

HRC DEPTIURE STATEMENT
SRI LANKA

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SRI LANKA -- DEPARTURE STATEMENT

I am very grateful to the people of Sri Lanka, and to President Kumaratunga, for the warm hospitality and expressions of friendship I enjoyed during my stay here.

I leave today with profound respect for the Sri Lankan people and the dynamic democracy being built here. I wish also to convey my deep admiration for the President, who has worked so courageously to pursue peace. Sri Lanka is showing the world the value of investing in people -- especially women and children -- through health care, education, and economic development. Nothing could be more important to the prosperity of any nation, particularly at a time of growing global competition and scarcer resources.

Sadly, my departure today from Sri Lanka also marks my departure from South Asia. It is my hope that over these past two weeks the bonds of friendship between the United States and the nations of South Asia have grown stronger. I truly believe we are on the threshold of a new era of cooperation that will encompass our joint commitment to democracy, human rights, and the alleviation of poverty, illiteracy, and disease.

Each country I visited offered unique insights into the challenges and successes we share as individual nations and as a global family. My brief stay in South Asia has further convinced me that our relationships must go beyond economic ties to embrace a greater concern for women and children, who play such a vital role in the political, social, and economic life of every nation.

In leaving, I would like to thank all of the wonderful people I met throughout South Asia for educating me about this exciting region of the world and opening my eyes to the beauty of each country. I will return home with fond memories from every stop I made.

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