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Commencement

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
IN COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS TO
JOHNS HOPKINS SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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MRS. CLINTON: Thank you, Dean Wolfowitz, for that introduction. I'm delighted to be here with Ambassador Nitze and his wife, Leezee Porter. And I want to say, special greetings to all of the administrators and faculty of SAIS, congratulations to the award winners, and to all who are here to celebrate the students who are graduating today.

This school, if I had any doubt before I heard the Dean and Frank talk about it, would certainly have ranked high in my list of places where one can learn about and become prepared to participate in the affairs of the world. I now know it is the finest school of international -- (laughter and applause.) And as such, it is a microcosm of the world. Its graduates have made and will continue to make their marks in diplomacy and foreign policy, in business law, communications, academia, and grass-roots advocacy. I know the President is grateful to have a number of SAIS graduates working in his administration.

Given your diverse backgrounds, interests, and admissions, it is fitting, I believe, that your graduation in 1997 comes so close to the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Marshall Plan. Secretary of State George Marshall's vision shaped a new world in the second half of this bloody century. And next week the President will go to The Hague to commemorate the Marshall Plan.

But if all we do is commemorate that vision, if we forget what brought Ambassador Nitze and Christian Herter and others to believe that we needed a permanent commitment here in the United States in the engagement of our people around the world, and to the understanding in how we could help peoples everywhere realize the blessings of freedom and democracy and prosperity, you will not have paid tribute to George Marshall, nor to all who worked with him over the past

50 years to bring us to the brink of a time that we can, as the President said in his Inaugural speech, consider a new, bright prospect for our globe.

Each of you who graduate has now a responsibility to use what you have learned here at SAIS to better the prospects for humankind. You will adopt different strategies, you will certainly fulfill that responsibility in a myriad of ways that you have been prepared for. And there are many subjects fitting for a commencement address at an institution such as this. But I want to ask you to consider two particular issues that I believe fall within your area of responsibility and that you can help us address.

The first is that you have to help make sure that America remains engaged in the world. It is no secret that many of our fellow countrymen and women, those of you who are United States citizens, have little interest or apparent concern about what happens beyond our borders. Time and again, they answer public opinion surveys by expressing the view that they want their leaders both in the public and the private sector to concentrate on matters here, close to home. They have not been sufficiently encouraged to support our foreign policy budget; they seem to care little about what goes on in the halls of Congress when the day is over, whether or not we will commit our time or money or resources to some faraway place.

And yet, we know all too well from the history that the 20th century has laid before us, that kind of indifference and lack of concern poses a great danger not just to stability elsewhere in the world, but to our future here. So I would ask you to use the skills and knowledge you have attained to make it clear to your fellow citizens why you came to SAIS, what international relations has to do with what happens here in Washington, D.C., or anywhere throughout our country.

There's also another particular issue that I would like to raise, because although our foreign policy, as we stand on the edge of this new millennium does not lack for challenges, there are some that get lost in the great concerns of the day and are not sustained over time.

Earlier this month, the President met with our democratic partners in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean to advance our hemisphere's efforts to build an inclusive and expanding global economy. Next week he will travel to Europe and he will again reaffirm America's commitment to Marshall's dream of a united, democratic and peaceful Europe.

Every day as the President works to create new opportunities for trade and cooperation in Asia, or to seize new opportunities for peace from Northern Ireland to the Middle East, he is working to create this new future of bright prospects. As he works to promote new opportunities for economic progress and democracy in Africa, and to build on the opportunity he now has to integrate fully the countries of the former Soviet bloc into the family of free nations, he's looking for ways to avoid the mistakes of the past.

We also face new challenges that George Marshall did not think about: How do we safeguard our people from the threats that continue of nuclear war; how do we face up to terrorism and extremism, international crime and the proliferation of drugs and environmental

degradation. You know so well that any one of these can produce instant global crises, as well as the crisis simulations that some of you have studied here.

While all of our challenges require vigilance and commitment, I think there is another unnoticed foreign policy flash point that also demands our attention. I am talking about social development, particularly investments in women and children. I believe that such social development represents a realistic, practical and moral approach to foreign policy, a way to fuse both American ideals and interests.

I went back recently and reread George Marshall's Nobel Lecture. It was notable for its eloquence. It was moving, as this old soldier talked about the new world that we needed to build together. But I was particularly struck by his stress on the importance of democracy as being a way to give people those resources that were required for them to build better lives. He talked about how tyranny inevitably must retire before the tremendous and moral strength of the gospel of freedom and self-respect for the individual. But we have to recognize that those democratic principles do not flourish on empty stomachs, and that people turn to false promises of dictators because they are hopeless, and anything promised is something better than the miserable existence that they endure.

As we watch the spread of democracy and free markets we can feel good about the contributions that the United States has made to the increasing prosperity and freedom that people now enjoy. But we cannot forget that without a continuing commitment not only to the spread of democracy and free markets, but to the realization of the fruits that those should bring, we will always be in danger of seeing instability break out and the crises that can flow from that affecting us on our shores.

If we consider social investment as merely a luxury, as something marginal to be looked at only when times are so good we have money to throw around, we do an injustice to George Marshall's understanding of the kind of world we are still continuing to build. I have long subscribed to the belief that investments in people are just as essential to the prosperity and stability of our national family and global community as investments in open markets and trade. That belief has only been strengthened as I have seen firsthand from my travels around the world on behalf of the United States what happens when social development is taken seriously, and what happens when it is ignored.

From Brazil to Bangladesh, Estonia to Eritrea, Mexico to Mongolia, and Thailand to Tanzania, I have seen how social investments, often supported by America's public, private, and not-for-profit sectors are giving more people, especially women, the chance to participate fully in the political, economic, social, and civic life of their countries.

I cannot count the times that women have come up to me in rural villages and poor barrios and urban slums to recount how their lives have been transformed because they received a small loan or started a business, or because their daughters now had a chance to go to school, or because a family planning clinic opened in their area, and for the first time they could plan how many children to have and when to have them, or because a new law had been passed

protecting their rights to own property or inherit it, to hold office or to vote. These were not just stories of individual transformation; they were stories how, because of these changes, women understood better what democracy meant and the stake they had in a peaceful future for themselves and their children.

Increasingly, governments, businesses, and leaders around the world are recognizing that as long as discrimination and inequities persist, our potential to create a stable, peaceful, and ultimately prosperous world will be far from realized. They're also recognizing that a democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms.

For too long, in too many places, women have lived on the outskirts of opportunity. Today, women comprise 70 percent of the world's poor and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write. They die daily from diseases that could have been prevented or treated. They too often watch their children succumb to malnutrition caused by poverty. They are denied the right to attend school by their fathers and brothers, and they are too often barred from the bank lending office and banned from the ballot box.

In some countries, women continue to be denied the right to participate fully on cultural or historical grounds. But as Secretary of State Albright has said, excluding women, denying them their rights, is not cultural, it is criminal. It is also impractical and short-sighted.

I well remember the wise words of the Vice President of Uganda, a woman physician whom I recently met, who talked about what life had been like under the tyranny that Uganda had endured for more than a decade. She said to me that for too long our leaders forgot that women are the ones who get society together. They forgot that women are the ones who care for their families, anchor their communities, look to the future, and worry not just about themselves, but about society. Finally, today, we are remembering, and our country is better for it.

We know we cannot build the kind of future we want for our country or the world without the contributions of women. In fact, I am often amused when an economist with a straight face tells me that in developing countries women have made no contributions to gross domestic product. (Applause.) Often they say that as we are riding down roads or I'm looking out the window, watching women plant and harvest crops, go to market and perform innumerable other tasks. And I often wonder what would happen to the economies of the world if women stopped working inside and outside the home for even one day. (Applause.)

This is more than just speculation. Every study that has recently been done about developing economies has demonstrated, as Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers as eloquently written, that investment in the education of girls may well be the highest return investment available in the developing world. That message is getting through now.

Again, on my trip to Africa, I saw a concerted effort to educate children to catch up and particularly to bring girls into schools. They will be creating new challenges for themselves because of the emphasis on education, for, as I saw on a visit to a primary school in Kampala, they now have classrooms bursting at the seams. They proudly took me into a class of 74 8-year-

olds and told me that for the first time they had more girls than boys -- 44 to 30. And one teacher. So their emphasis on education will cause them to have to work very hard, but at least they are moving in the direction of understanding what a commitment to education for both boys and girls can mean.

But even if you subscribe, as I do, to the notion that social investments are critical to progress in developing countries, some of you may well be asking yourselves why investing in women should be a concern of our foreign policy here in the United States. Certainly there are many important issues that have to be addressed; why add one more to the list?

I can only answer that by saying that the issues that people are confronting around the world, including here in the United States, are ones that have to do not only with the real politik, but what I call real life politik. We understand those of us who have studied political science or national relations what real politik is and what it demands of us as we attempt, as the Dean said, to make it possible for there to be a balance of power and to look forward into the future so that we understand those nations that are emerging as potential threats. But in a democracy, particularly now at a time of global communication, how people live, how they feel about themselves, their aspirations, what happens around their kitchen tables will have a great influence on what leaders are able to do in the broader world.

We ignore real life politik in foreign policy at our own risk. Because the pressures of globalization are posing questions that are unavoidable as we approach the 21st century: How will we balance individual and community rights and responsibilities? how will families raise children in the face of pressures from the mass media and the consumer culture? What about personal identity and worth in an age of globalization and information overload and high technology? What about how people can in some way preserve their ethnic pride and value their national citizenship? How will nations protect their sovereignty while cooperating regionally and globally with others, and how will they do so by keeping the expectations of their own people in some way satisfied?

As the President has said, our challenge is to balance the competing and sometimes contradictory pressures of global integration and disintegration. As we consider how free nations like ours will meet these challenges, we may need to be reminded that democracy is not just about our legally protected rights, elections, or free-market economies. It is about the internalization of democratic values in people's hearts, minds and everyday lives. It is about developing among democratic nations an alliance of values -- an alliance that means every nation bears a responsibility to make sure that all of the citizens, no matter their race, their gender, their religion or ethnic background, have a chance to take their seat at society's table.

Whether we succeed at this task real life politik important is particularly significant for women. Even for women in countries such as ours, where some are still striving to attain and define their rightful place in government, the economy, and civil society.

So how will we ensure that as we push democratization, it includes women; as we encourage free-market economies, women's economic contributions will be recognized? How

will we build public and private institutions that empower women with the tools they need to take responsibility for their lives? How will we through financial institutions provide credit for women, especially poor women, who around the world have shown that with access to small loans they can lift themselves and their families out of poverty? How will we acknowledge, finally, once and for all, that issues and concerns for women are issues that affect everyone?

These are not abstract questions especially for SAIS graduates, but they reflect in practical terms the kinds of issues you will face as diplomats and bankers, as lawyers and businesspeople and activists. Because, inevitably, if we care about opening foreign markets, or care about making our country and our allies safe and secure in the face of new postwar-Cold War threats, if we care about enlarging the world's community of democracies and widening the circle of peace and prosperity, we cannot ignore women and we must address their conditions and circumstances, because if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If they have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, they will make an economic contribution. When their families flourish, communities and nations flourish as well.

These are issues not just for the developing world, but indeed, for the advanced economies. In our country and across Europe there is serious debate underway as to how to sustain economic growth without tearing at the social fabric and ripping apart of the social safety net. There is a growing awareness that solutions cannot be solely government driven or market driven, they must reflect a balance of public, private, and individual power. And women must be part of that balance.

That is why I would hope that we will continue to stress, as the President and Secretary of State have, that women will be an integral part of our foreign policy -- not just in theory, but in practice. And I hope that we will make clear that our modest investments in foreign aid, less than one percent of our budget, yield dramatic returns.

Now, it is not that I believe that American aid, whether for microcredit projects, family planning, girls education, or any other social investment, is a panacea for women or democracy. And I have not starry-eyed enough to believe that every just cause in the world, whether or not it is related to women, is ours to embrace. But I do believe that social investments are vital in spreading our democratic ideals, strengthening free market interests, and enhancing our own security. And I think that if we can make that case, we can enlist more public support as well.

Social development is foreign policy, not social work. It is a realistic and moral way for the United States to help expand the global economy, nurture democracy, and improve our own prospects for peace and prosperity. As we move to this new century, we will certainly measure American foreign policy success or failure in terms of our strategic alliances, our trade agreements, even humanitarian aid in the wake of tragedy and crisis. But I would argue that we cannot just be reactive. We have to think about how we will build this alliance of democratic values in the hearts and minds of people everywhere; how we will reinforce human rights of men and women; and how we will be clear that the world we are hoping to build reflects

the best of American ideals.

In the days and months ahead, as you leave SAIS, I hope you will remember not only the Marshall Plan that he gave breath to and that we will commemorate, but the vision of what it could lead to. It was not an end in itself. The world will be challenging and unpredictable in the future, just as it has been in the past. But if we put into action our stated belief in democracy and in its promise to give all citizens a chance to live up to their God-given potential, America will stand on firmer strategic and moral ground in making the case for the kind of world we want in the 21st century.

You have a lot to say about whether we move closer to our ideals. And I urge you to do all you can to build that juster, more peaceful and prosperous world that all of us dream of and work for. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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