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**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
At Celebration of International Women's Day
Copenhagen, Denmark**

Thank you very much. I am grateful for this opportunity to speak at this forum on International Women's Day. Today, I have the pleasure of announcing a United States initiative to expand girls' and women's education in the developing world.

The issues addressed at this summit are issues that women around the world face every day in their kitchens, at their children's bedsides, in the marketplace, and in the workforce. Women should be active participants in helping their societies meet the great challenges of this and the next century. But that can only be achieved if women are empowered through education, legal rights and protection from violence and are assured access to adequate social services, employment opportunities, political institutions, and decision making. Empowerment and access will enable women to take their rightful place as they work in partnership with men to strengthen their families and contribute to their communities.

No single factor contributes to the long-term health and prosperity of a developing nation more than investing in education for girls and women. In countries where governments have invested primary and secondary schooling for girls and women, the investment has been repaid many times through higher economic productivity, greater participation of women in the modern labor sector, lower infant and maternal mortality rates, improved child nutrition and family health, longer life expectancy, lower birth rates, and stronger families and communities.

While we have witnessed significant increases in primary school enrollments worldwide in the past two decades, much remains to be done. Today, more than two thirds of the children who have never attended school or dropped out before finishing, are girls. Almost one billion people remain illiterate, and two thirds of them are women.

Recent research has demonstrated that investments in the education of girls and women are investments in the community and in the prosperity of a nation. Moreover, investments in girls and women may yield a higher return than any others in a country's development.

The deliberations, goals and commitments of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo last year, this World Summit for Social Development taking place here this next week, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing later this year, all have clearly stated that education of girls and women throughout their lives is essential to increased global prosperity and social integration.

Recognizing the critical role women must play in their own and their countries' development and the importance of education in enabling them to play that role, I am pleased to announce today that the United States will allocate \$100 million over a 10-year period to provide enhanced educational opportunities for hundreds of thousands of girls and women in Africa, Asia and Latin America who currently live in poverty. The goals of the initiative are ambitious: They include a 20 percent increase in girls' primary school completion rates or a 20 percent increase in the number of women who are functionally literate in the project areas in each country within 10 years.

A key element in this initiative is that it will be women, organized in NGO's, who will take the leadership in this effort. This new program will also assist women in developing their own capacities for improving the education of their own children, including their daughters.

I am proud that the United States is taking such an important step in helping poor women reach their full potential in their families, communities, and in their societies. There is no more important task before all of us. I respectfully urge other governments to join us in creating or expanding the opportunities for all women worldwide.

Thank you very much.

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