

U.A.E. Dinner  
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**Mission of the United States of America**  
**U.S. Information Service**  
11, route de Pregny – 1292 Chambésy – Geneva, Switzerland

Tel +41 22 749 4358  
Fax +41 22 749 4314

**INTERNET Homepage** <http://www.itu.int/MISSIONS/US/>

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REMARKS BY  
**U.S. FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**

at the United Arab Emirates dinner  
Intercontinental Hotel, Geneva  
14 May 1998

(Begin transcript)

Thank you very much. I was quite surprised by that lovely gift, but I thought for a moment there were going to be two beautiful horses brought into this room, and that would have made for a very interesting evening indeed.

I want to thank our gracious hosts. I cannot express my appreciation for the kindness that has been shown to me and the honor bestowed upon me. Mr. Al Mafda, and Ambassador Al Aboodi and the people of the United Arab Emirates, please extend my appreciation to His Excellency and to anyone who had anything to do with giving me this great honor.

I want to thank you, though, not only for your hospitality tonight, nor not only for the award I received, but for your tireless efforts to improve the health and lives of your citizens. I was especially pleased to hear about the enormous progress you have made toward lowering infant mortality rates. I was also pleased to be able to join all of you in celebrating the World Health Organization's 50th birthday. Fiftieth birthdays, of course, are something I have some recent experience with, and I believe it means that you are quite young, still. So there is a great deal yet to be done, despite the youth of the organization, but it is also a time to celebrate what has been accomplished.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved in the work of the WHO. UN officials, ministers, ambassadors, and particularly the President, for all the work and accomplishments that we celebrate today. I also want to pay special tribute to the Director-General, Dr. Nakajima, thank you for your dedication to lift up the health of all citizens. Children who now have immunization, families who now have access to needed medicines, people who have help in their fight against AIDS – owe you a debt of gratitude.

And I offer my heartiest congratulations to the incoming Director-General, Dr. Brundtland. I first met her at the Olympics in Norway in 1994. And as the conversation turned to health care, and particularly the health care reform debate that was then going on in my country, I was immediately struck by how much she knew about the issues at stake. She brought to that discussion the same extraordinary qualities she would bring to the WHO. The understanding and expertise of a physician; the heart of a great person; and the expertise and experience of a very accomplished leader. She will also, I might add, bring a perspective that women have about the needs of our families and children. So I know that she will launch into the work to be done with great energy.

I am pleased also to be joined tonight by another remarkable woman, Mary Robinson, who is with us, who has done so much on behalf of her own nation of Ireland, and now working so hard on behalf of human rights. I think it is particularly fitting that both Dr. Brundtland and Mary Robinson are heading up such important responsibilities for our world.

Although we have an opportunity to celebrate what has been accomplished, and the recent World Health Report detailed an amazing track record for which everyone in this room and countless others should be proud. We also, as we've heard over the last several days, have many challenges. But I'm confident that with the kind of commitment that I've heard about today, and the dedication that so many of you bring to this work, we will continue to make progress. I hope that we are not held accountable for the promises we don't keep, but instead for the ones that we can.

And I know that your work here at WHO and at related United Nations organizations in Geneva will play a very important role in ensuring that the 21st century builds on the progress and not repeat the mistakes of the 20th century.

So let us join together in the slogan "Health for All in the 21st Century" and continue to do what we can in our own communities, nations, and around the world to make that not just a slogan but a reality.

Thank you all very much.

(End transcript)