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“Globalization into the Next Millennium”

Remarks at The Sorbonne

by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton

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Thank you very much, Rector [Rene Blanchett], and thank you for this opportunity to be in this place of great learning and such important history. I'm honored to be here. I want to thank the university for extending this opportunity. I want to thank Madame Chirac, who was with me, and who has become a friend of mine and whom I admire very much. And I wish to thank her and her husband for once again making my family feel so welcome in Paris. I wish especially to thank the faculty, the staff, and the students, and I wish that I would have more time to spend here—a place I have long wanted to visit.

I am delighted to be joined here by the distinguished wife of our ambassador, and I am also very pleased that there are ministers, many distinguished guests, and fellow Americans as well. One cannot walk into this historic place without thinking of the extraordinary minds who have called this university home, and of the powerful ideas born and nurtured here. One also is confronted by the combination of tradition and change that has always thrived within these walls. It is that combination, and the challenge presented by the balancing of tradition and change, that I would like to speak about today.

We hear quite a bit in my country and yours, and around the world, about something called globalization and the dramatic changes that it is bringing. Yesterday in Geneva, my husband talked about globalization during a speech to the International Labor Organization. The leaders of the G-8 nations will also discuss globalization at their summit this weekend in Germany. In one form or another, this topic fills our newspapers, our television shows, and our conversations every day. How could it not? All around us we see remarkable increases in technology and the resultant shifts in the economy and the social structures of our nations. We see the effects of rapid transportation and communication in our lives. And we live in a world that is more interconnected and more interdependent than ever before.

Now, as with any sweeping change in history, there are those who are great proponents of globalization, whether or not they can define it. There are others who are great opponents, whether or not they can define it. But the real challenge is not to engage in an argument, but to try better to understand the forces that are at work and to harness those forces on behalf of society. To ensure that globalization, however one defines it, is never a substitute for humanization, never a force for marginalization, and not an enemy of the values that have long shaped our two societies.

Thomas Jefferson used to walk these streets, awed by the architecture of Paris, buying and reading books by Voltaire and Rousseau and other leading thinkers of the Enlightenment, shaping his own thoughts and beginning to assume the role that he would play in our nation's history. I imagine him inspired, more than anything, by the revolutionary idea that power does come from the people, not by any virtue of birth, nor religious order, nor social standing. But that in fact each of us, as he would say, is born with "inalienable rights" that have to be recognized. That simple and powerful idea built our sister republics, and it has bound us together through the good times and the tough times for more than two centuries. It has consistently tested us to see if we can live up to our own stated ideals and realize their promise, to see whether our actions as individuals and collectively match our ideals—whether in our own backyards, or in the Balkans.

We have much to be grateful for—those of us who are French or American—as we end this most violent century, for the blessings that were sewn more than two centuries ago. We are still realizing their benefits. Our prosperity, our security—we owe those to the pioneering work of our forefathers and foremothers. And yet, we cannot take for granted that the ideals, which motivated us and still should guide us, will be the ones that triumph in the 21st Century.

I recently visited refugees in a camp in Macedonia. It was there that I heard most powerfully the arguments as to why we must stand for the values that we hold and propose. The stories that were told were not in philosophical terms, they were not supported by statistical analysis, but they came from the hearts of people who had seen their families separated, their daughters raped, their fathers executed, their homes destroyed. I doubt that any one of us will soon forget the haunting images of children crowded onto trains—something we thought we would never see again on this continent.

I will always remember what one woman told me about how she and her family had been forced into a large crowd at the Pristina train station. She was holding the hands of one of her older children, who in turn was holding the hands of two of the younger ones. As the family was being pushed along, those little hands slipped out of hers; in the midst of that crowd, she lost three of her children.

Perhaps more than any other story, that one has stayed with me. It is hard to absorb what we are now learning about mass graves. It is hard to imagine that this still goes on. But I can, in my mind's eye, see a little hand slipping out of mine. It is not just that specific incident or the many other stories that it represents that I believe we should remember and learn from, because it is a challenge to us. What does it mean if we have cell phones that can connect us from one part of the world to the other with the mere flick of our finger, if a mother loses three of her children because of a forced expulsion? What does it mean if our affluence gives us so many more opportunities to travel, learn, and indulge ourselves in whatever we choose if we keep uncovering mass graves?

In the face of these kinds of tragedies, I've also seen the best of humanity. I've seen the relief workers from your country, my country, and places from as far away as Israel and Japan working in those camps. I've met people who are determined to rebuild Kosovo with a sense of

positive energy and not vindictiveness and retribution. This has been possible because our nations—our leaders and our citizens—stood up against evil. Now there are some who I know who would quibble with my use of that word, but I think it fully describes the conflict we have been waging these last few months.

Here in France, I know that many citizens responded. High school students raised money by selling bouquets of lilies in Normandy. School children collected teddy bears and toys in Brittany. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were able to pick up a satellite phone to tell their families that they were still alive because of Telecomms Without Borders. And starting tomorrow, a public/private partnership between the United States and France will allow refugees in Leon to get on the Internet and tell their stories right to their families and friends, and try to find out whether their loved ones are merely missing or dead.

The many democracies that came together to wage this battle against Milosevic may have spoken different languages and even held different political views. But they have sent a unified message at the end of this century that says we will not turn away when human beings are cruelly expelled, or when they are denied basic rights and dignities because of how they look or how they worship. When crimes against humanity rear their ugly heads, we have to send such a message as an international community.

But what about us as individuals? What about us as citizens? How do we live the values in peacetime that we have just fought for? How do each of us work to ensure that our children and our children's children don't repeat the 20th century's worst excesses? We're thinking about that because of the approach of the millennium. Like your Commission 2000, the President and I created the White House Millennium Council that we hoped would help people mark this time in history, not just by a great party on New Year's Eve, but by taking this opportunity to think of who we are as a people—what aspects of our history, our culture, and our values we want to bring into the next century, and what we wish we can, by hard work and determination, leave behind.

We've chosen as our theme: "Honor the past, imagine the future." By honoring the past, we have to take a hard look at where we have been; we have to acknowledge the progress we've made, but also the violence and the disappointment, in order to live honestly in the present and imagine and create a better future. Now at any time of great transition such as this, there are always pessimists among us. I went back and read about the first millennium's end. There was the myth of panic and terror afoot in the land, where people gave away their possessions and hid in churches all over Europe waiting for the world's end. There was even a rather controversial monk in the tenth century who consistently warned his neighbors of impending doom. He had quite a checkered past, having been expelled from a number of monasteries, but he always had an audience. There were always people who believed that the worst was yet to come.

Well now, clearly he was wrong. And now we look back at the so-called Dark Ages and we can see that there were changes during those times that set the tone for what was to come. There was a spread of literacy, the emergence of craftsman's guilds, students congregating on the Left Bank to study the liberal arts, new universities and religious orders beginning.

As we stand now in a very different time, there is much to be optimistic about. Yet there are those among us who are very pessimistic. And what is called for is a realistic appraisal of where we are, and where we want to be, and how we manage to navigate that journey. Because when it comes to globalization and the forces at work, we have to be realistic. There is no turning back. We're not going to be doing away with computers, or cutting off the Internet, or stopping jet travel, or preventing the mass media from bringing different cultures and ideas to our doorsteps.

So the challenge is taking that reality as it is and learning how to harness those forces, to answer positively questions that confront humanity. For example, will the global economy lead to growth, stability, and innovation—or will it merely lead to a race to the bottom of the economic ladder? Will it help to expand opportunities for all citizens, or only reward those of us already lucky enough to have the skills to manipulate information and navigate through the information age? Will we learn from one another, will we respect each other's cultures, or will we retreat into our own self-proclaimed identities? Will we permit our unique cultures to be uprooted by a one-dimensional consumer culture? Will we permit spirituality to be replaced completely by materialism? Will the fear of the unknown lead us further into racism, nativism, xenophobia, and violence?

These are the questions that not only leaders, but all of us have to address. We do not have any clear map of where we are going in the next century. If you look at popular culture, the image is not a pretty one. In my own country, many of the movies in recent years express our innate fears about what awaits us. They are apocalyptic visions that leave only a few people on earth—whole cities surviving under domes because we have depleted our natural resources. And often in these movies, for reasons that I question, we have space aliens who are always blowing up Washington, D.C., and the White House.

But these negative images, these apocalyptic visions, tell us something about the fears that we currently have, whether we articulate them or not. The statue of Victor Hugo next door has words imprinted on it that could serve as our motto for today. He said, "There is nothing like a dream to create the future." So what is our dream? Is it a nightmare that gives words and action to what we have seen in the Balkans or in Rwanda? Or is it a dream of cooperation, of a positive view of who we can be if we work together?

We have the responsibility to create a society in which we expand the benefits of democracy and freedom to all of our fellow citizens; where we ensure that free markets benefit all people, not just a privileged few; where we create and nurture vibrant civil societies that foster active citizens. I often use a very simple metaphor to talk about society—that of a three-legged stool: one leg is the government, another is the economy, and the third is a civil society. I spoke about this at length at Davos a few years ago because, for that World Economic Forum, I wanted to remind the participants that we cannot sit on a stool if there are only one or two legs; we cannot sit on that stool if one leg is shorter or longer than the others. We need three legs that balance and reinforce one another, and that are strong enough to support us in the years to come.

We have lived with the benefits, for 50 years now, of the agreements that were made at the end of the Second World War, coming out of Bretonwoods to create new financial architectures that would enable us to tackle the problems that we knew would lie ahead. Today, we have outlived the usefulness of that particular set of arrangements. And we now have to face up to creating a new architecture that will help us tackle runaway global capitalism's worst effects; ensure social safety nets for the most vulnerable; address the debt burden that is crushing many of our poorest nations. And I'm pleased, as I know many others are, that the G-8 will be addressing debt relief at the summit in Cologne.

So we do have to confront and be willing to use our political will to address the issues that are paramount today. That will take effectively functioning governments to do. There are those, particularly in my country, who insist on a salting government, who claim that if we would only abolish or severely weaken it that everyone's freedom and prosperity would blossom. That is, I believe, a very mistaken notion, particularly as we end this century. We need strong and efficient governments—not oppressive or weak ones—that are able to empower citizens to help them take responsibility for their families and communities.

Similarly, with the economy, there are those in Europe or the United States who overstate or understate the positive effects of the free market. There are many who are great advocates, who think that the market can do anything if left alone. There are others who are great opponents, who are very clearly undermining or misunderstanding the benefits that free enterprise brings. So again we have to create a balance. How do we enjoy the benefits without suffering from the excesses?

Now the discussion about government and the economy could go on for days. And I hope it does here in this distinguished university and in other places here and in the United States, Asia, and throughout the world, because we have to come to terms with how government and the economy will function. But today I want to focus on the third leg of the stool, the one that is often overlooked—that of civil society, of citizenship. Because it is there in the space between government and the economy that we live our lives and pass down our values. It is where we find that wonderful phrase from the great French observer of American life, DeTocqueville—"the habits of the heart"—that determine how we are going to live together; the voluntary associations that we join; the arts and culture that define us, challenge us and make our spirits sore; the training ground in families and neighborhoods that turn our people into citizens.

Now the economy can create the jobs and enough wealth so that we can enjoy what is best about life. And it can of course, as we have seen, create consumers and the producers of goods. But the economy cannot create citizens. Government can protect our freedoms and defend our lives, but it can only respond to citizens, not create them. Only civil society can do that. And it is time for us, in our advanced economies and our long-standing democracies, to renew civil society within and expand it abroad.

As I have been privileged to travel around the world, I have seen how new, struggling democracies are attempting to nurture civil society. They understand very well that they cannot contend with the forces of globalization without citizens feeling empowered to take advantage of

them. As the debate over globalization continues, the citizens will truly determine the outcome. It is they who will decide whether we will have strong, sustainable societies in France or the United States, but a strong global society as well.

As my husband said yesterday in Geneva, we must put a human face on the global economy, giving workers everywhere a stake in its success, equipping them to reap its rewards, providing for their families the basic conditions of a just society. How do we do that? Well, we have to invest in citizens—from their education, to the care of their children, to health care. This is not just about redistributing wealth; it is about distributing opportunity, or as Anthony Giddon has said, “It is about redistributing life’s chances.”

Now there are some in my country and elsewhere who say that once talk turns to civil society, to life-long education, to learning, to health care, to the voluntary sector—that we have strayed into the soft issues. That we are putting a spotlight onto what will lead, in the words of one commentator, to the “feminization of politics,” which I assume they believe is a bad thing. But I prefer to think of this process as the “humanization” of politics—the kind of kitchen table issues that are discussed in Paris or in Washington. And I believe that by paying attention to these real life political issues, we can reinvest citizens with a stake in their government; we can better empower them to compete in the economy; and we can have more assurance that our ideals will last into the future. We cannot be satisfied until we find ways to bring the benefits of the civil society to all people—whether it be providing education for girls in parts of Asia or Africa; providing small loans so that people can start their own business in Washington D.C., or Denver, or Latin America; creating opportunities for all citizens to participate in neighborhood and local decisions—to rebuild the repository of trust that is essential for all in any democracy.

Tomorrow I will be going to Sicily for a conference on building citizenship. This is a topic on the minds of academics, leaders, citizens, and those who are enlightened business leaders as well. One of the places I will go in Palermo is a 16th century church that just a few years ago was abandoned. Its surrounding neighborhood was a magnet for thieves, crime, and despair. But then four years ago, the citizens of that neighborhood decided that they had had enough. They determined to reclaim this treasure. So they began to clear away the rubble. They restored the church. They planted a garden. And in the process, they not only resurrected a historic site and turned it into a vibrant center for the arts, they became part of a world-wide movement of citizen action to combat crime and violence, and in a positive way to reconnect people to one another, to transform their own lives right where they live.

If we want to ensure that the global economy does lift all of us, then we have to teach young people how to feel that sense of empowerment. And we have to demonstrate to them respect for one another, and to see their diversity as a sign of strength. In France, you could see that in the faces of the World Cup champions last year. You can see it in the young people in groups like S.O.S. Racism. You can see it in exhibits like “Silence the Violence.” All around France, all around my country, and increasingly around the world, we are seeing citizens, including children, understanding the role they have to play in civil society.

This may be the hardest task that we have. How do we bring people together to live civilly with one another? Whether it is in Northern Ireland, or in the Balkans, or in the Middle East—how do we create a civil society where there has been very little evidence of that? How do we say enough to the bloodshed, whether it happens in Littleton, Colorado, or whether it happens half a world away in Indonesia?

There is a new impetus for this action, but it will require leadership. It will require us not to leave it to our governments, but to inquire into our own lives and our own professions as to how we can kindle that commitment to civil society. I'm impressed by the work of the youth counsels here in France where students in one community planted flowers and trees and worked to help clean up the neighborhood, and then taught others to do the same. Where children in another community started examining the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child—interviewing one another, organizing debates, and particularly focusing on children as victims of war—even becoming pen pals with children in Bosnia.

I'm told there are more than 600,000 students taking the Baccalaureate exams in France this week who are nervous about their futures. Well, I hope that through our own efforts, we will create conditions in which that nervousness is more about an exam than about the kind of world they will live in and inhabit.

Our predecessors over the last century did a lot to forward progress, to create opportunity, to build democracies, to give more people their God-given potential. But now it is our turn. We have enjoyed the benefits and the blessings of that work. Now we must contribute to its ongoing life and spread its benefits more broadly than they have ever been shared in human history. Recently at the White House, one of your many distinguished graduates, Elie Wiesel, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, spoke. He asked us to think about how all of us could combat what he called "the perils of indifference." He told a story of how when his father and he were taken away to the concentration camps, he thought, "How could this happen? I'm only a young boy." And then he imagined what it would be like when he was an adult and some young child would turn to him and ask, "What have you done with my future? What have you done with your life?" And Wiesel answered his own question by saying, "I would tell him I have tried to keep memory alive, and I have tried to fight those who would forget."

At the end of his lecture, the last question was asked by a Catholic priest in the audience who said, "How—at the end of this century and in the middle of the conflict in Kosovo, when it seems as though evil never retreats but just goes underground to reemerge again—can you tell us there is a future that awaits that can be positive?" And Wiesel said, "What choice do we have? We either hope and create the best future we can, or we give in to those forces arrayed against us."

That is the turning point we are at once again. I'm very proud that your nation and mine, and our NATO allies, fought a conflict—not for territorial gain, not to settle any score with anyone, but for reasons that have rarely motivated great nations—to stand up for human rights and the values that we proclaim in the teaching that takes place here. But now we cannot just leave the peace to chance. We have a lot of work to do in Kosovo, but we also have a lot of

work to do here in France and my country, and throughout the world. I'm hoping that in the years to come, that that three-legged stool stays sturdy because we recognize that we need effective government and we provide the tools for that; we participate in the economy, but we do not give in to it; and we build a strong civil society that will become the bulwark against the challenges that will inevitably come in the future.

I hope that as this millennium occurs, we ask ourselves the hard questions that it demands—we ask how we would answer the question that Elie Wiesel posed. Because one hundred years from now, at the end of the next century, perhaps somewhere in Paris in a virtual auditorium, there will be those that will wonder what happened in the 21st century. And I hope they will look back at us and believe that we did the best we could to face the challenges before us. That we honored the past by never forgetting its worst forms of evil. That we did not remain silent when people were stripped of their rights or dignity. That under our watch, globalization never substituted for humanization. That when given a chance, we worked to create a global society that did not drive us apart or push some up and others down, but that instead equipped people to make the most out of their own lives to create the kind of future they chose for themselves and their families.

There's a lot of work to be done, but it's a great time to contemplate how we can move in to this new century together. I am grateful for the long, strong friendship between our two nations, and I look forward to the leadership that will come from the public and private sectors to create the kind of future that is worthy of our past ideals.

Thank you very much.