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US/Latvia Hospital part.
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THE WHITE HOUSE

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**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
at U.S./Latvia Hospital Partnership Announcement
The White House**

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you. Please be seated and welcome to the White House. We are delighted to have all of you here for this occasion which is so significant to our two countries and we are so pleased that not only do we have members of the Latvian American community and Latvians but we have other concerned citizens who support this kind of partnership and endeavor.

I'm pleased that Mrs. Ulmane could be with us today. We've planned this so that she could be here to represent the people of Latvia. I am delighted that the Latvian Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Kalnins is here and that our new ambassador from the United States to Latvia is here, Ambassador Napper.

I want to thank all who have had anything to do with bringing about this very significant event. It is something that had been talked about and really dreamed about for many months ever since the President and I visited Latvia last July.

I would like to particularly thank Jim Smith, the Executive Director of the American International Health Alliance whose energetic and creative direction of the Medical Partnership Program has been instrumental in making possible not only this partnership but others that I have witnessed first hand in Moscow and in Minsk and in Kiev.

It is exciting for all of us to celebrate an occasion such as this that represents the ideals and aspirations common to our two countries. The coming together of hospitals in Riga and St. Louis represents precisely the kind of partnership we need between nations and between peoples if we are going to meet the challenges of this complex and fast-changing world.

I want to tell you just a little bit about how this partnership got started. It would not have happened without the energy and concern of a few women who were determined to find a

way to bring the best possible medical care to the women and children of Latvia.

I had the great privilege of meeting several women doctors at a lunch that was sponsored for me when I visited just less than a year ago. At the lunch, that was a great occasion for me to meet women from all parts of Latvia with many different interests and concerns, I was asked many questions about health care and was told about the challenges facing the people in Latvia that they were attempting to marshal the resources to meet.

When I returned home, I received very moving letters from two of the women doctors who were there following up on our conversation at lunch and asking for assistance. With the support of Brian Atwood and USAID a partnership was established through the American International Health Alliance. This partnership which we are here to launch will bring medical personnel from hospitals in Riga together with their counterparts in St. Louis. The hospitals participating on the Latvia side and the hospitals participating on the United States side will both be contributing. The partnership will address the priorities identified by the Latvian Minister of Welfare and State Minister of Health, including women's health and infectious disease. The formation of this partnership is something in which people throughout Latvia and America can take great pride.

I am personally so gratified by the American medical personnel both in this partnership and in all the partnerships that USAID and AIHA support -- who are devoting their time, energy, resources, expertise and their own compassion by traveling thousands of miles from home to share information with their counterparts in Latvia. Their efforts truly represent the spirit of community and volunteerism that is so needed in our world today.

As I have seen these partnerships in action already in other parts of the world, I have been impressed at the impact that can come about when people work together and I know from my own experience in speaking to American doctors and nurses who have become involved in medical partnerships that the learning is not a one-way street. What I have heard again and again is that in our age of medical competence and technological advancement their are important things we in the United States can learn from the health professionals in Latvia. I remember vividly an American doctor telling me that his practice was enhanced immeasurably by observing and participating in the close physician-patient relationships that he experienced in Moscow in one of these partnerships. Through relationships of mutual respect, medical personnel here and abroad can share skills and broaden their own medical knowledge and experience.

These partnerships are important here at home on a large scale as well. As citizens of our country, which is the longest living democracy, we can, through partnerships such as these, help countries whose peoples have made great sacrifices in their own struggles for democracy. As we all know, the march to democracy is not an easy one and there are many, many obstacles that have to be overcome. But the United States, now more than ever, bears a special responsibility for reaching out and assisting those brave people in nations throughout the world that are struggling to create their own democratic countries, their own market systems.

One of the great ironies of the debate currently going on in Washington in which there are many voices calling to cut foreign aid which consists of less than one percent of our national budget is that we are now at a point when the investments we have made throughout the decades in nurturing democracy, in providing information about economic growth in a free-market economy are about to really take hold. I have personally seen the extraordinary benefits flow not only to the countries in which we work but back to our own country through the investments we have made in programs sponsored by such institutions as USAID. Partnerships such as this are a testimony to the way in which the United States can provide a helping hand, not a hand out, to its partners, allies, and friends around the world in countries such as Latvia.

So I want to thank all of you for supporting this concept and in particular for supporting this particular partnership which holds such great promise. It is, I believe, the kind of relationship and effort we should be doing all we can to promote, to nurture, to grow, to reward.

And one of the people who has made today possible and who has been a strong voice on behalf of the United States remaining engaged, remaining a leader in helping to shape the emerging democracies, in remaining a leader in the struggle toward all people realizing in their own homelands the freedom that we too often take for granted here is the administrator of USAID a long-time devotee of the role in which appropriately used foreign assistance can make a difference in promoting democracy, Mr. Brian Atwood.

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