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**REMARKS BY
FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT THE 6TH CNN WORLD REPORT CONFERENCE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much. Thank you, Tom, for that introduction. Thank you, Ted Turner, for the vision you had which is spread out before us through out the world. I am delighted to be here, to participate in this conference, and I want to commend all of you, especially those of you who have come great distances, for helping to enrich the dialogue about current affairs among our countries and around the world.

Your work for CNN helps all of us sort out the very complex, important issues, and it also promotes a greater understanding among the world's people. Those of us who watch, sometimes around the clock, are grateful for your contributions.

This conference takes place at an historic time. As we approach a new century, we also find ourselves on the frontier of a new world. It is a world undergoing profound change. We have watched as dictatorships and controlled economies have given way to democracy and free markets in country after country. We have watched old divisions and hatreds recede or vanish. And we have watched new opportunities for peace and prosperity unfold.

At the same time, we have watched change generate new challenges, and intensify old ones: The challenge of poverty. The challenge of shrinking resources and accelerated global competition. The challenge of peaceful co-existence in the face of ethnic, religious, cultural and political differences. And most of all, the challenge of putting people first, of including all citizens -- men and women, rich and poor, people of all races and creeds -- as full participants in our societies.

Today, too many nations waste precious resources on building and acquiring weapons of mass destruction, on staging wars, and doing violence to basic human rights, instead of investing in their people. Too often, natural resources are destroyed, and human ones exploited, through irresponsible social behavior. And, too much time is spent in naked pursuit of power instead of working for peace and prosperity.

So our job -- whether we are in the media, in public life, in corporations or as volunteers -- is to think hard about how

governments, businesses, and citizens can help create conditions that encourage individual initiative and a vibrant civic life.

As you may know, I recently had the privilege of traveling through South Asia. And the lesson I took away from every country I visited -- Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka -- was that social development and economic development go hand-in-hand. You cannot have sustainable markets and trade without investing in human potential.

During my trip to South Asia, I saw example after example of women struggling to overcome poverty, illiteracy, inadequate health care and long-standing forms of discrimination. I saw poor and illiterate women who had organized around their capacity to borrow and save money, and were beginning to lift themselves and their families out of acute poverty. I saw women who had acquired skills to make crafts they could sell for profit. I saw women insisting that their daughters be given the same opportunities for schooling as their sons.

As I said in South Asia, and I have repeated many times since returning home, girls and women represent the best investment any nation can make. Women represent over half the world's population. They comprise a disproportionate number of the world's poor and illiterate. Yet in country after country they are denied access to the tools of opportunity. They are denied education, health care, credit, political and legal rights.

The consequences are not only unfortunate for women themselves, but for their families, their communities and their nations.

Development experts tell us that where women lack the tools of opportunity, children tend to be less educated and less well-nourished. Families tend to be larger and poorer.

Where women remain illiterate, we find that democratic institutions are more fragile and the environment less well managed. We know that investing in education is part and parcel of providing economic opportunity because, as capital and technology become even more mobile, differences in the quality of labor forces will become that much more apparent.

We have seen how the education of girls and women in parts of Asia and South America has lifted whole regions out of poverty. We are learning around the world, and re-learning here at home, that where women prosper, countries prosper.

I understand that issues such as education and health care

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are still regarded among some as "soft issues." Often they are cavalierly shunted aside as "traditional women's issues" that do not belong in any serious discussion of the problems we face in the 21st century.

But I believe strongly that issues relating to social development, especially of women, are the epicenter of our political and economic challenges. And I believe we can build on the work of world summits in Cairo, Vienna, Rio, and Copenhagen, and the upcoming conference on women, to encourage governments, businesses and citizens to recognize that women are critical to future global prosperity.

We can make progress in this area if governments rethink how to protect their most vulnerable populations, particularly at a time of growing budget pressures and of world competition, and if governments respect basic human rights, which include the rights of women and girls to be protected from exploitation and abuse.

Governments are responsible for promoting disciplined economic policies. They must strengthen the conditions that sustain democracy and market economies that we know can unleash the creative energies of millions of people -- if these people are prepared to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Governments around the world can begin by investing more resources in the health and education of children, especially girls. In parts of South Asia, I saw government programs in which poor parents are given weekly allotments of food -- and of cash -- as incentives to keep girls in school. I saw health clinics that had been placed in the areas of greatest need, however remote or impoverished.

I also saw that government seldom acted alone. Although governments have primary responsibility for creating a climate that fosters economic growth and social development, businesses and non-governmental organizations also have a role to play. Businesses must recognize that the social costs of their activities often have long-term economic consequences. Depleting natural or human resources destroys markets. Now more than ever, the world needs socially responsible business leadership.

And non-governmental organizations must remain a vital force in the march for social development. These NGOs are operating on the front lines, delivering services to people, listening to their concerns, and acting as their advocates.

They are not dispensing charity or creating a system of dependence. They are empowering people to take control of their lives through education, better health methods, access to credit,

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political participation and legal protections.

NGOs are critical to development for several reasons. Their leaders are often volunteers, and they come to their projects with great enthusiasm and energy. They have a vision of a better world and the commitment to see that vision take hold. And they give voice to the aspirations of people left out of the modern economy and whose influence over government is small or non-existent.

Such organizations have always been a vital foundation of American democracy, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed more than a century ago. They also have been vital to the creation and survival of democracy and open markets in many regions of the world.

So we must recognize that to meet the human needs of nations, we should build strong partnerships between governments, businesses, and NGOs.

As an American, I was pleased to learn that many of the most successful programs I visited in South Asia had received assistance from this country. I saw how small American investments were paying off in the form of lower birth rates, safer medical care for pregnant women, better treatment of fatal diseases such as cholera and diarrhea, protection for abused women and girls, and more opportunities for schooling.

In Copenhagen, I was privileged to announce a new 10-year, \$100 million dollar USAID Girls and Women's Education Initiative that will begin with an initial grant to India and be followed with grants to other countries.

These investments not only benefit the countries and the NGOs receiving the aid, but also the United States as well because they offer support to people and governments who are working tirelessly, and often at great price, to uphold the underpinnings of democracy and market economies.

Finally, let me say that investing in human potential -- particularly in women and girls -- also means paying more attention to the importance of family. Families usually determine how daughters are treated. Deeply rooted attitudes about the value of girls are hard to change, but we must try. Try to persuade mother and father to invest the love, attention, and resources in their children, particularly their girls, starting with education and health care. The success of that persuasion will rest on a new vision of a world in which the distinctions between men and women are not viewed as reasons to demean each other, but as complementary parts of a greater whole.

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In this new world, both boys and girls are loved and cared for, first by the family they are born into -- by parents who want them and invest in them; then by their extended family; then by the families they create as adults and by the children they, in turn, invest with love; and finally by societies that value every child as a gift to be nurtured and savored.

And of course, women must also be responsible for their own lives and their own futures. Women must find their own voices and become participants and decision-makers in the home, work place, community and nation. We must develop a new vocabulary, a new language, to replace the terrible silence that sounds too often when women's concerns are raised.

So let us not leave it simply to government, or simply to individuals, to solve the problems we all confront. We know that we need to work together, in partnership, men and women, if we expect to achieve change that will benefit all of us. Simply put, no government, no business, no community, no individual can remain idle, given the magnitude of the challenges we face and the uncertainties of the world we live in, and the opportunities we all have.

I hope all of us will give voice to the political and economic aspirations now being sought and expressed by women around the world so that we can create a more peaceful and more prosperous society for us all.

Thank you very much.

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