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PRESS AVAILABILITY
SRI LANKA

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Q: Mrs. Clinton, you're winding up the most extensive trip by an American First Lady since Rosalynn Carter toured Latin American back in the late 70's, your mission was to put a human face on American policy in this region and to promote goodwill in the area. What do you think you have accomplished in the last two weeks?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I hope I have been able to represent the American people and certainly, convey to the governments and people in the countries that I have visited here in South Asia how important we think this region of the world is and how important we believe that the development of the people of this region is. Not only for the future of the countries here but for our entire global family and I hope also perhaps through my visiting and my seeing a lot of what I experienced for the first time, perhaps some Americans, are also seeing new ways of thinking about this part of the world and learning some things about what goes on here. So, in a general way I hope that I have been able to demonstrate to the countries I visited our interest in them, and perhaps serve as a bridge of perception back to the United States and then I also think that there is much that we can learn mutually. The United States has been of great assistance in this region of the world for many, many decades and I am pleased to see the results of the those years of efforts, the kinds of investments that we have made in the people of the countries whom I have visited has produced results. I hope that Americans know that we have made good use of a lot of investments that our country has made over the years and I believe that there are lessons that we can all learn from some of the projects and programs that I have visited.

Q: Mrs. Clinton, one of the points of this trip obviously was to talk about the importance of educating girls and women, not only in this region but in the world and highlighting the role of women in general. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that you have been a pioneer in so many ways and I think a lot of us have sensed this week in some of your discussions with people, there were times you heard some things you weren't expecting to hear. What, what have you learned this week, in these past days that has relevance to your own challenges in balancing all the things you balance and have to balance, as a woman in public life, in America today, in a society which in

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many ways, so much more advance than the ones you have been visiting and yet has its own problems for women too. Have you taken away any new strategies for coping with the daily lot that is your life?

Mrs. Clinton: I probably have and I'm going to think about that more, but just off the top of my head, I'd say you come to this region of the world and there are such contrasts which all of us have experienced and seen in the last days. On the one hand, I've met the most accomplished, well educated, powerful women in the entire world. Not only the two women ambassadors the United States has placed in this region, but obviously the three women who lead governments in the five countries in this region, but, in addition to them, I've been able to have conversations with women judges and physicians and business leaders and I've come away just really overwhelmed by how effective they have been putting together their own lives. These are women who often make tremendous sacrifices to achieve their own education. I've heard stories as I've attended my small meetings with the women in these countries about how difficult it was to persuade their parents or even grandparents that they should go on to University, let alone go on for advanced degrees. I've listened and watched how they've balanced their family responsibilities with their public commitments. So, on the one hand, I have seen extraordinary examples of women who are leaders in the life of their countries. Then I've also seen, in contrast, women who are beginning to find their own voice, women for whom the opportunities provided through programs like SEWA or the Grameen bank have given them the confidence and courage to claim a life of their own and to develop a voice of their own. So, it's been a remarkable combination of experiences for me. Many of the women whom I've visited with personally, who have already achieved levels of education and accomplishments that would be the envy of many of us in the United States, are more matter-of-a-fact about the balance and the difficulties that they confront day-to-day with the stresses of trying to keep together families, raise children, do what is necessary to carve out their own lives, and the women whom I have listened to at SEWA and Grameen, are so proud of what they have been able to achieve on behalf of their families. So it was a reaffirmation of the belief I have that women even in our country, often, have to overcome obstacles, and the obstacles are both external and internal, and we all have to be aware of them, and I think talk about them and assist each other and I was very heartened by what I saw.

Q: Mrs. Clinton, how do you take what you're talking about there, with finding a voice there, women in the United States finding a voice, how does that apply to your personal situation as you try to give voice in a way that is both comfortable to you

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and comfortable to the American people who you know apparently were not comfortable somewhat with your role, you know, some were not comfortable with your policy making role on health care. How does all of that finding a voice effect you personally?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I think you have to be true to yourself. You have to find your own voice. There is no ready made off-the-shelf voice that you can pick up and put on. I think you have to continue in your own life's journey to know yourself and to be true to yourself. That's what I've always tried to do. So, I guess I've been reinforced in my belief that it's important to make the choices that are right for each one of us and that there isn't any stereotype or preconceived notion that one size fits all, whether its for first ladies or women who are in the business or academic or professional world or women who are finding their own way in any setting here or back home. It's that kind of reinforcing of my own sense of how important it is to equip women with the capacity to make the best decisions they can make for themselves. Now if you venture forth in the world you are going to encounter difficulties. There is no easy way to live a life of action and commitment, and certainly when I think about women who have been imprisoned, tortured, discouraged, barred from involvement in educational or professional opportunities that any of us in America go through, is minor in comparison. So, I can't even compare the difficulties that I or any of my friends encounter in attempting to do what we do with what I've seen in the lives of the women in these countries.

Q: Mrs. Clinton, as you've speaking to women and girls it's been noticed with admiration how gracious your daughter has been on this trip. How has it been having her with you and what sort of positive things, do you think people of this region can draw from seeing a very poised young women in the company her mother?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I've been thrilled that she could be with me, and it has made my trip so much more than I ever could have imagined because I get to share it with her every evening. As we go from place to place to see the experiences that she's having because she often does things different from what I do through her eyes and as well as the ones we share together. I think it's been an extraordinary opportunity and I'm very grateful she could have it. I also think that it is an opportunity which I wish more American children and teenagers could have. It was certainly eye opening for my daughter to see what we have seen on this trip and to see how much people value education. To walk into that village school outside Lahore and see the girls doing algebra and then go to the next classroom and go from microscope to microscope and look through them with the girls who were doing

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their science experiments. It was thrilling to me and I think also struck her about how often perhaps our own young people take for granted the opportunities we have tried to provide as a society to our children. So I hope perhaps as people have followed our trip together, they have seen through her eyes what I would hope American young people could see, and I believe strongly that bringing our daughter to South Asia reinforces our fundamental commitment to young people, particularly to girls, in a very obvious way, that perhaps couldn't be made more dramatic than by having her with us.

Q: (Inaudible) What was her reaction to the other women and girls she met, girls who younger than her, had already had children and were living in poverty, not those that were lucky enough to be in the school, what was her reaction and how did she see that aspect in what you all saw here?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I think that she was overwhelmed as I was by the conditions that some of the people we saw and met, were living in. But, also very moved by how people were attempting to make the most of whatever situation they found themselves in. She and I were talking earlier today about showing up at the school yesterday in Bangladesh, outside Jessore and seeing those children lined up in their scout uniforms, you know, having done their drills, going to the Grameen bank village sites and seeing the children singing and dancing and acting with such precision and knowing that they have so few of the advantages that we take for granted but are able to find all kinds of personal resources to call on. She's been writing many, many postcards to her friends to try to explain in words what this has meant to her, and it is something again I just wish we could convey to our own children because the courage, and the commitment to a better life, that we saw evidenced in many of the children and adults that we met is just invaluable. I mean there is no way to substitute for that kind of personal, human capacity and I think she like, I, was very moved that the human spirit can never be broken, if it's given a chance, it can just grow and take flight, and that's what I hope we can try to bring home to your own country.

Q: To turn that around, at each step along the way people were seen you as a role model in a very different way than you're seen at home and you at each step along the way introduced Chelsea and talked about how proud you are of her. The whole idea of the example that was set. Can you talk a little about that in what you are trying to achieve and how you felt about how they reacted to you along the way and to Chelsea?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, you know, I don't know that I noticed it exactly the way you've described, because I do a lot of

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travelling around our country and I've tried to spend a lot of time with young people, particularly young women. So, I go in and out of settings with young women all the time and what I was struck by in the conversations that we had in this trip is how similar the concerns were among many of the young women we spoke with, certainly at Islamabad college and Lums and then the young woman I met who wrote the poem. This real yearning to try to create an identity that I think, although rooted in cultural and ethnic and religious ground, has a common set of aspirations that go across all sorts of boundaries. So you know I felt that people were reacting to me in part because of my official role and part, perhaps, because of what they had heard or read but mostly out of their own desires to try to put into words, again, what it is that they wanted from their own lives. I think if I can help encourage that wherever I can, I want to do it.

Q: Have you given any thought, you've said a number of times before the trip and on the trip that you've also come here to learn and to look at some of things you might be able to take home, specifically as models that might be used in the United States. Have you given any thought to specifically what you might like to see at working home and also ways in which we might hear you in the future speaking out on the kinds of issues you've been talking about here, at home?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I want to continue to speak out on those issues and I think there are some ways we can perhaps take lessons and ideas from what we've seen and bring them home. There's a USAID program that has just started called "Lessons without Borders," and it uses some of what we have learned in helping other countries and then try to tell our people in America, so that, for example, other countries much poorer than we, do a better job at immunizing children and USAID funds a lot of those immunization efforts. So clearly we're trying with our new legislation to immunize all the children in America in the next several years. But, what can we learn that has worked through USAID efforts elsewhere that we can bring home? We have been very interested in the Grameen model and the SEWA model for a long time and my husband worked hard on that in Arkansas. We tried to set up through legislation the community development bank network so that we could begin to have the resources to do what Grameen has done in many of our impoverished urban and rural areas in the United States. I think that's very important. Because as we've seen there will be a lot of opportunities for people to give themselves a new economic outlook, if they can get access to credit. So, those are just two of examples that I'd like to try to work on and to try to make the linkage between what we've seen here and what we're trying to do at home and maybe now people will have a better idea what it is we're trying

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to get done there.

Q: Next stop Beijing, if you go to the Women's Conference, what concrete would you take from here?

Mrs. Clinton: If I go, which I would like to go, I will try to highlight education of girls and women, particularly poor women, health care for women throughout their life cycle. Even if I don't go, I'm hoping the American delegation under Ambassador Albright, will take the same message to Beijing. I think it is important that we take what is too often a kind of abstract discussion about women and women's rights and women's roles and bring it down to earth. There are many issues on which there should be general agreement. We now have enough practical information from around the world about what works to achieve goals and help the development of women. But, we ought to have some consensus and I would like to see coming out of the Women's Conference, in addition to the reports that are written and whatever analysis that is done, one page that could be translated in all the major languages of the world that would basically be a statement of principles and call for action on behalf of women about how girls are entitled to equal access to education and mothers should work with fathers to make sure girls are educated or we know that access to credit works particularly for poor women, so we should do all we can to insure it. So something very concrete that could be taken into our own cities in the United States or taken into the villages we visited.

Q: But, weren't you bucking some kind of cultural traditions there? You can't get one statement that would fit all sides?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I think you can. I think that certainly there will be disagreement on anything you say, I mean there are people who still don't think the Earth is round, but you can't worry about that. I always assume twenty percent of people will be against whatever you do, so that's just a given. But I think the vast majority of people are beginning to understand that there is a consensus in most cultures about the basic tools for development that within the context of different cultural settings, creates a higher standard of living for the entire family and from the family, the community and society. Better health care, especially, delivered in cost effective ways that we saw today at the International Diarrheal Center, saves lives and saves money. So, why not get sensible about how we provide health care to people. I think you can help create a consensus around some certain basic principles, staying off a lot of the political disputes that are going to be between nations and between groups of people. I know that those are there. Even where there are disputes of a political nature, there ought to be

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some effort to work toward providing these basic opportunities. Because after all politics should be a means to some kind of an end of uplifting people and giving them the opportunities to lead fuller lives, and if we look at it that way, then perhaps the Beijing Conference could come in with some ideas that would make a difference. And I just want to add that I think the Cairo Conference did. I think the Rio Conference did. Now, of course, there will be difficulties in implementation but having the statement of principles and the agreement among people about what we are trying to achieve in the environment or in family planning, population and development, or in the broader area of social development of women and girls, I think is a very important step.

Q: Mrs. Clinton, you say that politics ought to be about providing basic opportunities, yet so often in the United States, it's about spending cuts and tax cuts, having seen the needs of this region, it is worth, can government pull back, to retrench, be stopped, and can it be stopped in a way that the effort not be a liability for your husband in the 1996 election?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I think Gene, that the basic issue among a lot of people of good faith, in the broad middle is really about different approaches and means of achieving comparable ends. The welfare reform debate is a perfect example of that. You know, there is a broad consensus, I think, fueled largely by my husband's '92 campaign and by what he tried to do with the legislation that he introduced, we need to change the welfare system. So we've made that step, kind of philosophically if you will, even beyond politics. Now the question is what is the means of doing that, what are the outcomes we expect to achieve. So, I don't know that it's an either/or. You know spending cuts, tax cuts, investments, all of these are tools for trying to determine how we best deliver services, and, in effect, how do we redefine the mission of government in the twenty-first century, because that's really the underlying issues here. What is the government of the United States supposed to do? What are the governments of the states supposed to do? Of localities? What role is the private sector supposed to play? I think are trying to work this out. The objective is the same how do we create opportunity for people, raise their standard of living, strengthen our democratic institutions? Now what I hope is that we make those decisions based on information, and not on ideology, whether it be of the left or the right. You know, my husband used to say all the time that he was running for president not to jerk the country to the left or the right, but to push it into the future. I think if you look at the sorts of decisions we're having to make it's better if we have good information, in order to make the best possible decisions. And I

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think one of the real lessons from this trip for me, anyway is how effective our aid has been in leveraging change and that change has not only benefitted the people in the country where the aid has been delivered, it's also benefitted the United States. When you go and see, as we saw this morning, a center that created oral rehydration salts and you meet a doctor from Louisiana who was there because we had children who died of diarrhea in the United States and if we could figure out how to get oral rehydration salts, like they developed in Bangladesh more accessible and usable in the United States we'd save hundreds of millions of dollars and I think we'd save some lives. So, there's a real connection there, in what we've paid for and contributed to and in the effects that it's had. As people debate things like foreign aid for example, if they have good information, then I think we will have better choices and better decisions.

Q: Mrs. Clinton, I just wanted to ask, you and your husband both talk a lot about how our politics in the United States and our society in our time of transition, people are looking for new ways to cope with the changing world and information society. Having seen these societies which are struggling, mothers having been threatened with being thrown in the Gulf of Bengal, if they went school. What can you tell the mothers of America, first of all, do you think there are any (laughter), how do you approach in a way that can get this message across and yet not make you see to be leading some jihad?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, you know Todd, I think you have to keep true to your own beliefs about what is important and you have to say it over and over again, but you always have to be open to new ways of saying it, that are perhaps understood better and I think that is really what's at stake in lots of these settings around the world. I have visited other countries of the world that have made great strides in very sensitive issues like family planning by spending a lot of time bringing in people who you might otherwise think would be opposed. So I think there are different strategies that can be followed about how better to communicate what your core beliefs are, and I think also you always have to be open to new information. So coming on a trip like this, seeing what we've seen, has certainly given me an enormous amount to think about and to digest and try to make sense of and I do the same thing back in our own country. I'm always trying to interpret information and make sense of it, because I think we are living in a time where applying the old categories is not going to work and yet none of us is really comfortable yet in describing exactly what it is we're living through in a political sense and how we can make the most of it. There's going to be some really challenging times ahead. I don't think anybody has an answer, I mean I wish we did, and you all do

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too, something that could fit into a sentence or paragraph. It would be easier for all of us, because if you could figure out how to write it, I could just repeat it, or if I could figure out how to say it, I could give you some pithy quote, but I can't and I think people who are trying to impose an order, on the transition we are going through, are doing an injustice to the complexity of it. Having said that, we've got to figure out how to live in the world as it is and the world as it is right now has got a lot of people who are concerned, even somewhat insecure about what's happening. You go to this region of the world and you see how people are struggling just to make a living day by day and doing it under extremely adverse circumstances. But back in our own country, there are millions and millions of Americans who feel, in their own way, just as under stress. It may not objectively appear that way, if you were to have a split screen, and you were to show the home of the villager we visited outside Lahore and the home of the average American. And you talked to the villager and he would talk about what his life was like and what he was expecting from life and then you'd flash over to somebody in America who was feeling very much under pressure because maybe his corporation was downsizing or the job he thought he would have forever was going to be moved away from him or something was going on that was rendering him insecure. It would be an extraordinary contrast. I think we have many people now in the United States who are asking themselves, "What's to become of me and how am I going to survive in this period of transition?" and part of what the president's tried to do and part of what I think all of us, in every institution have to try to do is create an environment which does provide some security to people so that they can feel comfortable buffeted by all these changes that are happening. I don't think the answers are easy, and I don't think it's going to come quickly. But I believe we can work it out if people are willing to act in good faith, willing to act on the evidence as we know it, in making decisions.

Q: Mrs. Clinton, I have a question I think is really important for people to have an answer to, that is, I know you came here to talk about human issues, but some feel it was a lost opportunity to more specifically address human rights abuses and to really give a prod on some of these human rights abuses?

Mrs. Clinton: Well, I think by talking about girls and women, you are talking about human rights. I think there is an absolute correlation there. I also know that several of the people travelling with me had conversations about human rights issues and they had constant and consistent conversations. So, I don't think it was in any way left out of the American agenda in this trip or in any trip under this Administration. But I don't think girls and women get as much attention on a regular basis as

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some of the other well-publicized instances of human rights concerns, and I believe we have to emphasize as much as possible that the denial of education, that the denial of basic health care, the denial of choices to girls is a human rights issue, because it is the human potential that we are attempting to develop and the denying of it, I think, does violence to the spirit of the person and to the larger community. So, I view this very much as a human rights issue, and I think our Administration has been, as you can tell from the work that has been done by many others who have proceeded me to this region, focused on human rights in the broader, maybe more traditional sense of it. But I want to be sure that the issues of girls and women are given the kind of attention that I think they deserve.

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