

USAID Signing Ceremony
Santiago, Chile
September 30, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT USAID SIGNING CEREMONY
SANTIAGO, CHILE
SEPTEMBER 30, 1998**

Thank you very much. I am again delighted to be back in Santiago and to join all of you for these announcements.

I want to express my deep appreciation to our gracious hostess, Mrs. Frei. This is my third trip to your country, and I am always impressed by the warmth and graciousness of the people here, and I am delighted to be back once again.

Over the past two days, this conference has been discussing what all of us can do to reinforce the goals of the Summit of the Americas that was held here just a few months ago in Santiago: what we can do to overcome poverty and promote regional economic growth, and strengthen democracy. At that Summit, hemispheric leaders recognized that education is critical to meeting all of our challenges.

At the Summit, President Frei and my husband announced plans for a partnership for education and development. Each year, the partnership will provide 30 post-graduate scholarships -- financed jointly by the two development assistance agencies of our two countries -- for individuals from developing countries to study here in Chile. The partnership will provide special training to government and non-governmental leaders to help them improve education, reduce poverty, and strengthen local leadership in their countries.

Today, Mark Schneider, the Assistant Administrator of USAID for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Jacqueline Weinstein Levy, the head of Chile's development agency AGCI, will sign an agreement to create this new scholarship program. I also hope that, given the work of this conference, a significant number of the recipients each year will be women.

Just as critical to the Summit's goals is the other agreement being signed today -- to strengthen local government throughout the Americas. The Summit's Plan of Action recognized that strong vibrant local governments are critical to building democracy from the ground up. They also recognized that local officials need more training, and resources, and partnerships to make local government work better for our citizens. And we heard from the Governor General from St. Lucia today about the importance of such partnerships and training programs.

People in communities across the Americas have struggled to bring about

democratic change. And the progress that has been made is cause for celebration. But citizens also have the right to expect that democratic and economic reforms will deliver a better life for them and their families. To that end, the second agreement being signed today will establish a \$5 million program to assist local governments to better meet the needs of their citizens. This project, financed by USAID, will bring together city and county managers from the United States with their colleagues from throughout the region -- some of whom are with us today. They will work with community and local government leaders -- many of whom have just recently taken on the responsibilities of improving schools, helping to open health clinics, overseeing water and sanitation services -- a lot of new responsibilities that need technical assistance in order to succeed. I understand that over 15,000 communities have recently elected new mayors and city leaders throughout the hemisphere, and USAID is working directly with about 700 of them. This new partnership will dramatically expand those networks of shared experience so that we can all learn from each other how to do a better job for all of our people.

Women often benefit most from public services. But this program is important to women for other reasons as well. Local government is a significant avenue for women to enter the political arena. And in countless cities and towns across our hemisphere, a growing number of women are being chosen as mayors and members of city councils. Local government is also the launching pad for national political office -- where women are less represented than they are now at the local level. This project will look for ways to promote women in local government -- both as recipients of training and as partners in making local governments more responsive.

Both of these projects help promote the agenda of the First Ladies of the Hemisphere -- as well as carry out the commitments of the Santiago Summit. By working to expand opportunities for women to fully participate in the lives of their communities, we hope to ensure greater prosperity and stronger democracies throughout our hemisphere. Education and participation go hand-in-hand, and by the agreements signed today we hope to promote both to the benefit of all of our people.

So again, let me thank Mrs. Frei and the conference organizers, who have done such a superb job in bringing all of us together once again, and pledge my efforts, as well as the efforts of our government, to work to fulfill the goals that are set at this conference and to further the goals that were adopted at the Summit.

Thank you very much.

* * * * *