

Women's NGO, Estonia
7/9/96

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
SPEAKS TO WOMEN'S/NGO FORUM IN ESTONIA
TALLIN, ESTONIA
JULY 9, 1996**

Well, thank you very much. What an introduction! I have heard often of Estonian singing and dancing, and even heard of the Singing Revolution, but I never thought I'd get to participate. I am very grateful, and I want to thank the dancers and the singers for bringing me into that very enjoyable experience. We could just keep going . . . I've never seen dancers do such a fine job in such a small space. That was a real work of art in itself.

I'm delighted to be here, and I want to thank all of you who have gathered on this very rainy day to discuss with me what is occurring here in Estonia within the non-governmental organizational community. To bring you a message of support and encouragement from my husband and the American government and the American people. Because we are so excited that, after centuries of rule by others, Estonia is once again a free and independent democracy. And America is very proud to be your friend and partner.

Building and maintaining a democracy requires the participation of all citizens. This is true for my country, which has been working at democracy for two hundred and twenty years, as well as this new democracy here. And non-governmental organizations, such as the ones represented here, are very essential to the strengthening of democracy and to providing opportunities for citizens to participate.

I have met with NGO's throughout Central Europe, and now I am delighted to be here. Today, I also have the opportunity to participate in a small way in the work that you are doing by announcing a grant of \$24,000, jointly awarded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Information Agency to the Estonian Union for Child Welfare. This grant will support translation into Estonian and Russian of civics education texts for teachers.

I have great respect for the work of non-governmental organizations, and I am anxious to hear today about your work, your accomplishments, and any challenges that you still face. So thank you very much for joining me.