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**AS DELIVERED REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHILE**

Santiago, Chile
October 13, 1995

Thank you Señor Rector for that very informative review of the relationships between our two countries and the special relationship with this university. I want to thank you and all of the distinguished platform guests, as well as this audience for the invitation to be here today.

It is a great honor for me not only to be at the university, but to be here in Santiago. This is my first trip to South America, and I am delighted to have the chance to spend time here in this country, which represents so much hope and promise for democracy and prosperity in our region of the world.

And I must say that I would like a copy of the speech that President Theodore Roosevelt gave here, because the challenge to sustain democracy continues. It is a challenge that we all must meet every day in our own countries, and I would like to learn from the wisdom of President Roosevelt.

When I woke up this morning and looked out my hotel window at the beautiful Andes, I understood immediately why every visitor to this country is so taken with its natural beauty. Everyone with whom I spoke before I started this trip told me that when I got to Chile, I would be overwhelmed, both by the beauty of the country, and the warmth of the people. That was certainly a prophecy that has come true.

I want to thank particularly President and Mrs. Frei for their gracious hospitality, for the time they have both spent with me, and for their interest in issues that directly affect the lives of women, children and families.

Being here at this university, I am reminded of what someone once said to me. That is that Chile's greatest export is its ideas. My first thought when I heard that was that every young person I know, by the time he or she graduates from high school, has read a poem by Neruda or by Mistral. In fact, my husband and I just celebrated our twentieth wedding anniversary a few days ago and one of the gifts he gave me was Neruda's twenty love poems, one for each year. And I brought them with me on this trip (applause).

Although the idea that your exporting of ideas refers first in the minds of so many to your great writers, poets, philosophers, and teachers who are known around the world, it also refers to an approach that you have developed here to political and economic reform, that has become a model for many nations on this continent and beyond. What we see occurring in Chile is the kind of progress that can be achieved when there is a genuine commitment to investing in people. And that means investing in education and training, health care and jobs, and respecting the right of every citizen, including women, to participate fully in the political life of a country.

Chile and the United States share a commitment to democracy, social justice, and equality of opportunity. And we are working together in many endeavors. And we have, as you have already heard from the Rector, been partners here at this university in the creation of the school of geology and the labor and organization department, and in faculty exchanges. Many of the efforts in joint scientific research are symbolic of the deeper partnership between our peoples.

Improving the quality of teaching and schooling has been a principal focus of investment in both our countries. And that makes sense, because education universally is a cornerstone of any strong and lasting democracy. I feel very strongly about this issue. Not only because education has played such an important role in my life and in the life of my husband. But because around the world we have seen how the acquisition of knowledge and skills can lift whole groups of people out of poverty and dependence and into self-reliance and prosperity.

I learned about this first hand when my husband was governor of his home state of Arkansas, one of the poorest states in our country. At the time he was first elected in 1978, Arkansas ranked almost at the bottom in national measures of education. For decades, there had been very little public support for schools. And there were very few resources with which to initiate reform.

When my husband asked me to become the chair of an education task force, I spent many days, and weeks and months traveling throughout the state, talking with parents and teachers, community and business leaders. And an extraordinary thing happened as the attention to education became better understood, as to how it related to providing for better lives and the livelihood for people who themselves had not had first hand experience with the full range of education. Businesses joined together with citizen groups to lobby the State Legislature in support of a special tax to raise money for education. That was unheard of, to ask for any kind of tax, let alone one for the public schools. But businesses, as they learned in Arkansas and around America, and as you have learned here in Chile, know that future success depends heavily on the availability of an educated and skilled workforce. And so businesses began to understand that better schools would mean better workers. And better workers would mean greater prosperity for individual families, communities, states, and nations.

Within a few years of that reform measure being approved, there were differences in the quality of teachers and schools. And students' performance began to improve, and eventually even the standard of living for many people. I tell you this story, because it mirrors so much of what we see going on around the world today, and what you have committed to doing here in Chile. What makes your situation so unusual and inspiring is that your country succeeded in returning to democracy, achieving lasting economic growth, and reducing the number of people living in poverty --all at the same time.

Would any of this have been possible if your nation had failed to invest in the education of its people?

You have kept alive the dream of upward mobility for people, and that will continue with the education reforms I heard about today from the Minister of Education. And your continued access to new markets where not only the ideas but the products of Chile will be joining the world economy. And your future accession to the North American Free Trade Agreement, which President Clinton is committed to achieving will strengthen the partnership not only between our two countries, but among the countries in this hemisphere.

Education has played a critical role in all of those movements, and also in our own country. I do not think the United States would have endured as the longest democratic nation without an educational tradition that began with the earliest colonial settlers, expanded to one-room schoolhouses on the western frontier and then created a nationwide system of public universities.

Throughout our hemisphere, we will continue to depend on today's students, and we will have to continue to invest in them. Because increasingly, education is central to all of our goals for a more prosperous, peaceful 21st century. But if we look honestly at our hemisphere today, we have to admit that barely half of the children in Latin America now finish elementary school. And far too few graduate from secondary school. For those of us from the United States and from Chile, where education is a priority and where so much progress has been made, we do have a stake in what happens in the childrens' lives throughout our hemisphere.

For that reason, government leaders participating in the Summit of the Americas in Miami last year agreed to create a hemispheric Partnership for Education Reform Alternatives. It is called PERA. It will bring together governments, development organizations, non-governmental organizations, and businesses to help reform education policies. That means that all nations will be pursuing a plan similar to the one you have adopted here to improve the quality of teaching and schools to raise educational standards, to improve the management of schools and, to strengthen the education of women and girls, which is a key to economic prosperity everywhere.

to improve the lives of women around the world. More than 180 nations endorsed a document that sets forth specific proposals that if followed could make a difference.

As I said in Beijing, the single most important message echoing forth from that conference is that human rights are women's rights -- and women's rights are human rights. But we have to take that statement and the plan of action and move beyond both in order to implement what it is we know needs to be done to ensure that women and girls have the opportunities to fulfill their God-given potential in their homes, their schools, communities and workplaces.

This is particularly urgent because we have a diverging economy in the world today. Those who are educated, who are able to manipulate language and symbols will do very well in this new economy. Those who are not, will be left behind, and even further behind. Seventy percent of the world's poor are women; and women are two-thirds of those who cannot read or write. At the same time, women are busy every day doing much of the world's work -- everything from raising children to cooking meals, washing clothes, cleaning houses, planting crops, working on assembly lines, running companies and even running countries.

Women need and deserve what I sometimes call the tools of opportunity: access to education, to health care, credit and jobs, as well as legal protections and freedom from violence in their own homes as well as in the streets.

Education answers all of these needs, because it provides the basis for so many other opportunities in life. Women who are schooled are better able to take care of their own health and the health of their families; they are able to compete for better-paying jobs; they have more say over the direction of their own lives.

Just yesterday I stopped in Nicaragua, a nation that has started down the path to democracy and a market economy. The transition has been difficult and about half the population continues to live in poverty. The first stop I made though was a tiny bank in a barrio in Managua. It is run by 30 poor women who borrow modest amounts of money to invest in their own businesses. One woman told me she had started a bakery; another made mosquito netting; a third was a seamstress. Not only had these women organized themselves to improve their own circumstances, but by doing so they were improving the circumstances of their families and communities. One sign of their new self-esteem and determination was that they have a loan repayment rate of 100 percent. That would be the envy of many commercial banks that I am knowledgeable about.

These small and seemingly insignificant steps are changing lives and they will change nations. In fact, one of the women at the bank in Managua asked me about my trip to India last spring, because she knew I had visited a similar bank there. What she didn't know was that I will also be visiting a bank like that here in Santiago tomorrow before leaving.

The movement for micro-credit, micro-enterprise, the capacity for credit to become available to women so that they themselves can become entrepreneurs, start small businesses is one of the most important opportunities any nation has to build its economy from the grassroots up while it is making macro-changes that will have national and international effects.

If we invest in people, while we continue to move forward with respect to democracy and prosperity, the rewards for all people will be spread more evenly and justly throughout the society.

A few hours ago, I had the opportunity to visit with Mrs. Frei a community center where I saw in action programs working with pre-school youngsters, with women and with couples to strengthen families, to make marriages more open and stable, so that couples together will commit themselves to their children's future. It was a wonderful example of how foundations here in this country are working to better the lives of children, women, and families by making these investment where it matters in their relationships, in their capacities, in their futures.

Mrs. Frei and I will be in Paraguay in a few days to participate in a conference of First Ladies from our hemisphere. Foremost on our minds, and the minds of our fellow participants, will be the very issues that have been so instrumental in your nation's return to democracy, its economic ascent, and the examples of social progress I have witnessed during my brief stay here.

And I know while I am at this conference I will think back to my visit here at this university, because the ideals that it represents are ideals that need to take root and take flower in every nation of our hemisphere. Ideals of education, free inquiry, public discourse. Those ideals are embodied firmly now in Chilean society. Your country is an example and a model for many others who are struggling still for their own democracies to take root and flower. It is a privilege for me to see what has been achieved, but I was especially honored to see that you are not resting on the laurels of the successes that can be pointed to. But that every day, whether it is a plan to reform education or to strengthen families, you understand that there are three legs to the stool for progress in the twenty first century: democracy, free market economies, and social investment. And this is one place the world can look to see a stool that is firmly grounded and that will provide a setting for future progress for all the people of this country.

Thank you for what you are doing, the example you are setting and for the partnership and friendship that you have with our country. Thank you very much. (Applause)
