

Remarks at the Presidency
Sophia, Bulgaria
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**First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
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Well, Mr. President, and to the President of the National Parliament, and to the Prime Minister, and to all the Members of Parliament, and the ministers here gathered, and also to all of the wives of Heads of State and Heads of Government from the region -- I am very honored to be here with you this evening.

As the President said in his remarks, this is a very important time for Bulgaria and for the entire region, and indeed the world as we work to try to improve opportunities for people through better economic, social and political systems.

I want the people and the government of Bulgaria to know on behalf of my husband and the government and people of the United States how impressed we are with the reform efforts that you have undertaken in the last several years.

And the United States will continue to stand with you as a partner and a friend in your efforts as you continue to move forward. We know that the path of reform and change is not easy. It is not easy in any democracy, including the United States. And it takes persistence, and effort, and compromise. But we also know that the progress you have made will continue to develop and bring benefits to your people.

My visit is much too short this time, but I have already met a number of government officials, non-governmental organization officials and other citizens. And I have been impressed by their commitment to the work that you are doing. And I want to commend especially the three organizers of today's Conference. Because it is important not only for Bulgaria but for the region in order to enable half the population, namely women, to feel they are full participants in the transition that is occurring in this region.

So I look forward very much to my remaining time this evening and tomorrow, and look forward even more to returning some day, hopefully with my husband, so that he, too, can meet the Bulgarian people and learn more about the history, the present and the future of Bulgaria.

So, Mr. President, thank you for your warm welcome, and thanks also to the government and people of Bulgaria. And, please know that the United States is proud to be a friend and partner with Bulgaria as we make a better future together.

(Applause)

Thank you. Thank you very much.