

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MONGOLIA
ULAN BATOR, MONGOLIA

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much and Sain Bayn Uu [which means hello]. I want to thank Mrs. Tesvelmaa for her warm welcome and hospitality. Ambassador Johnson, thank you for your energetic and wise representation of our nation in Mongolia.

Professor Dorj, faculty, students, and other guests, thank you for inviting me here today. It is a great honor to be with you, and I want you to know that I bring with me very special greetings from the President and the people of the United States of America.

I hope that in the years ahead many more Americans will be able to travel here and experience first-hand the great beauty of your country, the vitality and strength of the Mongolian people, as well as the respect you show for your natural surroundings, the pride you have in your children, and the value you place on education.

In America we have had the opportunity recently to learn more about the rich culture and long history of Mongolia through the most important exhibit of Mongolian art ever to be shown in the United States. The exhibit, called "Mongolia: The Legacy of Chinggis Khan", opened at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco in July, and will travel to several other cities, including our nation's capital.

I have come here to express in very strong terms America's support for Mongolian democracy, independence, and prosperity. And I think it is wonderfully appropriate for us to be meeting at a university, because the opportunity for citizens to pursue an education is so essential to the growth and success of any democracy.

I also am very pleased to learn that so many women are students here. In many parts of the world, women are not afforded the opportunity of higher education, or even the chance to acquire basic literacy. Mongolia is an exception.

As you may know, I spent the past few days before coming to Mongolia at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The purpose of the conference was to bring together women and men from around the world who are dedicated to advancing the interests of women, children, and families.

About 185 nations, including Mongolia, sent delegates who are focusing their energies on the issues that matter most to women and their families: access to education, health care, jobs and credit, safety from violence in and out of their homes, and the chance to participate fully in the political life of their countries.

I mention this because so many of the ideals and values at work at the UN conference are the ideals and values at work in your new democracy.

Earlier today, I had a chance to meet with a group of Mongolian women, several of whom, including your First Lady, participated in the women's conference. And I think we are all aware that no matter what country we live in, as women we share many of the same aspirations and concerns.

We are living in a time of momentous change around the world. It is a time when dictatorships and tyrannies are giving way to more open and tolerant societies -- and new respect for human rights, free elections and free markets is emerging in many places.

Yet it is also a time of growing global competition, scarcer resources and unpredictability about the future. So along with a wave of democracy, we also see the resurfacing of ugly ethnic, tribal and religious conflict and the violence that often accompanies those rivalries.

In the face of such rapid change, there may be a tendency to assume that education, health care, economic opportunity and personal freedom have little to do with the economic and social progress of a nation.

The whole point of the conference in China -- and what we are learning in country after country around the world, including here in Mongolia -- is that investing in human beings and their potential to improve their own lives and the lives of their families is as important to a nation's progress as investments in the marketplace.

Along with access to schooling, health care and jobs, men and women must be permitted to take part in the decisions that will affect their futures.

It takes great courage on the part of many people to build a democracy, as we have seen from India to South Africa to Mongolia.

There are some who claim that freedom and democracy are Western concepts and that Asians prefer authoritarian rule.

I say: Let them come to Mongolia.

This country has transformed itself from a one-party communist dictatorship into a pluralistic political system. You have done so with quiet and courageous determination. Although it is not widely known in my country, the Mongolian people yearned so strongly for democracy that a movement began with demonstrations in sub-zero temperatures and culminated with the resignation of the Politburo, the legalization of other parties, and the writing of a new Constitution.

Clearly, the Mongolian people take the privileges of democracy and freedom seriously. I learned before coming here that about 90 percent of voters cast ballots here, and many have to travel great distances to do so. That voting rate is higher than in many older democracies, including my own.

There are some who claim that new democracies cannot survive economic hardship and struggle, and that, as a country makes the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, it cannot afford democracy.

I say: Let them come to Mongolia, where the government and people are both moving toward political and economic reform, economic freedom and political freedom.

Your nation is an inspiration to millions around the world who see the strides you are making in free-market reforms, the creation of an independent judiciary, laws that respect human rights and private property, and the doors you have opened to welcome free enterprise and foreign investment All in a very, very short time.

At the same time, we know that the creation of any democratic society requires patience, perseverance, optimism and the willingness to make difficult choices.

Here in Mongolia, you have experienced the hope, and the pain, that comes with rapid change. And you have shown great resolve in recent years in facing the obstacles you have encountered on the road to democracy.

I am here to tell you, on behalf of the President of the

United States and the American people, that the United States will stand by you as you continue your democratic journey.

I am proud to say that our support thus far has included activities funded by the United States Agency for International Development designed to strengthen parliament, the judiciary and non-governmental organizations -- including several representing the views and interests of Mongolian women.

We all recognize that NGOs are key elements in the development and sustenance of a civil society in any country. And they are crucial to the effectiveness and success of any democracy.

We will continue to show our support because we are convinced that a democratic, independent and prosperous Mongolia is in our interests as well as yours -- and that it is essential to maintaining peace and stability in Asia and throughout the world.

From the outset of Mongolia's transition to democracy, the United States has recognized the vital connection between democracy and energy.

We appreciate the importance of energy assistance in your capital, particularly during the coldest months (which I know can last for quite some time here).

In 1992, we pledged to provide \$35 million in U.S. aid to the Government of Mongolia's energy sector. For four winters, this support has helped keep the heat on, and the lights on, in the capital.

We intend to fulfill the remainder of this pledge in the coming year.

We also understand the Mongolian government's concern for the upcoming winter. Because the situation is so serious, I am happy to announce a new pledge of \$3.5 million in additional emergency support to get Mongolia through this winter before help is available from other donors.

It is our hope that this additional support will allow the Government of Mongolia to focus on further developing the country's market economy and democratic transition.

Today I am also pleased to announce that our government, through USAID, will provide UNICEF with \$1 million to support improvement in children's health.

It is our hope that this support will help Mongolia make up

the ground lost in providing for children's health in recent years. This is particularly urgent because more than half of Mongolia's population is under 25.

We also are involved in other activities in support of democracy and economic progress. Peace Corps volunteers are teaching English to students in Mongolia. Our military's humanitarian program has been active here -- I believe that some American military personnel helped build the school for gifted math and science students in Ulan Bator. And assistance from our Department of Agriculture has been used to promote small business.

I believe that the values that our nations share, and our common belief in the ideals of freedom and democracy, will draw us even closer in the years ahead.

I heard a story earlier today that struck me for two reasons: First, it reflects the prominence and respect accorded women in Mongolian culture.

It also reflects the solidarity of the Mongolian people over these last five years, and the importance of building solidarity among like-minded nations and peoples.

It is the story of Chinggis Khan's mother, who lectured the young Temujin and his brothers about the importance of staying united. To make her point, she showed them how easily one arrow could be broken, but how hard it is to break five arrows when they are held together.

On the eve of a new century, and a new millennium, democracies must stand together. After my brief stay here, I am ever more confident that our nations will move together along the path to a stronger, healthier, and more prosperous future.

Thank you all very much. And good luck both, to you to this country and many best wishes to our friendship and relationship in the years to come.

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