whether mandatory, legislated or voluntary – continue to be the most effective means for increasing the number of women both in political parties and elective office. Studies conducted by NDI also indicate that quotas, in and of themselves, have not overcome the many obstacles that many women confront, including developing the political will to meaningfully implement a quota. Usually, quotas are implemented only after concerted advocacy efforts by women's political and civic alliances. Ongoing debate continues over whether quotas are workable in every political or electoral system; and even in the many countries that have embraced the use of quotas, they are seen as temporary, special measures. As a result, some countries with a long history of quotas, such as Australia, have now opted for gender neutral quotas.

There are several types of quota systems:

**Quotas for candidates** – A system of reserved seats, such as those in Rwanda, Uganda and Morocco, guarantees that women candidates will be elected and achieve a specified level of representation in the targeted political institution, such as a parliament. Comparable attempts have been made by parties in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom to get women candidates designated within quotas to *winnable* constituencies. Meanwhile, a quota that targets party lists, such as in Mexico, does not guarantee the election of women candidates, depending on the placement of women candidates in relation to the percentage of votes that the party receives.

Quotas for representative institutions and multiple levels of government – This system mandates women’s representation in the national legislature, locally elected bodies, the executive branch (cabinet appointments), the judiciary and political parties.

Internal party quotas for candidates and for governing boards – A number of parties have internal quotas for women for all or some of their governing boards. These quotas ensure that women’s voices are present as the party makes internal decisions regarding its strategy and platform.

Non-quota efforts to enhance women’s political leadership have included reforms and legislation that regulate party activities; gender sensitive reforms to political institutions that increase the likelihood that the women who are elected will be able to succeed and seek reelection; party funding for the training of women; efforts to enhance the profile of women candidates; mechanisms to help women candidates address campaign costs; outreach to international organizations and donor aid agencies that can fund and carry out technical assistance programs to enhance the capacity of women candidates and elected officials, and to support advocacy campaigns on behalf of women’s political participation and leadership.

**Overview of programs that empower women to engage in political decision-making and civil society at all levels**

NDI has worked to support and empower women in political decision-making and civil society at all levels. Recently, the Institute conducted an assessment to better understand effective approaches to encouraging women’s political participation across regions and to measure the impact of such programs. The research concluded that best practices include: 1) conducting ongoing communications trainings; 2) focusing on building leadership skills; 3) uniting women across political party lines; 4) working with parties on internal reform; 5) training women to train other women; 6) developing the capacity and preparedness of elected women; 7) exchanging information internationally; and 8) engaging youth to help change socio-political attitudes and behavior.

With these criteria in mind, the Institute has sought to help women acquire the tools necessary to participate successfully in all aspects of the political process – in legislatures, political parties and civil society as leaders, activists and informed citizens. These programs have been supported by, among others, the National Endowment for Democracy; the U.S. Agency for International Development; the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative and Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor; the United Nation’s Development Programme; the Canadian International Development Agency; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; and individual contributors and private foundations, such as the Liz Claiborne Foundation and the Melvin and Bren Simon Foundation.

Working with women in civil society is a major part of NDI’s work. Women’s civil society organizations play a key role in supporting increased women’s political participation and women leaders. Furthermore, they advocate for, and provide technical expertise on key policy issues and help illustrate how policies may affect men and women, and boys and girls differently.

Involvement in civil society also gives women the opportunity to influence government and gain visibility, credibility and respect, and to help mitigate barriers to women’s political participation. In many regions, civic organizations are led by women, and are often viewed as vehicles for women’s leadership; they have emerged as incubators for women to cultivate their political and personal power. Creating strong partnerships among women in civic organizations and women in political parties and elected office can help advance a common women’s agenda in a coordinated way. Furthermore, partnerships between civic organizations - that are critical in reaching and educating citizens - political parties and elected officials help build networks, develop relationships, and sustain trust and communication at the grassroots level.

Civic organizations can also be useful in conducting gender equality assessments, working with political parties or examining public policies or government programs to identify challenges to gender equality and how to best address them. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Mostar Women Citizens' Initiative (MWCI) created issue-based coalitions across ethnic lines to provide a greater role for women in political and civic life in Bosnia. One such coalition of women from major political parties, civic groups and citizen associations formed to advocate for greater protection to women on maternity leave. The group established and managed a working group of experts who produced a draft law, then implemented a media and advocacy campaign to help influence the government to adopt this draft law.

Working with women in political parties is at the heart of NDI's work with women. Political parties are the gateway to political leadership and the key to advancing women's full participation in the political process. It is not enough for parties to establish women's wings or place women at the bottom end of party lists; they must develop real avenues for women's leadership. Access to, and advancement within political parties remains both essential to women's political success and the most difficult political door for women to enter.

NDI's political party programs focus on building the skills and capacity of women party activists, as well as reinforcing among party leaders the value of women as voters, party leaders and candidates. NDI's Win with Women Global Initiative, convened in 2003 by NDI Chairman Madeleine Albright, has focused exclusively on strengthening women's roles in political parties. The Win with Women Global Initiative's organizing tool is the Global Action Plan (GAP), a set of concrete recommendations to help political parties broaden their appeal by becoming more inclusive and representative of women as voters, party leaders, candidates and elected officials.

NDI has conducted multiparty and/or single party programs to assess parties' strengths and weaknesses in recruiting, retaining and promoting women; to help parties reform their internal policies and practices; and to develop effective strategies that attract, retain and promote women. The Institute also helps parties develop and implement gender equality strategies to increase women's representation and participation and provides technical assistance to parties in developing gender responsive political platforms.

In Botswana, NDI conducted assessments of three major political parties to determine the degree to which women are incorporated in leadership positions, and to identify both the obstacles and opportunities they face in seeking such positions. From these assessments, NDI generated specific recommendations on how each party can increase women's political participation. These findings were presented to party leaders and also informed the content and design of a skills-building program for potential women leaders in each party.

NDI also works to promote and support the participation of women in all stages of the electoral process, as candidates, campaign managers, poll watchers and voters. Recognizing the particular barriers women face in electoral processes, NDI has developed and implemented programs targeted specifically toward the specialized needs of women and gaps in women's electoral participation. In 2005, NDI assisted the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) in developing and a nationwide campaign to encourage women to participate in the general elections. The "Use Your Voice" campaign featured five prominent Lebanese women who appeared in television, radio, public transportation and billboard advertisements to motivate women voters.

In Afghanistan, where women have been disproportionately affected by the brutal repression of the Taliban regime, NDI has trained most of the women candidates for national and provincial elections since 2004. And in Iraq, the National Platform for Women, supported by NDI, brought together women political and civic activists to advance the issues of healthcare, education, employment and political

participation. After the elections, the National Platform will be a tool for newly-elected parliamentarians as they seek to respond to constituents' needs. It will also serve as a point of reference for including women in policy debates; and it will encourage voters to hold candidates and political parties who have endorsed the platform accountable to their public campaign promises.

The online resource iKNOW Politics ([www.iknowpolitics.org](http://www.iknowpolitics.org)) was created by the Institute and its partners to encourage women's participation and effectiveness in political life. A joint project of NDI, the UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), iKNOW Politics is a virtual forum in English, Spanish, French and Arabic that provides opportunities for women to share their experiences, access information and build a supportive online community to promote women's political participation. Since its inception in 2007, iKNOW Politics has averaged 1.5 million hits a month, and serves elected women officials, candidates, decision-makers, political leaders and civic groups, as well as academics, students and practitioners worldwide.

Having attained political office, women need the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to perform their jobs effectively. Elected women have often had little or no opportunity to develop the type of specialized skills necessary to succeed in public office and NDI often works with elected women to help build their capacity to be effective officeholders. These skills may be office-specific, such as rules of procedures, drafting and advocating for legislation and budgets, and constituency outreach. Such capacity building may focus on equipping women with the technical knowledge necessary to participate in influential committees in "non-traditional" areas, such as finance or defense. NDI also works with their male counterparts to raise awareness of gender equality issues, as well as to demonstrate the importance and political value of women's leadership in public office.

NDI also works to help form and develop caucuses that can advocate for women's participation and leadership. Parliamentary caucuses have helped harness the power of women legislators to increase their influence, add a gender perspective into the policy development process and introduce legislation that address priority issues necessary for the achievement of gender equality. These groups frequently represent a unique space within legislatures for multi-partisan debate, and as such, the ability of the women's caucuses to be effective has reverberations on larger legislative, civic and political processes. Many caucuses not only work to help women parliamentarians come together to enact policy, they also conduct programs, training workshops and roundtables to help make women better members of parliament and political leaders. Other types of caucuses include women's branches or wings within political parties that can impact party policies and processes; and broader caucuses that include party activists, elected women and leaders from civil society organizations who work together to advocate for change.

In Bangladesh, NDI supports an alliance of senior women political and civil society leaders through the Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership (BDAWL), which was formed to help women rise to senior positions within political parties, government, and civil society. The Alliance helped organize an orientation program for the 9th parliament of Bangladesh. Its recent 197-page publication, "Who's Who: Women Leaders at a Glance", serves as a "resource for government, business, academia, professionals and the media in identifying women experts from a broad array of disciplines."



### Conclusion

The international community – including donor aid agencies, intergovernmental bodies, international financial institutes and nongovernmental organizations – has focused its attention on, and dedicated growing resources to women’s development. And with the creation of a new senior level position at the State Department, the Ambassador at Large for Global Women’s Issues, National Security Strategy, along with USAID and State Department-funded programs, the administration has given concrete expression to renewed U.S. efforts in this regard.

There is now growing consensus that women’s equal rights and opportunity are inexorably linked to peace, prosperity, human development and democracy. How a country taps the talents and capacity of its women will, in large measure, determine its economic, social and political progress. As an Institute dedicated to political development, NDI believes that women’s more equitable role in politics will not only ensure that the concerns of women and other marginalized citizens are represented, but will affect many policy options that are debated and the amount of funding that programs receive. A 2008 survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which compiled the views of parliamentarians from 110 countries, found that male and female legislators emphasize different priorities. According to the IPU, women tend to prioritize social issues such as childcare, equal pay, parental leave and pensions; physical concerns such as reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence; and development matters such as poverty alleviation and service delivery.<sup>12</sup>

When women are represented in a legislature in significant numbers, they can bring their priorities forward to influence the legislative agenda. In Rwanda, for example, the growing number of female lawmakers was linked to more assertive and effective efforts on behalf of children.<sup>13</sup> In fact, there is evidence that women legislators not only prioritize, but take action on and fund these issues. Using data from 19 OECD countries, researchers found that an increase in women legislators resulted in an increase in total educational expenditure.<sup>14</sup> And in a study of Swedish female legislators at the local level, women showed a strong preference for childcare and elder care over other social issues. These priorities were reflected in local spending patterns, with more money directed towards childcare and the elderly in districts with more female representation.<sup>15</sup>

It is our hope, therefore, that new initiatives that focus on such issues as maternal and child health and women’s and girl’s literacy and microfinance, particularly in Muslim-majority countries, are joined by comparable efforts to promote women’s political participation and leadership. This will ultimately help sustain a local commitment to health, education and economic development. It is not an accident that the countries in which these issues are not part of the national agenda are places where women are denied a genuine political voice. Conversely, empowering women politically will help countries develop those democratic institutions so they can begin to successfully address issues related to security, jobs, human rights, physical well-being and human development.

<sup>1</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. “Women in Parliaments: World and Regional Averages.” Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm>

<sup>2</sup> O’Connor, K. (Undated) “Do Women in Local, State, and National Legislative Bodies Matter?” The Women and Politics Institute, American University.

[<http://www.oklahomawomensnetwork.com/doc/Why%20Women%20Matter%20paper.doc>].

<sup>3</sup> Camissa, A. and B. Reingold (2004) “Women in State Legislators and State Legislative Research: Beyond Sameness and Difference” in *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2: 181-210.

<sup>4</sup> Chinkin, C. (2003) “Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring the Participation of Women.” United Nations: Division for the Advancement of Women. [<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/peace2003/reports/BPChinkin.PDF>].

<sup>5</sup> Strickland, R. and N. Duvvury (2003) “Gender Equity and Peacebuilding: From Rhetoric to Reality: Finding the Way.” International Center for Research on Women. [[http://www.icrw.org/docs/gender\\_peace\\_report\\_0303.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/docs/gender_peace_report_0303.pdf)].

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- <sup>6</sup> International Crisis Group (2006) "Beyond Victimhood: Women's Peacebuilding in Sudan, Congo and Uganda" in *Crisis Group Africa Report N°112*.
- <sup>7</sup> Rosenthal, C.S. (2001) "Gender Styles in Legislative Committees" in *Women & Politics*. Vol. 21, No. 2: 21-46. [[http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J014v21n02\\_02](http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J014v21n02_02)].
- <sup>8</sup> Powley, E. (2003) "Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition." Women Waging Peace and The Policy Institute. Hunt Alternatives Fund. [[http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/10\\_strengthening\\_governance\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_rwanda\\_s\\_transition.pdf](http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/10_strengthening_governance_the_role_of_women_in_rwanda_s_transition.pdf)].
- <sup>9</sup> Schwindt-Bayer, L.A. and W. Mishler (2005) "An integrated model of women's representation" in *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 67, No. 2: 407-428.
- <sup>10</sup> Chen, Li-Ju (2008) "Female Policymaker and Educational Expenditure: Cross-Country Evidence." Research Papers in Economics 2008: 1 Stockholm University, department of Economics, revised, Feb 27, 2008. [[http://ideas.repec.org/p/hhs/sunrpe/2008\\_0001.html](http://ideas.repec.org/p/hhs/sunrpe/2008_0001.html)].
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- <sup>13</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. Rwanda: The Impact of Women Legislators on Policy Outcomes Affecting Children and Families. New York, UNICEF: 2007. Available from: <http://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/powley.pdf>
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Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you very much.

And next, I want to quickly turn to our second witness, Ambassador Hunt.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SWANEE HUNT, CHAIR, INSTITUTE FOR INCLUSIVE SECURITY (FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRIA)**

Ambassador HUNT. Thank you so much. And I also would like to ask that my full testimony be submitted.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Without objection.

Ambassador HUNT. Thank you.

I chair, as you know, the Institute for Inclusive Security, and we do a combination of research and training and advocacy with women in 40 conflict areas, and we have well over 1,000 women in our network of women leaders.

Mr. Chair, I appreciate very much the presence of the four Congresswomen who have been here, and I do want to make a comment that they are exquisitely aware that, as we talk about 19 percent of the parliaments around the world being women—women being 19 percent of those parliaments, that in the United States, at this last election, which was the great diversity election, women went from 16 percent to 17 percent. And so this is very much, do as we say, not as we do.

Now, we have a growing body of research, of course, that is verifying that women's leadership does reap significant rewards for governance. And Ambassador Verveer was talking about women as untapped resources.

I would like to focus, as Mr. Rohrabacher was, on Afghanistan, especially his question about culture. You know, should we go in there and try to change the culture? I would like to know what culture is. What I know is that, 40 years ago, this hearing would not have taken place. So, Mr. Chair, you are in fact changing this culture by holding this hearing. And I believe that we have a very important role to support those voices inside of the Afghan culture, the women in particular who are asking for support for their leadership.

I have been many times to Afghanistan, including during the Taliban years, and have brought women leaders to NATO headquarters. We have trained foreign service officers, U.S. Marine Corps, how to connect with Afghan women.

I want to particularly give as an example the Honorable Shukria Barakzai, a parliamentarian who put her life at risk to win her place in the Wolesi jirga, and she was part of creating that network that you were talking about earlier, that nonpartisan network. They have reached into the grassroots and included civil society in their work.

And I particularly want to say that that is an example of how women broaden this idea of democracy to create more stability. And that is the kind of initiatives we can be supporting all around the world. She is not alone, obviously.

Let me cede my time to Dr. Mishkat Al Moumin, the first Iraqi minister of the environment during the transition government. I would like to ask her to take my remaining 2 minutes to speak about her experience.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hunt follows:]

**Statement by Ambassador Swanee Hunt  
Chair, Institute for Inclusive Security  
US House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight  
June 9, 2010**

Distinguished Members of Congress,

I would like to thank Chairman Russell Carnahan and Ranking Member Dana Rohrabacher for inviting me to testify about advancing women's leadership in politics and civil society. I thank all the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee as well as representatives from other committees here today. By emphasizing women's agency rather than their victimhood, this subcommittee is highlighting an essential, yet often overlooked, partner in consolidating democracies and building peace.

I began promoting a more inclusive concept of security, one that acknowledges women's contributions to peace and stability, as US Ambassador to Austria. While helping resolve the conflict in the Balkans from 1993 to 1997, I became keenly aware of the unwillingness of the international community to use the enormous pool of talented, well-educated women peace builders to help resolve the conflict. Yugoslavia, the country torn apart by a bloody war that lasted a decade and killed close to 200,000 people, had the highest percentage of women PhDs per capita; yet when we convened the parties in Vienna and later at Dayton to negotiate, no women were on any formal delegations.

The marginalization of these experts in the Balkans was simply part of a broader problem of exclusion. To address it, in the fall of 1999 I founded a program called The Institute for Inclusive Security. Its cornerstone has been the global network of women peace builders, which has since grown to include over 1,000 women from 50 conflicts. My primary goal was to connect its members to policymakers around the world. Network members, all demonstrated leaders, are elected and appointed government officials, directors of NGOs and movements in civil society, scholars and educators, businesspeople, representatives of multilateral organizations, and journalists. With such varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, they bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process. Over the past decade, these leaders have led major efforts to create stability in the most volatile places in the world, ranging from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka, Colombia to Liberia, the Middle East to Cambodia.

**Women and Government**

To build inclusive political institutions, cultivate economic development, and sustain peace, governments must reflect the needs and priorities of the whole population. Yet today, women are severely underrepresented in governments across the globe. Women currently fill only 17 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide and only 14 percent of ministerial-level positions. They continue to be marginalized and underrepresented in everything from district councils to constitution-drafting committees to legislatures.

This is true despite a growing body of research showing the distinct roles women play in society. Strengthening women's leadership results in significant rewards for governance.

**The Benefits of Women's Leadership**

**1. Women advance critical developmental priorities post-conflict.**

Worldwide, women legislators often champion issues that directly impact communities, such as education, health care, and the environment. In many settings, women have crossed ethnic, religious, and

party lines to shape peace agreements, sponsor legislation, and influence the drafting of constitutions in ways that ensured greater attention to long-term social well-being. Women also are more likely to adopt a comprehensive definition of security, one that highlights key social and economic issues critical to solving intractable conflicts.

**2. Women help rehabilitate the image of government in the eyes of the people.**

In post-apartheid South Africa, women leaders successfully involved the general population in re-envisioning the role of the military so it could be viewed as a service provider rather than as an arm of a tyrannical regime. In Rwanda, the rise of women improved public perception of government; women there — and elsewhere around the world — are perceived to be less corrupt. In fact, research by the World Bank and others indicates a direct correlation between women and decreased bribery and corruption in the public sector.

**3. A critical mass of women in governing institutions promotes collaboration across ideological lines and sectors.**

Nothing illustrates this point better than the work of Senator Aloisea Inyumba of Rwanda. At the age of 26, Ms. Inyumba became Rwanda's minister of gender and social affairs after the genocide. She designed programs to bury 800,000 corpses and crafted a national adoption campaign to find homes for 500,000 orphans. As head of the Commission for Unity and Reconciliation, she went village to village helping victims dramatize their tragedies, preparing them for the reintegration of perpetrators. She created women's councils that fed into the parliament, resulting in the highest percentage of women legislators in the world.

In Rwanda's Parliament, Senator Inyumba and her female colleagues have secured what many have only dreamt possible: a female majority legislature. With 56 percent representation in the lower house, Rwanda is at the top of the world's ranking of women's political representation. Though Rwanda's legislative branch is relatively weak, women parliamentarians have been at the forefront of efforts to improve it. They developed and introduced the first substantive legislation to originate in Rwanda's parliament—a bill on gender-based violence. The Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP), a cross-party caucus to which all female members belong, led the bill's drafting and introduction. Throughout the process, the FFRP used an inclusive approach: extensive consultations and outreach to men and women in communities nationwide influenced the bill's provisions. Moreover, women legislators included male colleagues in the consultations and recruited them as co-sponsors. The significance of this legislation can not be overstated; Rwanda's executive branch has put forward every other substantive law since the 2003 election of Rwanda's first post-genocide, permanent government.

**4. Women increase cooperation between government and civil society.**

In Kosovo, Vjosa Dobruna led the interim government Department for Democratic Governance and Civil Society. She viewed as a priority the need to organize consultations on human rights and other issues with civil society. Dobruna notes these processes sparked a cooperative relationship between government and grassroots organizations: "For the first time, a ministry included marginalized minorities. We asked them what they wanted, and we listened to their responses."

In Afghanistan, women have been active participants in their country's reconstruction, striving to promote gender equity, religious and political moderation, and human rights education and reforms.

No one can tell the story of Afghan women better than the Honorable Shukria Barakzai. Despite the crushing oppression of Taliban rule, Ms. Barakzai founded and directed the Asia Women's Organization,

which provided underground education for women and girls. Ms. Barakzai was not alone; countless Afghan women continued to provide health, education, and social services under the Taliban, providing the foundation for Afghanistan's civil society networks today.

In 2005, Ms. Barakzai and more than 600 other women ran in Afghanistan's first parliamentary elections in over 30 years. The road to victory was not an easy one; she and many other candidates faced verbal harassment and even physical violence during the campaign. The results of the 2005 elections exceeded expectations, with women capturing 17 seats beyond the 68 allocated by quota.

While increasingly marginalized, women parliamentarians represent the only counterbalance to the religious leaders and warlords that dominate the National Assembly. While fighting immense challenges, they have bridged ethnic and political divides through a nonpartisan women's network, which includes women from the Assembly, various institutions of the executive branch, and representatives of civil society. When the Shiite Personal Status Law passed, women not only came together to demonstrate on Kabul's streets, but they also drafted and passed Afghanistan's first ever legislation outlawing violence against women. The legislation was recently signed into law by President Karzai. Through these multi-sectoral initiatives, women are broadening participation, helping to democratize Afghanistan's fledgling government.

More work still needs to be done. This fall, women will once again run for seats in the National Assembly. While the constitutional quota has opened the door for women, the international community must do more to ensure women can meaningfully participate in the legislative process. Like Rwanda, Afghanistan's women parliamentarians need a cross-party women's caucus in the National Assembly to provide the support and resources necessary to become effective leaders. As Afghanistan stands at a critical crossroads, these women are key allies we simply cannot afford to lose.

#### **5. Women in government serve as a democratizing force.**

In 1993, Cambodia held democratic elections, bringing peace to a country besieged by more than 40 years of civil war and despotic rule by the Khmer Rouge. Although the country's political environment is marked with party isolation and mistrust, the growing number of women in local government has strengthened democratic values.

Like many, the Honorable Mu Sochua was forced to flee her homeland to escape the Khmer Rouge. After nearly 18 years in exile, she returned to Cambodia and to an environment *Time* magazine called "a pervert's paradise." Women and girls were routinely being trafficked as sex workers. As Cambodia's first minister of women's affairs, Sochua negotiated an agreement with Thailand allowing trafficked Cambodian women to return to their country instead of being jailed. She authored and defended the Domestic Violence Law in Parliament. Sochua continues to call for greater national and international attention to government corruption and human rights abuses. She is the first woman to become secretary-general of a political party, and as a top opposition leader, she constantly faces threat and intimidation. Sochua's refusal to stand down has come at great personal sacrifice; she was recently stripped of her parliamentary immunity and found guilty of defamation against Cambodia's prime minister. Today, she is faced with imprisonment because she is refusing efforts by the government to silence her opposition. She continues to push for increased transparency and oversight, challenging local norms and systems that breed corruption and stymie genuine democratic development.

#### **A Critical Window of Opportunity**

These women are not exceptions to the rule; they are but a few examples of the valuable contributions millions of women make every day to building peace, providing stability, and consolidating democracies.

In the past decade, the rhetorical commitment to women's leadership has increased. The UN has passed Resolution 1325, 1888, and 1889, each emphasizing women's participation as a key prerequisite in establishing durable peace and security.

The 10th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security takes place in October 2010. Despite some important progress in achieving the goals of women's empowerment and protection in the context of armed conflict, the promise of Resolution 1325 is largely a dream deferred. Women face continued exclusion from peace processes and post-conflict governments. Reconstruction efforts are usually not gender-sensitive. There is rampant sexual violence against women in conflict, and rape is often used as a weapon of war.

Former Irish President Mary Robinson and I worked closely with UN Deputy Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro to spur the creation of a high-level steering committee on 1325 that includes the heads of all relevant UN agencies. That committee is meant to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach by the UN system to implementing the resolution. A civil society advisory group is helping shape the committee's focus and generating support and specific commitments from UN member states: I, along with Mary Robinson, Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarité Bineta Diop, former UN Special Representative of the Secretary General Lakhdar Brahimi, Ambassador Don Steinberg, and several Advisory Group members are seeking to make sure the tenth anniversary is a call to action.

US action and support in the lead up to this anniversary is critical. It would focus attention and catalyze support for women's leadership. It would strengthen the effort to end conflict and build peaceful, democratic societies around the world. And it could meaningfully help the women leading efforts to end conflict and strengthen communities globally.

#### **What Can Congress Do?**

The US Congress must play an important role in advancing women's global leadership. In particular:

- 1) **Congress should use its oversight role to request from the administration much more significant political and financial attention to programs that promote women's political leadership. Specific focus should be placed on:**
  - a) Cultivating nonpartisan women's legislative caucuses and supporting them technically and financially;
  - b) Supporting training for women parliamentarians on coalition building, advocacy, and public speaking as well as training that involves men to strengthen support for women's participation;
  - c) Providing financial and technical backing for civil society consultations on legislative initiatives in post-conflict countries;
  - d) Underwriting practical support to female candidates and government officials, such as transportation, child-care, extra security when appropriate, and access to mass media for campaigns; and
  - e) Funding urban and rural campaigns that publicize women's contributions and ability to lead.
- 2) **Congress should assist the United States in demonstrating leadership in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 by:**
  - a) Authorizing and appropriating funds to enable the direct participation of women in peace negotiations as well as post-conflict needs assessment and donor conferences;
  - b) Encouraging US support for a minister-level conference of UN member states proposed by the UN Civil Society Advisory Group on Women, Peace, and Security as well as substantial US

commitments at the ministerial conference. This conference would take place in October 2010 and provide a forum for member states and the UN itself to make commitments to specific actions they will take on this agenda over the next 3–5 years;

- c) Allocating increased funding and resources to combat sexual violence against women refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs); and
- d) Passing the International Violence Against Women Act.

**3) Congressional members should regularly meet with women political and civil society leaders during CODELS.** You would be surprised at the difference in substance and in tone. As ambassador, I worked closely with President Clinton, Secretary Albright, and Ambassador Holbrooke on Bosnian peace. We all had many frustrating encounters with stubborn local politicians who refused to support the possibility of coexistence. I always countered that resistance by meeting with hundreds of local women who had their fingers on the pulse of their communities. Each time I left inspired by their energy and motivation to rebuild their country.

**4) Congress needs to regularly recognize and call on women leaders from government and civil society around the world to testify.** Aloisea Inyumba, Shukria Barakzai, and Vjosa Dobruna are among the foremost leaders in their countries, yet it is rare to see a woman from a conflict zone called to testify and lend her expertise to your deliberations. Leaders like Mishkat Al Moumin should regularly be among those whose insight you seek. It will elevate their prominence and amplify their voices. Most importantly, it will enhance US efforts to consolidate democracies and sustain peace.

Thank you.



Mr. CARNAHAN. Please. You are recognized to do so. And welcome.

Ms. AL MOUMIN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak today.

Achieving successful transition to peace in Iraq requires full participation of women in political life. As the minister of the environment in Iraq from 2004 to 2005, I immediately focused on providing services, especially safe drinking water, trash pick-up, and environmental education in unsecured cities, including Sadr City, Fallujah, Karbala, Nasria, and Basra. When these services came on line, civilian deaths decreased. When these services were shut down, civilian deaths increased. Had we focused on securing and ensuring these programs continued and expanded, I am convinced many Iraqi and American lives could have been spared, as well as a lot of money.

As the minister of environment, I did not think I was dealing with security issues. To my mind, I was as far from dealing with security as I could be. However, providing clean water eroded al Qaeda base. I was undermining al Qaeda recruiting power. The weak, frustrated, isolated community was, above all, thirsty. These people were easily recruited only if they remained desperate.

I paid a very high price for my effort. The most difficult moment in my life was when I held my 9-year-old son in my arms after surviving a bomb attack, not realizing he was alive. I also survived a suicide car bombing, during which four of my body guards were killed. Zarqawi, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, claimed full responsibility, and he called me the leader of the Infidel. He vowed that his arrow will not miss again.

After surviving the attempt on my life, I went straight to the ministry. I worked as hard as I could. The ministry grew stronger. Communities I served honored me with their trust and appreciation. In April 2005, tribal leaders in the Iraqi Marshland approached me to train their women. After handing over the ministry, I founded Women and the Environment Organization, WATO, in Iraq, which is training rural women and children in southern Iraq to speak out when decisions are made. As a result, women's participation has increased sevenfold, and communities are now purifying water, improving hygiene. Moreover, the gender gap is being bridged organically, as communities are experiencing firsthand the positive results of listening to women.

The same women are interested in community policing and other security-related matters. Sometimes the links are so clear, we don't notice. For example, women walk miles to collect water. During these walks, they see things men do not see. I am one of many Iraqi women and around the world who understand that security cannot be achieved through the mere use of force. We comprehend security must be achieved by attacking the root causes of instability. We have the expertise, the knowledge, the background to combat insecurity and terrorism, but our distinct perspective is not sufficiently reflected in decision-making, and we are not called on as much as we should be in seeking to restore stability and prosperity to war-torn society.

Women's influence and insights must be leveraged to fight for stability in Iraq and elsewhere.

Thank you.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Minister. And thank you so much for being here and for sharing your story and the work that you have done. Thank you.

Last on our panel, I want to turn to Judy Van Rest.

Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF MS. JUDY VAN REST, EXECUTIVE VICE  
PRESIDENT, THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE**

Ms. VAN REST. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rohrabacher.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in this discussion today.

I will summarize my prepared statement.

I am pleased to participate in this discussion. It is a topic that is near and dear to IRI's heart. The International Republican Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to advancing freedom and democracy worldwide.

The evolution of IRI's work over the last few decades in many ways mirrors my own. The conventional wisdom was that it made more sense to include women and men together in trainings and not have specific programs for women. I came up in an era of Republican politics in which I felt strongly that being in a women's group would confine me to that niche, and I wanted a seat at the table with the men.

However, my view changed completely after spending 14 months in Baghdad as the Coalition Provisional Authority's point person for outreach to Iraqi women. Those Iraqi women taught me many things, but none as important as the need for programs that focus on giving women the skills to level the playing field in politics and in other fields important to their country's development.

To be sure, women face far more obstacles to becoming fully participating partners, due to cultural and traditional attitudes, but they also lack the training and experience.

In the international political realm, male party leaders control the political process and often do not want to include women candidates on party lists because they do not believe that women are capable of winning. Even quota systems, which have done much to increase women's participation in politics, cannot guarantee that the elected women will be effective legislators.

Without the proper training and mentorship, women themselves do not feel confident to take on political roles. But when women are given the tools to campaign for office, when they are taught to be effective legislators, when they learn how to advocate for their rights and rights of others, in my experience, they become powerhouses for change.

There is little doubt that women have made significant progress in the areas of health, education and business. There is also little doubt that women lag far behind men in politics. The World Economic Forum's 2009 Global Gender Gap Index reports that 134 countries, while closing gaps in health and education outcomes between men and women by more than 90 percent, have closed only 17 percent of the political outcomes gap.

A 2010 study on women's economic growth by the U.S. Agency for International Development evidences that throughout the devel-

oping world, women are becoming “vital economic players, representing a larger percentage of the workforce than ever before.” Yet, despite these gains, women are not adequately represented in the decision-making process at any level of government.

Still, with the recognition of the need for women’s empowerment, along with training and mentorship programs such as IRI’s Women’s Democracy Network and the Arab Women’s Leadership Institute, women are progressing and achieving much in the political field. More women are being elected to public office. Many more women leaders and members of civil society organizations are becoming politically involved by keeping their elected officials accountable and focusing on women’s rights.

Women in post-conflict societies are fearless in their pursuit of a better life for their family and communities. Afghan women are models of courageous women making a remarkable difference. In the lead up to the August 2009 elections, the Movement of Afghan Sisters (MAS), a 26,000 member, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization, conducted numerous civic education events and helped mobilize 25,000 women to vote on election day. MAS was the only women’s organization to successfully field candidates for provincial council seats, and 27 of its supported candidates were elected, filling 23 percent of the 117 female quota seats allocated nationwide.

Sadly, one of these brave women, Gul Maki Wakhali, a woman in her 20s, was recently slain by the Taliban.

Women are also demonstrating that, once elected, they can become effective legislators. The Peruvian Women’s Roundtable, a legislative women’s caucus, is showing that its 31 members are effective political leaders and members of Peru’s National Congress. U.S. Congresswoman Kay Granger and IRI board member was just in Lima, Peru, last week, where she learned firsthand how these women legislators are pushing for a new domestic violence bill.

We have countless other success stories of women who, with the help of other nongovernmental organizations, such as IRI, the National Democratic Institute, and the Institute for Inclusive Security, have become effective agents of change in their societies. These examples should give us the hope and impetus to double our efforts to support women in democratic development.

The United States has taken an important lead in this effort. Witness the work of women such as Secretary Hillary Clinton, Ambassador Melanne Verveer, First Lady Laura Bush, former Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky, and hundreds of other American women who are devoting their lives to advance women globally. We have seen an overwhelming demand for women’s participation in all facets of the political process, and IRI is fully committed to helping women reach their full potential in politics and civil society. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Van Rest follows:]

**TESTIMONY OF MS. JUDY VAN REST  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT  
JUNE 9, 2010**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rohrabacher and Members of the Committee. I am pleased to participate in this discussion on a topic near and dear to IRI's heart. The International Republican Institute, established in 1983, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to advancing freedom and democracy by developing political parties, civil society organizations, open elections and good governance. We have worked in more than 100 countries and currently are active in 61 countries.

The evolution of IRI's work over the last few decades in many ways mirrors my own. The conventional wisdom was that it made more sense to include women and men together in trainings and seminars, and not have specific programs for women. I came up in an era of Republican politics in which I felt strongly that being in a women's group would confine me to that niche, and I wanted a seat at the table with the men.

However, my view changed completely after spending 14 months in Baghdad as the Coalition Provisional Authority's point person for outreach to Iraqi women. Those Iraqi women taught me many things, but none as important as the need for programs that focus specifically on giving women the skills to level the playing field in politics and in other fields important to their countries' development. To be sure, women face far more obstacles to becoming fully participating partners due to cultural and traditional attitudes, but they also lack the training and experience.

In the international political realm, male party leaders control the political process, and often do not want to include women candidates on party lists because they do not believe that women are capable of winning. Even quota systems, which have done much to increase women's participation in politics, cannot guarantee that the elected women will be effective legislators. Without the proper training and mentorship, women themselves do not feel confident to take on political roles. But when women are given the tools to campaign for office, when they are taught how to be effective legislators, when they learn how to advocate for their rights and rights of others, in my experience, they become powerhouses for change.

There is little doubt that women have made significant progress in the areas of health, education, and business; there is also little doubt that women lag far behind men in politics. The World Economic Forum's 2009 Global Gender Gap Index reports that 134 countries, representing more than 90 percent of the world's population, have closed the health outcomes gap between women and men by 96 percent, the 'education attainment' outcomes gap by 93 percent, and the

economic outcomes gap by 59 percent. Yet, only 17 percent of the political outcomes gap has been closed.

A 2010 study on women's economic growth by the U.S. Agency for International Development evidences that throughout the developing world, women are becoming "vital economic players, representing a larger percentage of the workforce than ever before. Over 800 million women are economically active worldwide, undertaking critical roles in industry, agriculture, manufacturing, and services, and as producers, traders, and owners and operators of micro- and small-enterprises." Yet, despite these gains, women are not adequately represented in the decision-making process at any level of government.

Still, with the ever growing recognition of the need for women's empowerment along with training and mentorship programs such as IRI's Women's Democracy Network (WDN), women are progressing and achieving much in the political field.

More women are being elected to public office. Women hold nearly 20 percent of seats in national assemblies worldwide and 22 countries now have women as their heads of state. More women are taking on leadership roles as members of municipal and provincial councils. For example, in Morocco's June 2009 elections, thanks to a new quota system, 3,406 women were elected to municipal councils – a dramatic increase from 127 women councilors in prior elections.

Many more women leaders and members of civil society organizations are becoming politically involved, lobbying their elected officials and governments on issues that affect families and their nations. In Serbia, for example, a multi-partisan group of women, called the Network for Political Accountability, has since the 2008 parliamentary elections documented and tracked politicians' campaign promises and their subsequent activity in government.

Other women's civil society organizations focus on constitutional changes to ensure women's rights. The Kenya Women's Democracy Network country chapter, led by Professor Ruth Oniang'o and Dr. Josephine Ojiambo, took a leading role in reviewing the draft constitution, and recommended that Kenya's Human Rights and Gender Commission as contained in the Bill of Rights, be separated into two individual commissions to highlight the Gender Commission's role in advancing the empowerment of Kenyan women. The current draft of the constitution now includes a provision which, if passed in the August 2010 referendum, would give parliament the power to restructure the commission into two or more separate commissions through legislation.

Despite cultural and security impediments, women in post-conflict societies are fearless in their pursuit of a better life for their families and communities. When I was in Iraq, I witnessed an astonishing number of Iraqi women coming forward to take part in the reconstruction of their country despite death threats to themselves and their families. One such organization, the Women's Leadership Institute (WLI), during the terrible, violent period of 2006-2007, persisted in training women leadership skills, focusing on the day when women would have the opportunity to run for local office. In advance of the January 2009 provincial council elections, WLI held multiple workshops, training more than 400 women candidates, and as a result, out of

the total of 110 women currently sitting on provincial councils throughout Iraq, 42 percent are WLI trainees.

Afghan women are models of courageous women making a remarkable difference. Since 2001, a growing number of Afghan businesswomen, educators, and activists have taken on more visible roles as advocates in support of the needs of their communities and have sought to leverage their social activism and business experience as a conduit to greater political participation. The Movement of Afghan Sisters (MAS), a 26,000 member, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization consisting of women from parliament and provincial councils, the business community and civil society, in the lead up to August 2009 presidential and provincial council elections, conducted numerous civic education events for women throughout the country and helped mobilize 25,000 women to vote on Election Day. MAS was the only women's organization to successfully field candidates for provincial council seats, and 27 of its supported candidates were elected filling 23 percent of the 117 female quota seats allocated nationwide. Sadly, one of these brave women, Gul Maki Wakhal, a woman in her twenties, was recently slain by the Taliban.

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In Bolivia, women legislators partner with women political party leaders and local council members in the Multi-Party Women's Roundtable to create and introduce gender promotion legislation to enforce women's political rights by having the National Electoral Court intervene in cases in which women are forced to leave their elected positions. Although the bill was not passed in its entirety in 2008, the National Electoral Court and the nine Departmental Courts adopted key parts of this bill and included it in their official modifications to the electoral law.

We have countless other success stories of women, who with the help of nongovernmental organizations such as IRI, the National Democratic Institute, and the Institute for Inclusive Security, among others, have become effective agents of change in their societies. These examples should give us the hope and impetus to double our efforts to support women in democratic development.

The United States has taken an important lead in this effort; witness the work of women such as Secretary Hillary Clinton, Ambassador Melanne Verveer, First Lady Laura Bush, former Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky and hundreds of other American women who are devoting their lives to advancing women globally. Through our Women's Democracy Network, and a new effort called the Arab Women's Leadership Institute, we have seen an overwhelming demand for women's participation in all facets of the political process. The momentum for women's empowerment is clear and strong. The International Republican Institute is fully committed as a partner in helping women reach their full potential in politics and civil society.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you. And I guess I want to kick off the questions.

You all were here for the first panel, and first of all, thanks to each of you for the important work that you and your NGOs have done for many years and your individual work. But I would like each of you to quickly evaluate current initiatives. We have heard about things the administration is doing now to try to really have the tool of empowerment of women as a more integral part of our foreign policy. We heard from initiatives at the U.N. to combine many of those organizations, again to have a more effective way to deal with that at U.N.

I would like your quick evaluation of those current initiatives and a comment about, is there anything we are missing? Are there things that we need to be doing in addition to these things that you would like to highlight for us today? And we will go in reverse order on this round and start with Ms. Van Rest.

Ms. VAN REST. Thank you. In evaluating these programs, I believe that a lot has been done by the United States to raise the awareness of the importance of women in all walks of life. And I think that increasingly throughout the world there is a momentum for this to happen.

I do think that the programs that each and every one of the organizations are doing are having an impact, but I think that there has to be some understanding of how long it is going to take for women to reach these levels, attain political leadership and leadership in other walks of life, and to commit to a long-term plan to make sure that once they receive training, for example, that there is follow up, that there is a constant mentoring, because it cannot be just a one-off thing.

So I think that while these organizations and the programs are having a great effect, there certainly is a much greater momentum now than there was 10, 15 years ago. I think a lot more emphasis should be put on the long term.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Ambassador HUNT.

Ambassador HUNT. At issue here is the definition of security. And when we are out in the field, we hear repeatedly that security to these women includes—or isn't just about, you know, where are the borders, but rather, can my child go to school and back without getting raped? Is there water? Can I go to gather firewood without putting my life at risk from land mines, et cetera? And so we have to have a broader perspective on the meaning of security, and I would hope that the Congress would think in terms of what we are spending for each soldier that we are putting in Iraq. And to Mr. Rohrabacher's point earlier, if we want to bring home our troops, with the enormous cost of every single day of that war, the most effective means, the most effective strategy, in my opinion, would be to elevate the voices of these extraordinary women leaders there.

And I have met with them. We have done training of hundreds and hundreds of these leaders. But how many are on the supreme court? Zero. With all the influence we have with the current government, there are zero women. And that is appointed by the

President. Zero women on the supreme court, which sets the tone. And how many are ministers out of 27? Three.

So we have allowed—Mr. Rohrabacher, you were talking about culture, and what is culture? Culture is the way that decisions are being made every nanosecond. And it changes constantly. And when we talk about what is Pashtun culture, who are you listening to? Who is defining that? Is it the Pashtun women, who, in fact, many of whom are leaders who are asking for this kind of training, who are asking for positions? Because we are not getting in there and supporting the elements of the culture that would allow us in fact to leave there.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Wollack.

Mr. WOLLACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I believe that the architecture for assistance exists both within the United States and internationally. I also believe in this work, as I do in democracy and human rights work, pluralism is good. I don't believe in one source of assistance.

People bring different strengths to the table when they provide assistance. And I think the international community has created an architecture and the United States Government in successive administrations have created an architecture to provide support for women.

My argument would be, as we invest more in the economic health and education sphere for women, all extremely important, that we ensure that there are also resources to empower women politically. Because, ultimately, if these efforts are going to be sustained at the local level by the politicians and the governments in these countries, it is going to require a critical mass of women that will be in positions of political power, in political parties, in legislatures, and government.

And there is, based on evidence, that you need almost a critical mass of about 30 percent of women in these political institutions that I believe will be able to help sustain these types of economic and educational and health programs that the international community is supporting.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

I now want to recognize Mr. Rohrabacher for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Do you, the panel, do you think that Islam by its nature or by the fundamentals of the religious beliefs that are in the Koran is contrary to what our concept of equal rights for women would be?

Ambassador HUNT. May I speak to that? I would love to speak to that because, as you may have heard during the introduction, I have a master's degree and a doctorate in theology. So I even know what backsliding means. I am from Dallas, Southern Baptist.

And I think that if you go and you read the Old Testament of the Bible, it is horrible in terms of rights for women, human rights for women. So we can—any one of us can go in and choose this Scripture or that Scripture to make the point that the Koran is detrimental to women or that the Bible is.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, it is the Old Testament, you said. Is the New Testament that way as well?

Ambassador HUNT. Well, there are—



Mr. ROHRABACHER. Christians don't really say that the Old Testament counts as much as the New Testament.

Ambassador HUNT. Well, I will tell you what. I cut my hair—I actually cut my hair myself. I cut my hair, and the Apostle Paul would have a very hard time with that. But he was speaking in terms of culture, as many of the Scriptures in the Old Testament and in the Koran were. But he would say it is a shame that I cut my hair. So we choose what verses we are going to emphasize.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So you don't see that Islam is any different in terms of a threat to women's rights as an adamant enforcement of what people who are looking to those Holy Scriptures, either in the Koran or in the Bible, you don't see that as being more of a threat to women?

Ambassador HUNT. No. I see fundamentalism as being a threat.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. No matter what kind of fundamentalism? Christians, Jews, Muslims. The fundamentalists of religion are the enemy of women. Is that it?

Ambassador HUNT. To greater and lesser degrees, depending on the branch. Okay. As I say, I am from a fundamentalist background.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I haven't studied this, so I am asking for information.

Ambassador HUNT. I would say the more fundamentalist a group becomes in any of the religions that I have been a part of or studied, the more narrow the rights of women become. But my esteemed friend here, who is Iraqi, I would like to give her just a second to address this.

Ms. AL MOUMIN. Thank you. From a practical experience, women in the environment organization work among tribal communities in southern Iraq. The organization that I founded and my colleagues in Iraq work with it as well.

We empower women to participate in the decision-making process on the village level, on the local level. The way we did it, we highlighted the prominent Muslim women who played a big deal role in decision-making. And I can name them.

For example, Lady Hajja, she is known to be the mother of all Muslims—all Muslims, including men. They follow her steps every year and perform a pilgrimage in Mecca. However, no one highlighted that. No one highlighted that there is a great powerful Muslim woman, first of all, who everybody follows. So even men, they go to Hajj or pilgrimage every year knowing that they are following the steps of a woman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Look, again, I am really seeking information here. I am not really making a point. Because, after all, that is what the hearings are supposed to be for, I think, is to educate us a little bit. But, look, doesn't the Koran talk about men have a right to four wives, and it doesn't say that a wife has a right to four men. And I mean there is a fundamental difference there, is there not?

Ms. AL MOUMIN. Not really.

Ambassador HUNT. Mr. Rohrabacher, read Leviticus, read your Leviticus.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Old Testament.

Ambassador HUNT. Tonight pull out Leviticus.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. The one thing I do know is that there is a difference between—a lot of Christians don't believe what is in the Old Testament because they believe that when Christ came he amended all of that and made it different. So the New Testament is what Christians go by. I am not saying that is necessarily what I believe in, but that is my inkling of what people tell me about.

Ambassador HUNT. Here is my concern. As soon as we start saying that the problem is Islam, we forget that the problem is those who are interpreting Islam in order to press a certain world view.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay.

Ambassador HUNT. And we let these guys off the hook who are doing this interpretation.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I think it is fair to say that people who attack Islam and say that "Islam is our enemy" are different than people who say "radical Islam is the enemy." Of course, there are some people who don't even want us to say radical Islam. They can't even get those words out of their mouth. But I would say that I—

Let me put it this way. Mrs. Bhutto, who I knew quite well, was elected to be President of Pakistan, and that supposedly is a very strong Islamic country. So it would seem to me if she was elected that that would mean that there isn't something contrary with most Muslims that would be contrary to have a woman as their head of state, because they elected a woman to be their head of state.

Now, of course, that is Pakistan and not Pashtunville or whatever it is there, the Pashtun territories up in the northwest part of the country.

So, in terms of religion, that is the only thing I can identify now. In Buddhism and other religions, is there a differentiation between men and women as well?

Ambassador HUNT. I think we are getting afield of talking about the issue here.

If you look at the swath of where we have problems with terrorists across the world, you will find a correlation with terrorism and the suppression of women. All right? Now you can take a bad idea, like the extreme Islam, if you will, being used by terrorists, and you can try to fight a bad idea with machine guns, but you won't get very far because you keep inspiring the people with a bad idea because now they are victims, they are under attack. So what you do is fight a bad idea with a good idea, and you focus on the elevation of these women's voices, which is, de facto, a way of fighting terrorism.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, I certainly buy onto that, Mr. Chairman. Certainly there is no doubt that something—if we can mobilize women by backing them up in a demand for rights in various parts of the world, I think that would make it a more peaceful world. I don't have any doubt about that. I don't necessarily think that that is going to be an easy task because there is going to be a cost related to that as well, which was the basis of my question before about how much we would expend in Afghanistan in order to make sure that what we would consider an evil force for repression of women doesn't dominate that area.

But I buy onto what you are saying. That is absolutely right. If we support the rights of women, that would be a great way of bringing change to a society in a positive way that would make it less threatening to the rest of the world and certainly less threatening to half their population.

Ambassador HUNT. So we will work together on that, right?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you. There you go.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

I have one more set of questions for myself, and I will just make them very short and concise. But I would like each of you to comment about the kind of monitoring evaluation measurements out there that can help us in looking at some of these new initiatives, which I think we are all pleased to hear about here today. So that is number one.

And, number two, in particular, you know, there are some examples of programs where we have done well with young boys and men in terms of educating them because I think that is—we obviously have to focus on women empowerment, but I think a piece of that strategy has to be focusing on young boys and men and how they are part of creating that environment.

So let me start with you, Mr. Wollack.

Mr. WOLLACK. The evaluation process I think is important in terms of the work that we do in all elements of democracy and human rights work. It is difficult oftentimes to quantify it, to put numbers to it, aside from the fact that the numbers of the people you train, the numbers of the people you work with. Much of it has to do with behavioral change. It is like describing a good movie or a good book. It is hard to do it through numbers. You have to use words.

But I think there are a number of ways that you can evaluate these programs, particularly in the political sphere. The first is whether the behavior of the women that you are working with change over time, that they gain the self-confidence so they can compete professionally, that they have the capacity to communicate effectively so their participation in the political process is not seen as remarkable by the population at large and by their male counterparts. So the evaluation process is one that looks at behavioral changes of people, whether they have the information and the tools that enable them to compete with their male counterparts.

There are other factors that inhibit that competition, but we have seen in this work, because of international expertise, international support, and international solidarity and specific programs, that the behavior of people change.

The second is more in the regulatory field, whether laws and processes change within political parties, within legislatures, and within government. Are resources being dedicated to women who are competing? Whether reforms that are taking place in parties allow real avenues for political leadership in political parties. That sometimes you can determine in the end by numbers because you can see a rise in the number of women at all levels of political parties.

And then, ultimately, one has to look at whether—not only the numbers of women that get elected or women in legislatures—whether they can function within those legislative bodies and does

the legislature provide for reforms in those institutions that allow for women to be effective lawmakers?

So all of these things are ways that you can judge programs over a period of time. But, ultimately, it is going to be, I believe, a long-term, generational change. But you have to begin now, and you have to begin this work in an intensive way because the process is about change of behavior.

Mr. CARNAHAN. And real quickly on the subject of men and boys.

Mr. WOLLACK. Yes. Most of these institutions that we are dealing with are male-dominated institutions. But what we are seeing is the youth in these institutions, the youth do not have, in many cases, the same prejudices that their parents do or their grandparents do. So also enhancing youth engagement, both young men and young women, also changes the political dynamic as well. Because if more youth receive leadership training and avenues for leadership development, you are going to find it much easier for women to gain those positions as well.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Ambassador Hunt?

Ambassador HUNT. I would like to take us to a different conflict, and that is Rwanda. I happen to be writing a book right now called *Rwandan Women Rising* where I am evaluating how it is that women came to be 56 percent of the Parliament in the Lower House. That is the first time in the history of the world. And on the Supreme Court, there are three out of the seven, including the Chief Justice, and on and on and on throughout.

And the important thing is to ask the women themselves to evaluate. I have done more than 100 hours of interviews with these women, and they have come up with five different—I am not going to go through them—five different ways that they came to have that kind of influence. One of the ways, by the way, was their influence on the men and the boys. And, of course, the President, Paul Kagame, there is a whole strategy they used to not only get his ear but to get his action.

But I will leave you with this image of my arrival at the Senate. I was told, well, there is the president of the Senate, this gentleman, this tall burly man. So I went up to say, hi, I am Swanee Hunt. And he said, oh, hello, I am the president of the Senate—Senator whatever—Mulgambuttu—and I am gender sensitive. It was part of his calling card, if you will. And that is how intrinsic to that whole culture this issue of gender sensitivity had become.

Mr. WOLLACK. I should just add one thing, Mr. Chairman. The male politicians in Rwanda came to the conclusion that if women had been in political power in Rwanda, genocide would never have taken place; and that was a motivating factor for a lot of the male politicians in the country.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Ms. Van Rest.

Ms. VAN REST. I would like to echo what both Ken and Swanee talked about with regards to measuring how effective our programs are and what the results are. And I think all our organizations pay very close attention to this because we are also looking for lessons learned. That will help us to refine the programs.

We also understand that in doing these programs and measuring and evaluating what happens is that we still have to have this understanding that people are only going to take baby steps and that, once again, as I said earlier, is that there has to be a commitment to long-term planning and training to ensure women in their quest for leadership roles and wanting to become leaders in their society.

With regards to young men and boys, one thing to consider is that once women become confident it is going to have sort of a domino effect with their sons and, also, there is a difference in the generations. In many countries we work in, the young men do not have the same view as their fathers. So we do emphasize in our training bringing together women and men. We don't just have programs focused on women, because we want to make the point that it is important for them to work together.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I just want to give a special thanks to all of you for your time today. I apologize for the delay from the vote. And thank you for the work you do. We look forward to continuing to work with you on many of these challenges going forward.

We will be adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:07 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]



# A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515-0128

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
OVERSIGHT**  
**Russ Carnahan (D-MO), Chairman**

June 7, 2010

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight, to be held in **Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live, via the WEBCAST link on the Committee website at <http://www.hcfa.house.gov>)**:

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 9, 2010

**TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society

**WITNESSES: Panel I**

The Honorable Melanne Vermeer  
Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues  
Office of Global Women's Issues  
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Esther Brimmer  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of International Organization Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

**Panel II**

Mr. Kenneth Wollack  
President  
National Democratic Institute

The Honorable Swanee Hunt  
Chair  
Institute for Inclusive Security  
(Former U.S. Ambassador to Austria)

Ms. Judy Van Rest  
Executive Vice President  
The International Republican Institute

**By Direction of the Chairman**

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

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### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON IOHRO MEETING

Day Wednesday Date 06/09/10 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 1:06 pm Ending Time 4:05 pm

Recesses 1 ( 2:34 to 3:22 )

Presiding Member(s) Chairman Carnahan, Ranking Member Rohrabacher

CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY:

- Open Session
- Executive (closed) Session
- Televised
- Electronically Recorded (taped)
- Stenographic Record

TITLE OF HEARING or BILLS FOR MARKUP: (Include bill number(s) and title(s) of legislation.)

Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Carnahan; Rep. Rohrabacher; Rep. Ellison

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an \* if they are not Members of HIRC.)

Rep. Delahunt; Rep. Woosley; Rep. Moore\*; Rep. Jackson Lee; Rep. Schakowsky\*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes  No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

SFR - Al Moumin Defense Concepts paper 2009 (pgs 49-56 only), SFR - Al Moumin testimony, SFR - Monica McWilliams, SFR - Rep. Moore, SFR - Rep. Schikowski, SFR - Rep. SJL, (see attached)

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE MARKUP: (Attach copies of legislation and amendments.)

RECORDED VOTES TAKEN (FOR MARKUP): (Attach final vote tally sheet listing each member.)

Subject	Yeas	Nays	Present	Not Voting

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or  
TIME ADJOURNED 4:05 pm



Subcommittee Staff Director

**COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
**MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON IOHRO MEETING**

*Hearing: "Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society"*

**Statements for the Record, Page 2**

SFR - Visaka Dharmadasm

USIP PB29 Afghan Peace Jirga

NATIONAL INTEL COUNCIL DR 2008-31 Women in 2025 – Economics

GWJ fact sheet

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Esther Brimmer by  
Representative Russ Carnahan (#1)  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
June 9, 2010**

**Question:**

Ms. Brimmer, last week UN Secretary-General Ban ki Moon made remarks at a meeting on “The Global Effort to Increase the Participation of Women in United Nations Policing in Peacekeeping Operations” where he commented on that the 10 year anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognized the importance of expanding the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations. Could you comment on the progress made in increasing the number of women in UN Peacekeeping Operations? Have we seen UN Peacekeeping Operations increase in effectiveness over the course of the last 10 years as a result of this initiative? What has the U.S. done to advocate for having more women in UN Peacekeeping operations over the last decade?

**Answer:**

The United States has been a leading advocate for increasing the participation of women throughout the United Nations, including in peacekeeping operations. The UN actively encourages Member States to increase the numbers of women among their troop and police contingents in UN operations, and now requires that lists of candidates for senior positions include women.

The most senior female UN official dealing with PK operations at UN HQ is Suzanne Malcorra, Under Secretary-General for the Department of Field Support. Prominent women leaders with current UN peacekeeping missions include Ellen Margrethe Løj (a citizen of Denmark) who is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for UNMIL in Liberia; Ameerah Haq (Bangladesh) is the SRSG with UNMIT in East Timor. In addition, Leila Zerrougui (Algeria) is a Deputy SRSG with MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rima Salah (Jordan) is Deputy SRSG with MINURCAT in Chad. The United States strongly supports UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s five-year campaign, launched in August 2009, to lift the percentage of women peacekeepers to 20 percent in police units, and to 10 percent in military contingents by 2014.

The UN now includes figures on numbers of women in uniformed contingents in its monthly statistics. Women deployed include the following:

In 2007, India deployed a 125-member all-female police contingent to Liberia, as part of their UN Mission. These women have not only contributed to stability, peace, and security in Liberia, they have also served as a model for women in policing and have inspired Liberian women to become police officers themselves. Also, the UN mission has launched a joint UN-Liberian campaign against rape. Other countries are following suit. Bangladesh sent an all-female police unit to Haiti to participate in the UN Mission there; Namibia is sending an all-female police unit to Darfur to conduct patrols in and around IDP camps and to train local residents in community policing; and Nigeria has announced plans to send an all-female police unit to Liberia.

The U.S. military has also embraced this focus on women. All-women teams of Marines will be meeting with Afghan women in their homes to assess their needs. Women peacekeepers are able to deal effectively with women and children in cultures and under circumstances where male officers might not be welcome. Women peacekeepers can also provide special and additional assistance for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

The United States continues to strongly advocate for women to hold senior positions in the UN and with peacekeeping operations.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Esther Brimmer by  
Representative Russ Carnahan (#2)  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
June 9, 2010**

**Question:**

UNDP Administrator Helen Clark wrote, in an op-ed on Monday, that she believes “that achieving gender equality is not only morally right, but also catalytic to development as a whole, creating political, economic, and social opportunities for women which benefit individuals, communities, countries, and the world.” Could you comment on the Administration’s positions and programs that support UNDP and other UN agencies’ initiatives that seek to achieve gender equality?

**Answer:**

Investing in the health and education of women improves the lives of their families and communities, as women tend to be responsible for the health and care of their families, for managing natural resources, for farming, and for controlling household goods. Furthermore, countries in which women fare better are more stable.

Looking at specific UN agencies, UNDP is the UN’s premier development agency, and an important partner in achieving gender equality in many parts of the world. We expect UNDP to work closely with UN Women to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment into its development work. The United States is contributing \$100.5 million to UNDP’s core resources in FY 2010.

UNIFEM, which will be folded into the gender composite entity called UN Women, works with affiliated networks of individual advisors and organizations in over 100 countries, focusing on relatively small projects which bring concrete benefits to women’s lives. U.S. contributions to UNIFEM have risen steadily over the years, most recently with a \$6 million contribution for FY 2010.

HIV/AIDS is a disease that disproportionately affects women: women care for those living with the disease, contract the disease themselves, and leave behind orphans when they succumb to the disease. UNAIDS has actively supported the MDGs related to gender equality and women’s health. UNDP is part of the

UNAIDS family and leads on the gender components of the global HIV/AIDS response.

UNESCO has helped countries assess how education helps promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, and improve maternal health. Basic literacy skills for mothers affect the overall health of the family, and the United States has supported UNESCO's effort to improve literacy skills for women and girls worldwide.

Refugees are often excluded from development programs that follow humanitarian interventions, and ignoring the needs and potential of refugees and regions hosting refugees and/or returnees in transition and long-term development programs may hamper efforts to attaining the gender-related MDGs. This is all the more evident in those situations in which displaced and/or formerly displaced people make up a substantial part of the total population, and an even larger part of the poor population.

The United States continues to strongly support the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which aims to meet MDG 3 on women's economic empowerment by promoting a two-pronged approach for the protection of refugee women: gender equality mainstreaming and affirmative action to support the empowerment of refugee women and girls. A central objective is to ensure the meaningful participation of refugee women in community decision making and in return and reconstruction processes.

In terms of U.S. initiatives, President Obama's Global Health Initiative is a \$63 billion program to improve health and strengthen health systems worldwide. The program focuses on women and girls, whose health has the greatest impact on families and communities. The President's Feed the Future Initiative commits \$3.5 billion to strengthening the world's food supply. The program recognizes that most of the world's food is grown, harvested, stored, and prepared by women; and that women have specific needs regarding training and access to financial services, markets, and decision-making.

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**Cooperative Security: Creating an Integrated Security Environment in Iraq***Mishkat Al Moumin***Introduction**

Security is often seen as the mere use of force. However, in conflict and post-conflict settings security is tied to delivering services and empowering local communities. When the central security apparatus lacks the capacity to deliver security, local communities can be empowered to remedy the situation and through service delivery interrupt the recruitment tactics used by the insurgents.

This article examines the connections between security, local empowerment, and meeting basic needs.

**Checkpoints or Community Involvement?**

The recent escalation in bomb attacks in Iraq provides further evidence that security is not the mere use of force; security requires involving the people in achieving their own safety. It is critical that the Iraqi Government and its allies acknowledge this reality while the U.S. troops prepare to withdraw from major cities in Iraq.

When the constitutional government does not give its people an active role in security planning and implementation, the insurgency and the militia will give them an active role in standing against the government. This lesson was learned from the Sadr City blast on June 25<sup>th</sup> 2009 that killed more than 78 and wounded an additional 200.<sup>1</sup> The blast was generated by 440 lbs. of dynamite smuggled into Sadr City through several checkpoints.

Persons familiar with the entrances and exits of the city, and who do not look like a strangers, can evade checkpoints. Sadr City is a closed community; no one, not even Iraqis, can gain entrance to the city without raising questions or being noticed, even if he is not engaged in smuggling a large quantity of dynamite. Thus this tragedy was perpetrated by someone who had access to the area and who acted against his own community.

Men can circumvent checkpoints after receiving basic security training on evasion methods, spending some time observing checkpoints in operation, and passing through these checkpoints themselves. A man cannot spend time understanding how checkpoints work unless he is employed to do so, and no one would pay a "newcomer" who could easily be noticed and who would raise suspicions among such a closed community as Sadr City. If the entire community was involved in achieving its own security, it would be very difficult to smuggle dynamite into that community without being noticed.

This lesson can also be learned by analyzing the Al Bathaa blast of June 10<sup>th</sup> 2009,<sup>2</sup> which occurred in Nasiriyah Province, 225 miles southeast of Baghdad. Nasiriyah was once considered one of the most secure provinces in Iraq, not because it is very well protected, but because of its location. Nasiriyah is located near the Iran -Iraq border and is surrounded by other Shiite majority provinces. Its location made it increasingly challenging for Al Qaeda, a Sunni organization, to operate there, as Al Qaeda cannot win the "heart" of a Shiite dominated region. However, Al Bathaa became vulnerable as a battlefield between the winners and losers of the January 2009 provincial elections, thereby impeding locals' access

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to responsive government. This gave the major stakeholders a passive role in security planning and implementation.

**Meaningful Involvement**

The same conclusion can be reached in examining the Kirkuk blast of June 21, 2009, which occurred 156 miles north of Baghdad. More than 73 people were killed and 200 were wounded.<sup>3</sup> Kirkuk is a mixed city of Arabs, Kurds, Sunnis, Shiites, and Turkmen. The blast took place in a Shiite-Turkmen neighborhood. While Turkey was protecting the Sunni Turkmen, the Shiite Turkmen were left without protection. Protecting the Shiite Turkmen would have required their recognition as a political entity that could share wealth and power, a move all Iraqi political parties were against. Thus, the Shiite Turkmen became vulnerable, since they played too passive a role in achieving their own security. Decisions regarding their security were made behind closed doors without involving them in the process.

The deadly blast in Sadr City of June 25th was of a similar nature. Prime Minister Maliki is currently organizing his election campaign for a second term around his success in providing security. One way to undermine his campaign is to prove to the voters that he did not succeed in providing security. Sadr City is a strong-hold of Moqtada Al Sadr. Prime Minister Maliki cracked down on Al Sadr's powerful militia known as the Al Mahdi Army in February 2007 as part of the security operation known as Operation Law and Order. In the Middle East, revenge is a bloody custom and Iraq is no exception. Thus, Sadr City inhabitants became vulnerable and Sadr City became a battle front. As was the case in Kirkuk, its people played too passive a role in achieving their own security and were thus more vulnerable to attack.

These cases demonstrate that each social group within a community should play an active role in achieving their own safety and security.

**Inclusive Security**

Defining security as the mere use of force results in the use of one tool to deliver security rather than diversification of the tools that can be used to deliver security.

The need to diversify security tools is crucial in conflict and post-conflict zones such as Iraq. State agencies including security apparatuses cannot fully deliver security alone. The conflict leaves these agencies dysfunctional; thus, there is not enough force to combat insurgency. Identifying roles and responsibilities for communities to protect their neighborhoods will enable these communities to fill the gaps left by the inefficiency of the security apparatus. When each social group within the society plays a role in delivering security then there are many players responsible for delivering security. The players perform many roles based on their capacity which bridge any security gaps.

As an example of the breakdowns that can occur when this approach is not implemented, one may consider the December 2007 decision by the the Iraqi government that female members of Iraqi police forces (1,000 out of 299,000 total police officers) should go home and hand over their guns to male colleagues.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this move, Iraq is witnessing the phenomenon of female suicide bomb attackers. Al-Qaeda took advantage of this security "breach" immediately. The number of female suicide bombers increased from



eight in 2007 to 32 in 2008.<sup>5</sup> In a society in which a male police officer cannot physically search a female, the lack of female police officers is a major security hole. By sending female officers home, the Iraqi government did Al-Qaeda a favor. Moreover, the Iraqi government announced its decision in the media, which made it easier for Al-Qaeda to take advantage of this decision. Increasing the number of female officers within the Iraqi police force, reaching out to communities, and training them on how they can address and handle security issues are key principles to successfully handling security after the withdrawal of the American troops.

The lesson learned from the above experience is that each member within the community should play a role in delivering security. This role should coincide with his or her social role and responsibility within that community. The second lesson learned is that no member in the society can perform *all* roles and responsibilities in security planning and implementation.

#### **Security and Services**

Security is about protecting communities. However, any community that lacks access to basic needs cannot protect itself. A community that lacks access to safe drinking water, proper sewer systems, a supply of electricity, and trash pick-up is a vulnerable community. Insurgents will recruit easily among such a community by offering basic needs. For example, the Mahdi Army—the most powerful Shiite militia in Iraq—distributes resources including gasoline and fuel, and in return the recipients become loyal followers. For a person who pays his entire monthly income to buy gasoline for his generator, this is a great offer. Iraq is a desert climate and temperatures often reach over 100°F. Summer lasts for nine months. However, most people lack sustainable electricity supplies. They depend on private generators, which require gasoline to run most of the day. People who can afford buying gasoline can run their generators and enjoy fresh air; people who *cannot*, go without. These deprived citizens are vulnerable towards any offer of aid they receive. When one has gasoline, then he and his family can enjoy fresh air and cold water, bathe, and cook. Thus, it is not surprising that most followers of the Mahdi Army are impoverished.

Another correlation between security and the supply of electricity is seen in youth recruitment. Lack of sustainable electricity supplies led people—particularly youth—to go to mosques because mosques have back-up generators providing cool, fresh air. However, the air conditioning came at the price of listening to preachers recruit the listeners for the cause of Jihad. If the Iraqi National Guards and its allies use force to address this issue, the result would fuel Jihad. The insurgency will portray the use of force as a war against Islam and will recruit more followers. However, if the Ministry of Electricity supplied consistent electricity, teenagers might instead watch TV, play computer games, or read books at home.

#### **Security and Basic Environmental Needs**

The leaders of the insurgency realize the importance of meeting basic environmental needs such as access to safe drinking water. Speaking from my own experience, I believe they comprehend the connection between needs and security better than the government.

In July 2004, as the Minister of Environment, I led the first campaign to provide water for Sadr City inhabitants. I supervised work among poor communities, helping them

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to meet their basic environmental needs. In August of 2004, I survived a suicide bomb attack in which four of my bodyguards were killed. Abu Musab Zarqawi, the leader of Al- Qaeda in Iraq, later claimed full responsibility and called me, “the leader of the infidels.” Considering his statement, in which he vowed that, “his arrow will not miss next time,” has made me reflect on his persistence to hunt me.

I came to three important realizations. The first was that the insurgency used the grievances of the people to mobilize them to oppose the government. Without these grievances the insurgent leaders would have lost their base of support. <sup>6</sup>

The second realization concerned the legitimacy of the government in conflict and post- conflict settings. People in Sadr City, Fallujah, and Karbala feel that they are part of the decision- making process.<sup>7</sup>

The third realization was that security can be achieved through responsive government. Providing basic needs resulted in reducing the level of violence. In 2004—when these projects were running—less people were killed. The number of civilian deaths dropped from 12,049 in 2003 to 10,751 in 2004. The number of civilian deaths continued to increase after these were ceased. In 2008 after the surge, the number of civilian deaths decreased dramatically to 9,214. However, this number is very close to the 2004 number, and it came at a higher cost. These projects cost US\$20,000, while the White House estimated that the surge cost US\$22 billion.<sup>8</sup>

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Year	Date	Civilian Death
1	<b>2003</b>	<b>12,049</b>
2	<b>2004</b>	<b>10,751</b>
3	2005	14,832
4	2006	27,652
5	2007	24,522
6	<b>2008</b>	<b>9,214</b>

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Source: Iraq Body Count <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>

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#### **Insurgency, Grievance, and Opportunity**

The Sunni insurgency makes the appealing argument that, whereas Saddam restored electricity, water, and other basic needs just four months after the First Gulf War in 1991, the Iraqi government, backed by the only remaining superpower, has failed to provide such essential services. The Sunni insurgency includes Ba’ath party members who claim that they should be in power because they did a better job providing services. In this case, recruitment is based on the capacity to provide adequate services, and the perception that the government is failing to do so fuels the insurgency. The government can choose to address this issue indirectly by launching a security campaign or directly by providing basic services, and in doing so eliminating this recruitment tool.

**Moving Away from Conventional Warfare**

The Iraqi National Guard and the United States Armed Forces face difficulties in eliminating insurgency. A conventional army will always be in disadvantaged position against the tactic of “hit and run,” and will be unable to achieve complete military victory. In examining all the security campaigns launched against the insurgency, the following conclusions can be reached:

- 1- The security situation is still problematic; Fallujah, Tal Afar, Sadr City, Karbala, and Basra are not completely secured. These cities witness a calm period for a few months right after the security campaign. However, blasts and assassinations targeting both Iraqis and Americans take place afterwards. For example, Operation Restoring Rights was launched in September of 2005 to secure Tal Afar. Tal Afar witnessed a calm period until October 8<sup>th</sup> of 2006, when a bomb killed 14 people in Tal Afar and wounded 13. The violence continues to this day with attacks occurring sometimes twice a month.<sup>9</sup>
- 2- The insurgents flee the city before or during the security operation. They build a new base in another city, which must then be targeted by an entirely new operation. The Iraqi National Guard is running in circles chasing the insurgents from one city to another.<sup>10</sup>

**Adopting a New Strategy**

The Iraqi National Guard and the United States Army can adopt the strategy of stretching out the enemy rather than destroying its base. Al Mahdi Army is a good case study. Al Mahdi Army is the most powerful Shiite militia consisting of 60,000 men. These men are only located in urban areas. They do not operate outside of the main cities. Their cells are organized at the national level within downtown areas. Their cells *cannot* be organized to function on a local level, such as a district or a village. Forcing them to operate on the local level would result in stretching their forces, distracting their attention, and reducing their influence and power.

Empowering local community leaders in each district, county and village would create an alternative center of power with whom the army could cooperate. For example, Iraq has 111 districts, by simply dividing 60,000 – total personnel of Al Mahdi Army—over 111 districts the result will be 540 men. 540 men are hopeless without their lines of supply, without orders from their commanders. 540 men cannot stand against a district inhabited by 20,000 people.

Supply lines, communications, and resources are available only in downtown areas. Provision of security should be initiated at the local level where insurgents have difficulty operating. Security planning should start from districts, counties, and villages, and then move to the cities and downtown areas.

This approach will give the Iraqi National Guard and U.S. Army a decisive advantage over the enemy: operating on a level where the insurgents cannot operate; distracting the enemy and paralyzing its forces; when the supply lines overstretched they can easily be interrupted; reducing the manpower of the enemy.

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The Mahdi Army cannot fight against all districts and villages. For example, Basra consists of seven districts and six villages. Al Mahdi Army cannot compete for control in all of them. If every district and village is secured, downtown Basra will be secured as well. Then the Mahdi Army will be surrounded by opponents and unable to operate in a province in which all of the districts are outside its control.

However, attempts to secure downtown first—as was the case when Prime Minister Maliki launched his security operation of the Promise of Peace in June of 2008—resulted in a new security challenge of how to *sustain* security in downtown areas. The security operation resulted in members of Al Mahdi Army hiding in districts and villages or fleeing the country waiting for the right moment to come back. Fear among locals that the gunmen will return remains persistent.

The same analysis can be applicable to fighting Al Qaeda in Iraq. Al Qaeda needs to operate from Anbar province because of its supply requirements; Anbar province is located on the borders with Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Jordan. Money, fighters, and equipment can easily be smuggled inside and outside Iraq from these areas. However, Al Qaeda cannot control the entire province, which is the largest by territory in Iraq, comprising some 39 cities and towns. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research estimates the number of Al Qaeda fighters at little more than 1,000.<sup>11</sup> 1000 men cannot control the entire province nor all cities and towns within it. These men cannot move away from their supply-lines, main roads, and commanders. Rather than attacking the base, which is hidden inside a community, the Iraqi National Guard should start by securing districts and towns.

When a town is secured, then security should be handed over to the local community within that town. By local community, I mean both tribal leaders and local populace living in that town. While local tribal leaders present a type of local governance, the local populace should be trained and involved in security implementation. The local populace meets with their tribal leaders on a daily basis to discuss local issues and security is among the main issues discussed. Both local tribal leaders and the local populace are familiar with the entrances and exits to their town. They can easily spot a stranger or an intruder engaged in suspicious activity that an outsider might miss. Local populaces are close to each other; they are all from the same clan. A foreign fighter cannot move easily without being noticed. Why did they not notice foreign fighters before? They did notice them.<sup>12</sup> However, they did not know what to do or how to report it or to whom.

Security is highly centralized in Iraq, and it might take months to pass information on insurgents to the Iraqi police forces or the Iraqi National Guard. Even then, receipt of information does not ensure the Iraqi police forces will respond or take an action. In the meantime, the informant may be targeted for cooperating with the authorities.<sup>13</sup>

Providing a venue for the local populace to take control of their own security is the key to successful security planning and implementation. In conflict and post-conflict settings security planning and implementation must be managed at the local level. Bringing security planning and implementation to the local level is the key to delivering and *sustaining* security in Iraq.

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**Dr. Mishkat Al Moumin** is a specialist in Iraq and the Middle East. Her areas of expertise include political dynamics, laws and regulations, culture, environment and economics. Dr. Al Moumin was handpicked by the United Nations Special Envoy to Iraq to be the first Iraqi Minister of Environment. Dr. Al Moumin has over 15 years of related experience in government, international law, NGOs, and academia. Dr. Al Moumin has expertise in repairing dysfunctional agencies and has received the following degrees: Master in Public Administration from Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and PhD in International Law from the School of Law, Baghdad University

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<sup>1</sup> Hameed, Saif and Ned Parker. "Sadr City blast, at least 78 killed "Baghdad bombing kills at least 78, injures 145." *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 2009. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iraq-bombing252009jun25.0.4188722>. (accessed on July 21, 2009)

<sup>2</sup> Shadid, Anthony. "Blast in Crowded Market Kills 30 in Southern Iraq." *Washington Post*, June 11, 2009. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp\\_dyn/content/article/2009/06/10/AR2009061000359.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp_dyn/content/article/2009/06/10/AR2009061000359.html) (accessed on July 21, 2009)

<sup>3</sup> Mahmoud, Mustafa and Mohammed Abbas. "Death toll from Iraq's Kirkuk blast rises to 73." *Reuters*. June 21, 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLL374882> (accessed on July 21, 2009)

<sup>4</sup> Tina Susman. "Iraqi Policewomen are told to surrender their weapons." *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 2007. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-policewomen11dec11.1.7397870.story> (accessed on July 21, 2009)

Also "Iraqi Women Join Fight Against Suicide Bombers." *Radio Free Europe*, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraqi\\_Women\\_Fight\\_Suicide\\_Bombers/1256365.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraqi_Women_Fight_Suicide_Bombers/1256365.html) (accessed on July 24, 2009); Giardino, Carrie. "Iraq Women Contribute to Security as New Police Officers." September 29, 2008. [http://iraq.usembassy.gov/prt\\_news\\_09292008.html](http://iraq.usembassy.gov/prt_news_09292008.html). (accessed on July 21, 2009)

<sup>5</sup> Roggio, Bill. "Female Suicide Bomber Kills 30 in Karbala, Iraq." *The Long War Journal*, February 2009. [http://74.125.93.132/search?q=cache:-qa4h47RUeMJ:www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/female\\_suicide\\_bombe\\_1.php+suicide+bombing+by+women+attacks+Iraq+2007+2008&cd=4&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us](http://74.125.93.132/search?q=cache:-qa4h47RUeMJ:www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/female_suicide_bombe_1.php+suicide+bombing+by+women+attacks+Iraq+2007+2008&cd=4&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us)

<sup>6</sup> In his book, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (1999) Homer Dixon defines insurgency as the function of grievance and opportunity (p.143)

<sup>7</sup> Legitimacy, however, is not static, based on voting leaders into office. Rather, it is an ongoing process of public discussion and the formulation of alternative policies and actions." Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 117-118.

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine, Robert A. Committee on the Budget, Estimated Cost of U.S. Operations In Iraq and Afghanistan and of Other Activities Related to the War on Terrorism, 110th Cong. July 31, 2007, Congressional Budget Office, [http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/84xx/doc8497/07-30-WarCosts\\_Testimony.pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/84xx/doc8497/07-30-WarCosts_Testimony.pdf) (accessed July 24, 2009).

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<sup>9</sup> Tawficcq, Mohammed "Bomb Rips Tal Afar; More Bodies Found in Baghdad." *CNN*, October 8, 2006. <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/10/07/iraq.main/index.html> (accessed July 24, 2009)

<sup>10</sup> Wong, Edward and Schmitt, Eric, "Rebel Fighters Who Fled Attack May Now Be Active Elsewhere." *The New York Times*. November 10, 2004. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/10/international/middleeast/10insurgency.html> (accessed July 25, 2009)

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Tilghman, "The Myth of AQI," *The Washington Monthly* (August 2007)

<sup>12</sup> In August of 2003, I had a conversation with one of my students from Fallujah. He said "these foreign people come during the night with their guns. They take over and we cannot stop them, we do not know what to do."

<sup>13</sup> The Iraqi Minister of Interior Samir Al Summai'dai, currently the Iraqi Ambassador to the United States, survived an attempt on his life. The person who passed the tip about the plan was found dead the next day.



To: Honorable Mr. Russell Carnahan the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight.

Date: June 9<sup>th</sup> of 2010

**Subject: Including Women to Secure Iraq**

Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak today.

Achieving a successful transition to peace in Iraq will require supporting women's participation in political life.

As the Minister of the Environment in Iraq from 2004 to 2005, I immediately focused on providing services—specifically safe drinking water, trash collection, and environmental education—in insecure cities including Sadr City, Fallujah, Karbala, Nassryia, and Basra. When these services came online, civilian deaths decreased. When these services were shut down, deaths increased. Had we focused on ensuring these programs continued and expanded, I am convinced many Iraqi and American lives could have been spared and a great deal of money could have been saved.

As Minister of the Environment, I did not think I was dealing with security issues; to my mind, I was as far from dealing with security as I could be. However, providing clean water eroded Al-Qaeda's base. I was undermining Al-Qaeda's recruiting power; the weak, frustrated, isolated community was, above all, thirsty! These people were easily recruited only if they remained desperate.

I paid a very high price for my efforts. The most difficult moment in my life was when I held my 9-year old son in my arms after a bombing, not realizing he was alive. I also survived a suicide car bombing during which four of my bodyguards were killed. Zaqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, claimed full responsibility and called me the "leader of the infidels." He vowed that "his arrow would not miss next time."

After surviving the attempt on my life, I went straight to the Ministry, and worked as hard as I could. And the Ministry grew stronger. Communities that I served honored me with their trust and appreciation. In April 2005, tribal leaders in the Iraqi Marshlands approached me to train their women. After handing over the Ministry, I founded Women and the Environment Organization (WATEO) in Iraq, which is training rural women and children in Southern Iraq to speak out when decisions are being made. As a result, women's participation has increased sevenfold and communities are now purifying water and improving hygiene. Moreover, the gender gap is being

Women and the Environment Organization |1629 K St, NW Suite 300|Washington DC 20006|  
[www.wateo.org](http://www.wateo.org) |[info@wateo.org](mailto:info@wateo.org) |Phone: 202-355-6397|

Mishkat Al Moumin, PhD, CEO|[Moumin@wateo.org](mailto:Moumin@wateo.org)| 202-492-5739



bridged organically as communities are experiencing first hand the positive results of listening to women.

The same women are interested in community policing and other security-related matters. Sometimes the links are so clear we don't notice. For example, women walk miles to collect water and during these walks they see things men do not see.

I am one of many expert women in Iraq and around the world, who understand that security cannot be achieved through the mere use of force. We comprehend that security must be achieved by attacking the root causes of instability. We have the expertise, the knowledge, and the background to combat insecurity and terrorism; but our distinct perspective is not sufficiently reflected in decision-making and we aren't called on as much as we should be in seeking to restore stability and prosperity to war-torn societies.

Women's influence and insight must be leveraged in the fight for stability in Iraq and elsewhere.

Thank you.

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Mishkat Al Moumin, PhD. CEO|[Moumin@wateo.org](mailto:Moumin@wateo.org)| 202-492-5739



Monica McWilliams  
Written Testimony for Congressional Record

I have always been confident in women's leadership abilities. As a professor at the University of Ulster, I started a certificate program for uneducated women who had leadership potential. Many of the women had husbands in prison for 15, 20 years. They had to run their homes and their communities, and they were doing incredibly well, without any education and without any skills. For 25 years I also worked with domestic violence victims, establishing rape crisis centers and attempting to change divorce laws that kept women in abusive situations. The kinds of problems we were dealing with were not exclusive to any side of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

In 1996, I was a representative at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Good Friday Agreement. In spite of my reputation as a trustworthy and nonpartisan community leader, my participation in the negotiations did not come without struggle. Facing traditionally sexist attitudes, the political party that Pearl Sager and I co-founded, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC), ran under the slogan "Wave goodbye to dinosaurs." Our aim was to increase the representation of women in the peace talks. After a "kitchen-table campaign," the NIWC placed ninth in the elections. With the top 10 parties guaranteed a place at the negotiations, the NIWC earned two seats at the peace table.

Eventually, the NIWC was the only political party that was accepted in all of the communities and its representatives were the only ones at the peace table who had no difficulties working across the divide. But we weren't respected right off the bat. The morning after the elections, one newspaper story proclaimed, "Hen Party Come Home to Roost," a mere hint of the disrespect to come. When we arrived at the negotiations, the "dinosaurs" we had campaigned against treated us shabbily, calling us dogs and cows, mooring through our speeches and booing while we made comments. We repeatedly faced sexist insults and, at one point, we created an "Insult of the Week" notice board. The men's behavior was sometimes so ingrained that they did not realize they were harassing us. By way of confronting the name-callers publicly, the NIWC's notice board sent a strong message that we would not tolerate this sort of treatment.

Throughout the process Pearl Sager and I played two essential roles at the negotiation table. We supported the process as a whole, serving as facilitators for the negotiations and encouraging political opponents to work together. At the same time, we never lost sight of what we personally had set out to accomplish.

At the negotiations, we raised some substantial issues that would not have been addressed otherwise. For instance, we discussed the importance of integrating communities and schools, educating Protestant and Catholic children together for the first time. We also provided key contributions on issues of import to all the negotiating parties, such as decommissioning weapons, noting that illicit weapons had been used not only for political purposes but for acts of domestic violence as well.

Following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, from 1998 to 2003, I served as a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly, representing 60,000 people from South Belfast. Today, I serve as chief commissioner at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and continue to advocate for women and for human rights in Northern Ireland.

Congresswoman Gwen Moore

OPENING STATEMENT

HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND OVERSIGHT

WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: ADVANCING THE ROLE OF WOMEN  
IN POLITICS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

JUNE 10, 2010

I am pleased to be here today to hear about U.S. efforts to help ensure that women around the world can be active and engaged participants in the civil life of their nations.

For too long, we have simply let too many excuses, and too many barriers keep millions of women out of the political and public life of their nations. Our world is no better for it. The lives of these women are no better for it.

I look at the example being set by Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and wonder where her country would be without her leadership at this crucial time. I also remember meeting with recipients of the State Department's Women of Courage awardees this year. The stories of these few extraordinary women remind me that there are lots of women around the globe who continue to fight to make their communities better despite all the obstacles (poverty, war, violence, culture, etc) that they face. They want to be engaged despite the personal persecution they may face for doing so.

Empowering women doesn't just mean doing so in far away places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In our own hemisphere, we have a responsibility to show a strong commitment to this challenge as well.

I think of the challenges faced by women in Haiti including those who have been elected to serve in a Parliament whose terms expired shortly after the earthquake. No new date for parliamentary elections have been officially set yet which means that at this moment, there is effectively no democratically elected legislature in the country to lead and oversee the extensive. At this crucial moment in the history of Haiti and its people when we are endeavoring to build "a better Haiti", it is critical that we address the empowerment of women in Haiti and engage them at all levels as an active part of rebuilding efforts, not just another afterthought.

Given the many benefits that accrue when women are able to participate in public life and public policy, focusing on this issue now in Haiti will also benefit that nation and the international community which is investing so heavily in the future peace and prosperity of that nation. I hope that the delayed parliamentary elections in Haiti will be held soon to restore democratic order in

that nation. I also hope that the U.S. and international community will use this opportunity to facilitate the involvement of more women in these forthcoming elections. This includes providing and sustaining basic assistance to identify civil leaders who are women, provide them with basic skills and leadership training, ensure that they are aware of how to participate and be candidates in the parliamentary elections, and ensure that these polls are held in accordance with international standards.

I thank the Chairman and the Subcommittee for choosing to shine a spotlight on what we can do to support such courageous women and ensure that they are an active part of civil society and political life, not just an afterthought.

Both Congress and the Administration must press this issue at every opportunity so that we can sustain and build on gains in helping women to take leadership roles in their nations. Particularly, I would like to see the U.S. commitment that I am sure our panelists today will testify about—at least on the first panel—reaffirmed in the President's FY 2012 budget. Nice words and commitments are fine, but funding these initiatives will really show how committed we are to empowering more women around the globe. I look forward to hearing from the Administration witnesses on new budgetary resources that you will make available or will need from Congress to help support these important initiatives and enable them to allow more women around the world to speak truth to power as I am privileged to do today as a Member of the House of Representatives.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky**  
**Opening Statement**  
**Foreign Affairs IOHRO Subcommittee**  
**“Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society”**  
**June 9, 2010**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing and for inviting members of the Congressional Caucus on Women’s Issues, which I co-chair, to participate. Thank you also to the distinguished panels of witnesses.

Last fall, I testified before this subcommittee on the critical importance of a comprehensive strategy to fight violence against women around the world. The resulting legislation, the International Violence Against Women Act, currently has 100 cosponsors.

But halting the worst abuses against women is only half the story. It’s not just about how we make sure that women’s fundamental human rights aren’t horrifically violated, it’s also about how we can promote the ability of women to play a critical role in civil society and politics.

It’s no coincidence that the worst places to be a woman are also some of the most unstable regions of the world. Particularly in conflict or post-conflict settings, women’s participation in civil society and politics has proven to be a critical component of successful reconstruction and reconciliation. Research has also found a correlation between women’s political participation and lower levels of corruption.

In Afghanistan, U.S. troops have found that reaching out to local women yields tangible national security benefits. The Marine Corps’ Female Engagement Teams have cultivated valuable relationships with women in Afghanistan, who may be the mothers and sisters of disgruntled young men or even Taliban militants. These women can give our military a better understanding of their communities, and can be a source of critical intelligence.

Mr. Chairman, play a key role in their societies, and, particularly in critical countries like Afghanistan, I believe we could be doing a much better job to promote and utilize their unique skills and talents. Thank you for holding this important hearing, and, as co-Chair of the Women’s Caucus, I very much look forward to working with you on this in the future.

VISAKA DHARMADASA  
TESTIMONY FOR CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

For over two decades, conflict in Sri Lanka has been destroying our country and destroying our people. But for me, the conflict hit closest to home on September 27, 1998, when the LTTE attacked the Sri Lankan military base in Kilonochchi. The Sri Lankan government reported 609 military personnel as missing in action—including my 21-year-old son Achintha Senarath. Achintha was not given any identification tags. The army didn't think it was important! If he had been wearing an ID tag, I would have known what really happened to him.

Three months after the attack, I gathered with other parents of the missing to hold a flower offering ceremony to honor our children as well to gain recognition to our issue. Over time, we continued to meet to share our stories and discuss what action we could take to help find our missing children. These informal meetings led us to create the Association of Parents of Servicemen Missing in Action (PSMIA). We committed ourselves to uncovering the fate of soldiers missing in action, advocating for the release of detainees, and promoting peace in Sri Lanka. Our work resulted in regulation changes regarding those missing in action, including the issue of identification tags to all soldiers and the expedited registration and tracing process of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

While we effectively engaged the Sri Lankan military, I knew that we had to take our message of peace directly to the Tamil rebels. I met with the LTTE to share the importance of identification for soldiers and to promote dialogue between the rebels and the government. As first, it was a struggle. The LTTE had to be convinced that I wanted to benefit the people of both sides. I wrote to the rebel leaders and sent messages through representatives of the international community. Finally, I met with the second-in-command of the Tamil Tigers. I took seven women—no men. The LTTE commander was convinced after talking to us that we were sincere. This marked the first time that a civil society group had a meeting with the LTTE. Contact and communication are essential in the peacebuilding process, and the PSMIA's meetings with LTTE leaders paved the way for the ceasefire and the peace talks.

As I continued communicating with the Tamil population, I began to understand the deep pains that all women feel about losing their husbands and children in the war. I knew then that having a forum for women to mourn their lost loved ones together would encourage communication and reconciliation, so I founded the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) as a network for women from both sides of the conflict who have lost sons or husbands.

Since 2002, the AWAW has engaged in many peacebuilding activities, including facilitating dialogue between the government and rebel groups. Our success is a result of our strong base of mothers from both sides. A mother's voice is very influential when she says "No more bloodshed."

Although the Tamil Tigers were defeated in early 2009, there is still much work to do. The AWAW and PSMIA continue to work for peace by bringing communities together, providing conflict resolution trainings for women, and assisting those affected by the 2004 tsunami. In 2009, AWAW initiated a campaign to make the promise of UN Security Council Resolution

1325 (which calls for the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding) a reality. In Sri Lanka, women are still poorly represented in government—they hold only 5.9 percent of the seats in parliament and few senior government positions. But you can't just say, "Include women, include women." You have to show the capacities of women. With this in mind, we trained 25 women leaders on how to enable and encourage women to run for political office. We are preparing women to campaign for office and become effective leaders. So far, we have trained 500 women and have begun workshops with 750 more women from across Sri Lanka.

Today, Achintha is still missing in action. If you know your son is dead, you can at least mourn him. For me, the issue is eternally pending. But my personal tragedy motivated me dedicated my life to ending the conflict in Sri Lanka, so that another mother doesn't have to lose a child. I have spent the last ten years working with the government and the Tamil rebels and building trust between my country's divided populations. Peacebuilding is not just my work, it is my true calling. I was pushed in this situation and I know in order to save the children of my country, I have to do this.

Visaka Dharmadasa has been a member of The Women Waging Peace Network since 2000.



PALWASHA HASSAN  
E-mail: Pal\_Kabul@yahoo.com

## The Afghan Peace Jirga: Ensuring that Women are at the Peace Table

### Summary

- In late May 2010, the Afghan government will convene a Peace Jirga in Kabul to determine a national reintegration and reconciliation strategy.
- Afghan women have played a variety of social and political roles during the last three decades of conflict, including as peacebuilders, but now risk being excluded from current peacebuilding processes.
- In alliance with international agreements—most notably United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325—the Afghan government must make sure that women are actively engaged in the upcoming jirga and are included in other reintegration and reconciliation policies.
- The inclusion of women is central to sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan.

### Introduction

As Afghanistan's political leaders prepare for the Peace Jirga—bringing together some 1,500 Afghan policymakers, community leaders and elders to end the Taliban insurgency—it is important to make sure Afghan women are duly represented and included in any decisions regarding reconciliation. Banished from public life under the Taliban regime, Afghan women were included in the 2001 peace negotiations in Bonn and have steadily occupied an increasing number of public leadership positions in Afghanistan, challenging longstanding patriarchal norms and attitudes regarding women's role in Afghan society.

Despite marked improvements in women's lives in Afghanistan and greater participation of women in public life, Afghan elders and community leaders continue to demonstrate considerable reluctance to include women in peace talks. Many observers fear, that the Afghan government, desperate for an agreement with the Taliban, will compromise on the issue of women's rights in the upcoming Peace Jirga, and women will be a pawn in the negotiations, and lose ground for which they have fought hard.<sup>1</sup>

The reluctance of Afghan leaders to include women as equal partners in policy processes is reinforced by longstanding cultural practices, including the belief that women have mainly been the victims of war, rather than active participants. This view of women as passive victims, rather than as active citizens, limits the scope of women's full participation in the decision-making process, and when women are involved such a perception often relegates them to token positions.

“Many observers fear, that the Afghan government, desperate for an agreement with the Taliban, will compromise on the issue of women's rights in the upcoming Peace Jirga, and women will be a pawn in the negotiations, and lose ground for which they have fought hard.”<sup>1</sup>

As we approach the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325—which calls for women to be key actors in peace talks and all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction—there is precious little time to get right the Afghan peace process. It is only with women's active participation that a lasting peace can be established.

### The Role of Women in Afghanistan

The incorrect perception that Afghan women are wholly disempowered and exert limited influence in society due to the cultural norms of Afghanistan is one of the legacies of the Taliban regime. While it is important to consider broad social and cultural traditions, it is also critical for international actors and the Afghan government to recognize the diversity of women's role in Afghan society and how this role has evolved over time.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Afghan rulers started to promote greater freedom for women, and the 1964 constitution gave women the right to vote and seek elected office. The constitution also guaranteed them the right to education and freedom to work. However, these rights were largely enjoyed only by the elites associated with the monarchy.

The Communist regime (1979-1992) further advanced equal rights for women. Under the Communist regime, women held high posts at the ministerial level of government. Many young women were also given the opportunity to pursue higher education through special scholarship programs in the former Soviet Union and in other allied Soviet states. Women were even employed in the state's secret intelligence services, the Khad, which was responsible for killing thousands of innocent men and women.

That said, the ensuing Afghan civil war split women, much like it split the country. Indeed, there were also many women in the rural regions who sided with hardline religious parties, including Hizb-e-Islami, the political apparatus of the Jihadist parties that instituted the extremist policies of veiling and gender segregation. A small number of women even participated in armed conflict against the communists. For example, the notorious Commandant Kafar confessed to slaying numerous people. Traditionally, Afghan women had played important decision-making roles in private settings; the war and the ensuing absence of men in the villages thrust women into public leadership and decision-making roles at the local level. Women also played major roles in refugee camps starting literacy classes and schools for children.

During the Taliban rule, groups of women continued to defy and circumvent many cultural constraints even in the face of brutal repression and set up underground schools, health clinics, and other services vital for Afghan women and girls.

During the post-Taliban era, Afghan women have been playing a variety of roles at the local, national and international levels. Women lobbied hard for the Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Jirga and managed to convince the government to accept them as participants.<sup>2</sup> In 2007, women came together in holy shrines in Kandahar to call on warring parties to stop fighting, and to raise awareness about the suffering of women and children. That same year, women in Kabul visited every mosque to call on combatants to cease using religion to justify suicide attacks. In 2008, women in Kabul and throughout the provinces started wearing blue scarves to signify their opposition to war, and to send the message that the suffering of war knows no borders or ethnicity.

Women are also issuing position statements in response to policies that concern their rights. For example, they are asking the government to protect their constitutional rights and ensure that women's rights are not compromised for the sake of national security or as part of some deal with the Taliban.



In sum, throughout Afghanistan's 30 years of conflict, groups of women have been active peacebuilders as well as social entrepreneurs working around cultural and religious barriers by running schools, clinics and community centers. This has led to the development of a vibrant women's movement.

### A New Context for Afghan Women

There is no society in which gender and women's rights are considered a basic imperative. In the Afghan context, top down and politically motivated approaches have historically been unsuccessful and counterproductive. But the opportunity today for reform is more favorable than any other period in Afghan history. There are two major differences that make the current era more conducive to social change.

First, the changing social and political context in Afghanistan has increased the chances for women of the middle and lower-middle class to enter the political scene. Previous attempts to secure more rights for women were dominated by women from elite families associated with the monarchy and, in later years, with the Communist party.

In 2010, most women's organizations and advocacy platforms are not associated with any political party or elite family. The number of women activists from middle and lower-middle classes, if not directly from remote areas, demonstrates that the women's movement is representative of all segments of Afghan society.

Women-led organizations working in remote areas, like the Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC) in the provinces of Paktia and Paktika and the Afghan Women Resource Center (AWRC), and Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA in the eastern part of the country), are bridging sociocultural as well as geographical divides, and reflect the larger diversity in the culture and the changing realities of the country.

Second, the incorporation of gender-mainstreaming strategies in international reconstruction efforts is helping to bring women out of seclusion following six years of social and political isolation under the Taliban regime. The Bonn Agreement paved the way for institutional changes by eliminating restrictions on women's public participation and by envisioning the creation of a Ministry of Women's Affairs. Since then, there has been a chain of events leading to the increased participation of women in the political sphere. For example, 100 women delegates participated in the Constitutional Loya Jirga. In addition, 28 percent of parliamentary seats are now allocated to women, and women also have reserved seats in the provincial councils.<sup>3</sup> Women now have the opportunity to run for high level decision-making bodies, including for the office of the presidency.

Similarly, post-conflict reconstruction efforts spearheaded by international actors are paying attention to women's rights and assist in connecting Afghan women's groups to larger networks and international organizations. Capacity-building projects as well as female economic entrepreneurship is actively encouraged by donor countries.

While there is significant progress in women's rights, addressing systemic and entrenched gender inequalities is a continuous challenge.

In Afghan society, women demonstrating leadership abilities are often deemed as un-Islamic and representing only western values. Participants of the women's movement in Afghanistan are often accused of rebelling against traditional Afghan values. Afghan policymakers also dismiss calls by women's groups to uphold women's rights and increase women's participation on the grounds that these are liberal values held by residents of urban areas and are not representative of the values of the vast majority of Afghan women in rural and remote areas. These attitudes



espoused by many Afghan policymakers, which Afghan women have dubbed “Talibanism,” is no less threatening to women’s progress as that of hardline Taliban rule.

Even as the Afghan government is taking bold steps toward the goals to achieve gender equity, such as ratifying the U.N. Convention on Elimination of Violence against Women, the government also continues to endorse discriminatory laws toward women, such as the Shiite Personal Status Law—the infamous law that contains a provision obliging a wife to fulfill her husband’s sexual desires. Afghan women regard this provision as legalizing marital rape.

There are also barriers and challenges unrelated to cultural or religious traditions, including the 30 years of conflict that has contributed to a culture of war and impunity. This is a particular problem when trying to combat sexual and domestic violence.

Finally, overemphasizing women’s victim status neglects the other roles and positions women held during the conflict and they hold today as emerging leaders and peace builders. Focusing on Afghan women’s ‘victimhood’ contributes to their isolation and marginalization.

### Looking Ahead: Peacemaking, Reconciliation and the Role of Afghan Women

The January 2010 International Conference on Afghanistan held in London brought renewed focus on peacemaking in Afghanistan and marked a significant policy shift in favor of reconciliation and reintegration of former Taliban insurgents. International interlocutors and Afghan policymakers are now taking concrete steps toward realizing these new policy imperatives by allocating funds for reintegration and preparing for a consultative Peace Jirga.<sup>4</sup>

As President Hamid Karzai continues to emphasize the need for reconciliation negotiations and national dialogue with the Taliban, the question remains what role Afghan women have in any of these processes. While it is still unclear as to what will result from negotiations with the Taliban, Afghan women are fearful that the process could resurrect the policies of the Taliban regime. Afghan women are now lobbying the government to ensure protection of their rights, and to contribute their unique experiences to any reconciliation effort. Activists are also calling on international interlocutors to ensure that any peacemaking process is inclusive of women. Women’s participation in reconciliation and negotiations recently received renewed attention following a meeting of Afghan women activists in Dubai in January 2010 and a civil society meeting that paralleled the January 2010 International Conference on Afghanistan. Nevertheless, there remains a looming concern among Afghan women as to what role—if any—women will have in upcoming negotiations and how reconciliation will impact the future of women’s rights in Afghanistan.

To ensure meaningful participation by women in Afghan political life and in the reconciliation process, I offer the following recommendations to the Afghan government and international actors.

#### Recommendations for the Afghan Government:

- Ensure women’s active participation through specific quotas in the different consultative and decision-making fora, including the upcoming Afghan Consultative Peace Jirga, bodies devising reintegration policies and strategies, and other relevant fora regarding peace and development in Afghanistan. Women should be represented according to the quota set out in the Afghan Constitution, which is 25 percent in political representation.
- Consult women activists and civil society actors on issues and policies affecting women’s rights, and give serious considerations to position statements on women’s rights.





- Protect and promote women's rights and access to justice by providing support to the family law reform process and cooperate with the family reform movement in Muslim countries.
- Support a gender sensitive environment in educational institutions.
- Train law enforcement agencies to be able to address women's specific protection needs in times of conflict and peace.
- Be consistent with U.N. Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 when developing a national security strategy. A national action plan on women peace and security should be integrated as a core element of the national security policy, and a quota of women's representation in all peace and security deliberations should be established.<sup>1</sup>
- Ensure the implementation of U.N. Resolution 1325, a practical national action plan is necessary that emphasizes joint collaboration with civil society organizations, specifically women's groups and government agencies, specifically a Ministry of Women's Affairs. A mechanism must be in place to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the action plan and women's role in current peace and reconciliation efforts.
- Implement all commitments made in the London Communiqué, National Action Plan (NAPWA), and the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) bill.

#### Recommendations for International Actors:

- Sensitize international forces deployed in Afghanistan on cultural practices and the special protection needs of women in the Afghan context in conflict areas.
- Conduct research and explore new approaches that can encourage women's participation.
- Build on the existing capacities, the momentum of change, changing gender roles and the emerging leadership among women.

In summary, the changing sociopolitical reality and the breakthrough in the perceived gender roles are bringing women to new positions of responsibility and influence around the world and also in Afghanistan. Now, more than ever, Afghan women have the opportunity through the reconstruction process to work toward and shape a comprehensive peace agenda. We must acknowledge that Afghan women's important participation in traditional community dispute mechanisms and their roles in the country's wars as both conflict actors and peacemakers contradict the perception that women are passive agents or victims in Afghan society. Women's leadership in social entrepreneurship, their growing presence in traditionally male-dominated occupations and spaces, and their active role in lobbying the government and international community are incrementally transforming longstanding cultural and structural norms and practices.

Harnessing the experience and capacities of Afghan women to engage in decision-making processes in both peacemaking and reconstruction requires policymakers to adopt a perspective that acknowledges and emphasizes women's resiliency throughout decades of conflict, and their important contributions to peacemaking and reconstruction in the post-Taliban era. The Afghan government and the international community must continue to enhance the capacity of Afghan women and encourage their participation in the reconstruction and peacemaking process.

#### Endnotes

1. See for example, Karin Brulliard, "Peace Deal could erode Afghan's women's progress," *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2010. At the time of this printing, the Peace Jirga is expected to convene the last week of May 2010.



The Afghan Peace Jirga: Empowering Those Who Almost Got at the Peace Table

#### ABOUT THIS BRIEF

The May 2010 Afghan Peace Jirga will be convened with the purpose of ending the Taliban insurgency. It presents a great opportunity for Afghan women to be engaged in the peacebuilding process. The Afghan government and international actors must work together to ensure that women have their place at the table in order to achieve a lasting peace. This Peace Brief offers recommendations for the government and international actors to bring this about. The author, Palwasha Hassan, is a former U.S. Institute of Peace Afghanistan fellow in the Jennings Randolph fellowship program. She is an active member of the Afghan women's movement.

2. The Afghan-Pak Joint Peace Jirga convened in Kabul, Afghanistan from August 9 to August 12, 2007 as a result of an initiative taken by the presidents of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This was the first event of its kind, and opened a channel of dialogue between members of the parliaments, political parties, religious scholars, tribal elders, provincial councils, civil society, and members of the business community. Seven hundred people from both countries participated. Regrettably, women were excluded from the smaller councils (Jirgatee).
3. Two seats from each province are reserved for women.
4. Zalmay Khalilzad. "The Taliban and Reconciliation." *The New York Times*, February 19, 2010.
5. This was a recommendation made by Afghan women activists. "Reaction from Afghan Women Civil Society Leaders to the Communiqué of the London Conference on Afghanistan," United Nations Development Fund for Women, [http://www.unifem.org/news\\_events/story\\_detail.php?StoryID=1019](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=1019) Resolutions 1820, 1888, and 1889 relate to sexual violence.



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## NIC 2025: Women as Agents of Geopolitical Change

### Key Points

*At a recent conference in support of the National Intelligence Council's **Global Trends 2025** project, members of the US Government, academia, think tanks, and nongovernmental organizations discussed the economic and political empowerment of women as a strategic factor that could transform the world's geopolitical landscape over the next 15 years. **This report incorporates the findings of the conference but does not represent official US Government views.***

Conferees assessed that female participation in economies is making a profound difference in societies, while data on the impact of women's political involvement are inconclusive.

- ***An increase in female economic participation in recent decades—fueled by wide-ranging improvements in health and education for women—correlates with an explosion in global prosperity over the same period.*** The extent to which women participate in a country's paid workforce, in fact, is a probable indicator of a society's future economic growth and social stability. Women in some parts of the world increasingly are better educated than men, a trend that will likely give them a leg up in today's human capital-intensive global economy.
- In spite of increased educational and employment opportunity, and their contributions to global economic growth, women comprise 70 percent of the world's poor and two-thirds of illiterate adults, and own less than one percent of the world's titled land. Provision of microcredit (very small loans to the poor to start or expand a business activity through such purchases as sewing machines, cell phones, or food for resale) to women is a possible path to pulling them, their families, and their societies out of poverty.
- ***The political empowerment*** of women appears to have some capacity to change governmental priorities. Examples as disparate as Sweden and Rwanda indicate that ***countries with relatively large numbers of politically active women place greater importance to societal issues, such as health care, the environment, and economic development.*** In spite of women's political gains in recent decades, however, women have barely begun to close the political empowerment gap with men.

*This memorandum incorporates findings of a March 2008 conference co-sponsored by the NIC and State INR, and was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Economics. It has not been coordinated among Intelligence Community agencies. Comments may be directed to the NIO on 703-482-0848 or 933-7329.*

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## Discussion

### Scope

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) and Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research co-hosted a conference in spring 2008, *Women as Agents of Geopolitical Change* in support of the NIC's *Global Trends 2025* project. In keeping with the forward-looking nature of the project, the conference sought to examine how increased economic and political empowerment of women could impact global trends over the next 15 years. Conference participants focused on the following questions:

- **Economics:** What are the links between female economic empowerment and economic growth? How might improved health and education for women in the developing world spur economic development?
- **Politics:** To what extent do women political leaders foment significant change in their societies? How does women's leadership differ from that of men in the conduct of politics, diplomacy, and security? How might increased political activism by women change political agendas?

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### Women and Economics

Conferees assessed that female participation in the paid workforce makes a profound difference in both economic development and societal stability. *The explosion in global productivity in recent years has been driven as much by fostering of human resources—particularly through improvements in health, education, and employment opportunities for women and girls—as by technological advances.* Indeed, over the past four decades, two-thirds of all new jobs have been filled by women, with female employment outstripping capital investment and new technologies as a driver of global economic growth. If unpaid labor is added to paid employment, women may account for more than half of world economic output, according to a 2006 estimate by *The Economist*.

The increased employment of women may have helped to mitigate the economic impacts of global aging and falling birthrates.

- For example, participants saw the predominance of women in Southeast Asia's export sector as a key driver of that region's economic success. In India the states that have had the highest number of women in the workforce have grown the fastest and had the largest reductions in poverty, according to the World Bank.
- Women's efforts may be especially crucial in the agricultural sector. Even lacking reliable access to land, credit, equipment, and markets, women agricultural workers account for half of the world's food production—particularly the rice, maize, and wheat that form the bulk of food intake in the developing world, according to the International Labor Office.

Women in some parts of the world are increasingly better-educated than men, a trend that will likely give them a leg up in today's human capital-intensive global economy. A 2003 OECD study of 42 industrialized countries suggests that when women and girls enjoy equal educational opportunities they tend to be more academically successful than men and boys (specifically, earning better grades and more university degrees, although men still dominate graduate programs).

- Demographic data indicate significant correlation between a narrowing male-female education gap—particularly a higher level of female literacy—and more robust GDP growth within a region (e.g. the Americas, Europe, and East Asia). Conversely, those regions with the lowest female literacy rates (southern and western Asia; the Arab world; Sub-Saharan Africa) are the poorest in the world. A recent study of 65 low- and middle-income countries by the British Charity Plan (based on World Bank and UNESCO data) estimated that the cost to those countries of denying education to girls is a collective \$92 billion per year.

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- While overall female employment rates are increasing (around 40 percent worldwide), women continue to comprise the majority of undocumented and unpaid workers (mostly in agriculture and services), and are more likely than men to be unemployed. They also hold less than a quarter of paid, non-agricultural jobs in the world's poorest regions, according to UN Development Program data.

Provision of microcredit (very small loans to the poor to start or expand a business activity through such purchases as sewing machines, cell phones, or food for resale) to women is a possible path to pulling them, their families, and their societies out of poverty. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) such as Grameen Bank that have focused efforts on loans to women have claimed higher success rates for their female borrowers than the males.

- Women often receive microcredit for a number of reasons: they run the bulk of small, home-based businesses (e.g. vegetable stands and food stalls) in the developing world and they have a better record of repaying loans than their male counterparts. Multiple studies also indicate that women are far more likely than men to use their earnings for domestic-related expenditures—particularly on nourishing and educating children, factors linked with greater societal health and stability.

Conferees agreed, however, that “the jury is still out” regarding the efficacy of microcredit. Such loans do provide credit to those who otherwise would not have access and seem to have alleviated some poverty. There is a lack of data, however, to prove that microcredit can permanently pull households out of poverty—much less fuel regional economic development.

#### The Impact of Falling Birthrates

Demographic data compiled by the American Enterprise Institute indicate that *by 2025 women at all income levels and in most regions of the world will be having fewer children*. This trend toward lower birth rates could ameliorate the problem of maternal-related illness, a leading cause of death and debility of women in the developing world, and lead to a greater influx of women into universities and the workplace—as has happened in Iran. Higher maternal survival rates also probably will mean fewer orphans, less malnutrition, more children in school, and other societal goods.

- In the German-speaking and Mediterranean regions of Europe, fertility trends indicate that childlessness could become the norm rather than the exception by 2025, although falling birthrates are no longer the sole province of the developed world. With notable exceptions in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, the vast majority of countries that have achieved or are moving toward sub-replacement fertility rates are low-income, contradicting the conventional wisdom that rising affluence is a prerequisite for decreased fertility.

The reasons behind the global drop in fertility probably include a combination of more schooling for girls and women, urbanization, greater access to contraception, and falling child mortality rates. A high number of working women in a society is not necessarily an indicator, however: Swedish and US women are more likely to hold paid employment *and* to have children than their German, Italian, and Japanese counterparts, according to *The Economist*.

#### Women and Politics

The presence of women as political officeholders in significant numbers is a relatively new phenomenon. As a result, the “sample size” is still quite small, and data regarding how women officeholders change political agendas are inconclusive. *Conference speakers agreed, however, that greater inclusion of women in politics often seems to change governmental priorities and improve the quality of governance by reducing corruption.*

- Female officeholders are more likely than males to have honed their leadership skills as social activists or as heads of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and therefore seem to be more prone to concentrate on helping marginalized populations in such policy areas as social services, the environment, welfare of women and children, and gender equality. This is underscored by a 2000 survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union indicating that political activism by women in countries as varied as El Salvador, Ethiopia, New Zealand, and Russia had led to notable improvements in those policy areas.
- Conferees noted an apparent correlation between the longstanding involvement of women in Scandinavian political decisionmaking—Swedish women, for example, first won the vote in 1862, and now hold almost half of their country’s parliamentary and cabinet positions—and those countries’ propensity to favor social programs over military ones. Similarly, the fact that Western democracies tend not to go to war with each other may be because they are more “feminized” than autocracies in terms of enfranchisement of women and substantive female participation in political systems.



- Simply having a female head of state or government does not guarantee a change in political priorities. Female politicians who come up through a mostly male hierarchy (e.g. former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Indira Gandhi of India, Golda Meir of Israel, and Margaret Thatcher of the UK) are more likely to foster a traditionally “masculine” agenda than those who are products of political systems with a sizeable female presence (commonly defined as those with at least 30 percent of women in their parliaments).
- World Bank research indicates that countries with a high number of women in parliament or in senior government positions tend to have lower levels of corruption. Nigeria, for example, was ranked as the most corrupt country in the world by Transparency International in 2003, but graduated to that watchdog’s list of “21 most improved” countries in 2005 subsequent to a woman becoming the country’s finance minister.

Whatever the realities, voters’ perceptions of women as agents of change can aid their attainment of high office—particularly in countries where the previous male-dominated rule has been thoroughly discredited. Election of Presidents Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and Michelle Bachelet of Chile symbolized breaks with an ignominious past—symbols furthered by Bachelet’s naming a cabinet made up of an equal number of men and women, and Johnson-Sirleaf’s firing her entire Finance Ministry staff and naming women to the posts of finance minister, commerce minister, and justice minister, and chief of police.

*In spite of women’s political gains in recent decades, however, women have barely begun to close the political empowerment gap with men:* worldwide, women fill only 17 percent of national parliamentary seats and 14 percent of ministerial-level positions (most of which are portfolios traditionally considered “women’s” concerns such as culture, children, and health), according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

- Conference speakers cited a number of barriers to women running for political office worldwide: lack of funding, family responsibilities, male political gatekeepers, threats of retribution or even violence against the women and their families, and lack of mentors and role models. Women are also more likely than men to be held back by their own lack of confidence and by distaste for the rough-and-tumble of politics—and for the corruption that can be necessary for financial survival in many political systems.
- In a recurring pattern worldwide, women who aspire to positions of leadership are more likely to head NGOs—where there are many fewer obstacles to female participation—than to run for political office. Moreover, although NGOs can influence national policy, they do not make it, leading one of the conference speakers to assert that NGO leadership cannot be considered “power” along the lines of that conferred by political office. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, women head 90 percent of NGOs but have no presence in that country’s parliament. Similarly, in South Korea women run 80 percent of NGOs while holding less than 14 percent of National Assembly seats.
- The majority of women who have become heads of state or government attained power in countries with parliamentary systems, which do not demand separate elections for legislative seats and executive office.

#### The Case of Rwanda

Death, imprisonment, and exile—not to mention public discrediting—of men during and immediately after the 1993-94 Rwandan genocide forced dramatic shifts in gender roles. With Rwandan women in 1994 outnumbering men by as many as seven to one, they were compelled to take a significantly greater part in their country's political and economic life. Today women occupy 48 percent of the parliamentary seats—the highest percentage in the world—greatly surpassing the 30 percent of seats set aside for them under the quota system. The Rwandan cabinet is 36 percent female and the chief justice of the Rwandan Supreme Court is a woman.

Although the uppermost reaches of the Rwandan Government remain a largely male preserve and a powerful executive branch and meager funding limit the ability of the parliament to foster and pass legislation, the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, while inexperienced, has managed to influence Rwanda's post-genocide political agenda.

- Most significantly, in 2006 the Forum drafted and pushed to passage the first substantive bill—"Prevention, Protection, and Punishment of Any Gender-Based Violence"—to originate in the legislative rather than executive branch. Female parliamentarians, who had themselves suffered or witnessed brutality during the genocide, also were instrumental in enacting penalties for violence against children.

Rwandan women's economic participation has matched their political activity. Although the majority of women remain very poor, again, because of post-genocide demographics, most of Rwanda's workforce is female, as are almost half of its business owners. Legislation adopted in 1999 in the wake of the genocide enabled Rwandan women to inherit property for the first time, removing a significant cause of female poverty.

Gender quotas are a proven means of launching more women into politics: *the 97 countries with quota systems are also those with the highest proportion of women in their legislatures or party leadership*. However, quotas are controversial—and sometimes have the downside of undermining the credibility of female politicians who attain office via such means.

- Quotas underlie the fact that a number of African countries—including Rwanda, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana—have a far higher proportion of women in their legislatures than some of the oldest and richest democracies in the world (e.g. Australia, Canada, France, the UK, and the United States), according to a study by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner first attained political office in the wake of a 1991 law aimed at increasing female representation in Argentina's National Congress, and which resulted in an immediate quadrupling of women in that body (although numbers have stayed steady since). Similarly, South Africa went from 141<sup>st</sup> (1994) to 13<sup>th</sup> (2004) in the world in terms of legislative seats held by women with the enactment of a 30 percent quota for female candidates, according to the International Women's Democracy Center.

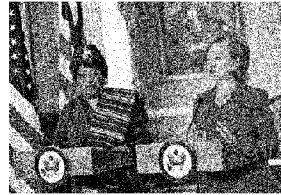
- Although female legislators are not a unitary group, quotas can help to assure that they will find potential allies and a means of coalition-building. In addition, according to one conference speaker, because election of women may be “contagious” (i.e. populations that grow used to seeing women in power can become inclined to keep electing women to political office), quotas can help assure that female political power will eventually become self-sustaining.

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

*"Fundamentally, we share an optimism about what can be done if people are given the opportunities to break through glass ceilings, to break the chains of history that sometimes hold them down... There must be no limits on human potential, and it is up to us to continue to make that a core value of who we are as Americans and what we hope for others around the world."*

*— Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, November 2009*

Women are joining government in growing numbers, holding almost 20 percent of seats in national assemblies worldwide, and serving as heads of government in over 20 countries, including Argentina, Bangladesh, Liberia, and Lithuania. From the Provincial Councils in Afghanistan to the Panchayats in India, women are participating in local governments and building foundations for peace and prosperity in their communities. Women's political engagement not only increases visibility of women's leadership abilities, but also leads to social and economic benefits for their communities and countries. For example, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has prioritized women's empowerment, which has resulted in the inclusion of six women in her Cabinet and the enactment of initiatives focused on distribution of farming equipment to rural women, construction of domestic violence shelters, and credit for women entrepreneurs.



Despite this progress, women are still significantly outnumbered in the chambers of parliaments, in boardrooms, and at negotiating tables where conflicts are resolved. The U.S. Department of State recognizes that democracy cannot flourish without the full participation of all its citizens. Women must be engaged in governance and policymaking – not only because they have a right to be involved in the decisions that directly affect their lives and their communities, but also because their perspectives and experiences improve the outcomes of these deliberations.

### Women's Political Participation

Investments to advance women's political participation and civic engagement will include:

- **Elections and Issue Advocacy:** Supporting emerging leaders through training and mentoring programs to equip them with the knowledge, access, and skills to run for political office, participate in elections, and lead community-based organizations.
- **Legal and Policy Framework:** Supporting NGOs working to advance anti-discrimination laws and policies that enable more women to participate in political and civic life, judicial training on gender equality, and the mainstreaming of women's issues in government.
- **Peace Building:** Supporting women's rights leaders, government, and NGOs efforts to promote women's full and equal participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, particularly in peace negotiations, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction.



**SHEILA JACKSON LEE**  
 18<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT, TEXAS

WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
 2160 Rayburn House Office Building,  
 Washington, DC 20515  
 (202) 225-3210

DISTRICT OFFICE:  
 7039 State Street, Suite 1100  
 The George Mitchell Texas Tower Building  
 Houston, TX 77062  
 (713) 866-0268

AT HOME OFFICE:  
 6710 W. Alameda Street, Suite 204  
 Houston, TX 77057  
 (281) 961-4987

RIGHTS OFFICE:  
 320 West 15th Street  
 Houston, TX 77006  
 (713) 861-1030

TECH VARS OFFICE:  
 3307 Lynd Avenue, Suite 201  
 Houston, TX 77025

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
 Washington, DC 20515

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 OF TEXAS  
 Hearing On:  
 WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE:  
 ADVANCING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS  
 AND CIVIL SOCIETY



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Thank you, Chairman Carnahan for inviting me to participate in this important hearing. I also want to welcome our distinguished witnesses: The Honorable Melanne Verveer, The Honorable Esther Brimmer, Mr. Kenneth Wollack, The Honorable Swanne Hunt, and Ms. Judy Van Rest.

Women have made important strides in many places throughout the world. All but a handful of countries recognize women's right to vote. We have seen women become heads of

state, heads of Fortune 500 companies and heads of households. The developed world, by and large, formally recognizes the equal political rights of women.

But those who think we have won the battle against gender inequality are sadly mistaken, especially in the developing world. According to a 2006 UNDP report, two thirds of the world's 960 million illiterate adults are women, 60 percent of the world's poor are women, and only 16 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide belong to women. According to the World Bank, women earn only 73 cents for every dollar men earn in the developing world. And let us not too eagerly sing the praises of the developed world, where women earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn.

There are tragic stories behind these appalling numbers. Most of us have heard about the suffocation under Sharia law in countries like Saudi Arabia, where women may be arrested for violating the dress code. In Iran, a woman can be forced into marriage against her will at age 13. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, current law prohibits a woman from refusing her husband's sexual advances, essentially institutionalizing the cultural practice of marital rape.

In short, it is an unacceptable reality that women continue to disproportionately bear the brunt of global poverty, violence, and marginalization. The question before us today is: how do we change it? Experts identify a number of strategies, generally covering the inter-related goals of education, security, access to the political process, access to reproductive health services, job equality and opportunities, and transforming public and private power relationships, among others. One thing is clear, however: the path to women's empowerment is long, slow and complex.

A few cases illustrate the difficulties of moving in the right direction. In Afghanistan, despite a number of oppressive laws such as the one cited earlier, the Constitution actually

forbids the marriage of women under 16. Regardless, according to a UNICEF study, tribal customs and local authorities condone forced marriage as early as puberty, or sooner. A May 30, 2010 New York Times article details the story of two young Afghan girls aged 13 and 14 who were publicly flogged by police for trying to escape from forced marriages to older men. Not only were they not breaking the law, flogging is illegal according to the constitution.

Changes to the legal system and constitutional guarantees are not enough; we also need more comprehensive local efforts to change power relations, transform culturally accepted forms of abuse, and improve security by ensuring the accountability of local authorities. To me, this story clearly indicated the importance of helping Afghanistan implement and enforce laws already on the books. We must continue to work with our partners in Afghanistan not only to craft progressive laws that free women, but also to enforce the laws that already exist.

A key component of Afghanistan's development is the education of women and children. A country that does not provide access to education for all of its citizens will never realize its full potential. We must also make sure that women are allowed to feel safe in society. That is why I sponsored legislation in 2007 to protect women legislators in Afghanistan and supported language to fund exchange programs for women legislators between Afghanistan and the United States.

Another illustrative example comes from Iraq, where the Constitution requires a minimum of 25 percent of Parliament's seats to go to women. According to a March 3, 2010 AP report, "sheer numbers in parliament do not always translate into more power for women." While acknowledging the importance of giving women a foothold in the political process, some of the current obstacles include a lingering lack of respect for women in politics and a lack of consensus amongst women politicians regarding women's rights.

Some women even outright reject the quota, claiming that women in parliament are marginalized because they are seen as having reached power simply because of the quota. Like legal reforms, political empowerment through quotas merely scratches the surface; cultural, economic and social barriers to empowerment must also be lifted to ensure true equal rights for women.

Finally, we should not be so presumptuous as to assume that we are the ones with all the answers, or that we can tell intelligent, educated women elsewhere what to do if they happen to disagree with us. A May 31, 2010 New York Times article documents the story of Rowdha Yousef, an educated and confident Saudi Arabian woman who happens to believe in conservative Sharia values, and opposes western attempts at “imposing” their values in her country. I firmly believe in universal human rights, and that every human being on earth is entitled to them regardless of where they happened to be born. Still, I would ask our distinguished panel of witnesses, how can we most effectively promote human rights and combat criminal abuse while remaining sensitive to local cultural perceptions and without alienating potential allies?

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the women of the world deserve a better life. They deserve to be free of the unfair share of poverty, violence and marginalization that they still bear. It is our responsibility to help them achieve that freedom, but let us not be so naive as to believe that the task will be simple or that political changes alone will suffice. We need to find respectful but effective ways to remove abusive cultural practices, and strengthen institutional and structural foundations for equal rights and opportunities. I am confident that our distinguished witnesses will provide us with insight as to how to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the remainder of my time.

