

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

**Announcement of Relief
Aid to Macedonia
Skopje, Macedonia
06/22/99**

Announcement of Relief Aid in Macedonia
by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Skopje, Macedonia
June 22, 1999

Mrs. Gligorova, Deputy Prime Minister Ibrahim, Ambassador Acevska, and other distinguished guests: I am pleased to be here again in the Republic of Macedonia with my husband, the President, our daughter and our delegation – at a time when there is so much more hope for peace and stability in this region.

I want to thank the Ambassador for that introduction and for her leadership, but I wish to give her more credit than she took in her remarks. It was the Ambassador who first spoke to me about the contacts being canceled, and the economic dislocation being caused in this country by the war in Kosovo. And I'm very pleased that today's announcement will help bring more economic security to the people of Macedonia – and more comfort to the refugees of Kosovo.

I want to thank everyone who helped make this possible. I especially want to thank Paul Charron, the CEO of Liz Claiborne, who has shown us what it means to be a good corporate citizen. And now, that label will be worn by thousands of refugees, thanks to the generosity of Liz Claiborne and its CEO. So thank you Paul. I'm very grateful that Mr. Charron could come and be with us for this announcement.

I'm pleased that we're also joined by the Minister of Development, the Deputy Administer of USAID, Hattie Babbitt, and other representatives of USAID, Mercy Corps International, other NGOs and many textile workers who will benefit from today's announcement.

When I was here five weeks ago in May, I talked about two of our nation's goals in the crisis in Kosovo. First to help the refugees return home in peace. And second, to ensure that Macedonia continues on the road of progress, including economic progress. I'm pleased that we are moving forward on both fronts.

During my last visit, I met refugees in the camps here in Skopje who told heartbreaking stories about what happened to them and their families. Now, two months later, the Serbian security forces have left Kosovo, the KLA has just agreed to demilitarize and the refugees are returning home.

This is an incredible victory. It's a victory for the international community, who stood together against the evil of Mr. Milosevic. It's a victory for the Macedonian people who opened their homes and hearts to the refugees – and sacrificed so much.

And, as we end this violent century, it's also a victory for those who believe that peace and reconciliation – not hatred and division – must rule this new century.

When I was in Macedonia last time, I heard again from your President, Prime Minister, and your Ambassador about how the war was threatening to reverse the recent economic growth your country had achieved. They talked to me about their hopes that relief organizations would buy

goods locally produced in Macedonia. And how concerned they were that U.S. and international companies had begun to cancel their contracts.

I'm pleased that our government has been committed to addressing these concerns – including working with the World Bank to provide \$87 million in debt relief and technical assistance. And I'm also pleased that, with today's announcement, one of America's leading clothing businesses has stepped up to do its part as well. Let me tell you how that came about.

The last time that I was here, I met with a small group of business entrepreneurs who produced vegetables, baked goods, crafts, and clothing. One of the women, Danica Georgieva, was the owner of a small textile company. Danica told me very personally what had happened to her business because there were fewer orders for the garments she was making. And she understood why, in the face of the war, companies might be reluctant. She mentioned that one firm she was very proud to work for, Liz Claiborne, had provided important work for them, but because of the war, these orders were being cut back dramatically. Danica is here with us today – and I am pleased to be bringing good news for her and other textile workers throughout Macedonia. Danica, may I ask you to stand for a moment?

I had promised Danica that when I returned to Washington, D.C., I would get in touch with the head of Liz Claiborne. So I called Paul Charron, the CEO, and told him Danica's story. He explained that the war was making it impossible to get clothing into the stores on time. But, he was nevertheless very concerned about the impact these kinds of cutbacks could have on Macedonian clothing factories and their workers.

Within days, he called me back with a promise. He said that Liz Claiborne would continue to contract work with its existing manufacturers in Macedonia – by switching over to less time-sensitive clothing. And it is very stylish clothing – I'm wearing one of the shirts right now.

Paul also came up with a wonderful idea that will bring comfort to the refugees, while making sure that Macedonian workers stay on the job and that the doors to their businesses stay open. Beginning immediately, Liz Claiborne will donate the fabric, designs and expertise to create a quarter of a million shirts and pants for the refugees – and, in the process, provide jobs for 3,000 textile workers at three factories in Macedonia. I want to thank USAID for providing funds to produce and distribute this clothing – and Mercy Corps International for making sure that it reaches the refugees.

And now it is my great honor to introduce someone who is showing that good citizenship is good business. He understands the challenges Macedonia is facing. And he has not only committed Liz Claiborne's resources, he wants to enlist other companies to join together so they can help even more Macedonian workers and businesses get back on their feet and begin to make progress once again.

I am very pleased to introduce the CEO of Liz Claiborne, Paul Charron, who will tell us more about his company's commitment.