



**Women's Foreign Policy Group
Celebrating Women Leaders Luncheon
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Ambassador Melanne Verveer

Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Department of State

Women Center Stage in Foreign Policy and the Global Economy

Patricia Ellis: Hello, everyone. I'm Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, which promotes women's leadership and women's voices on pressing international issues of the day.

I'm so pleased to welcome all of you. We're here for our Celebrating Women Leaders Luncheon on Women Center Stage in Foreign Policy and the Global Economy with Ambassador Melanne Verveer, the Department of State's Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. [Applause.] We are particularly honored to have Ambassador Verveer—who many of you in this room know—not only because of her fantastic work and her unprecedented appointment, which reflects the elevated importance of global women's issues to the administration, but also because she is a long-term member and a friend of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. She is a real role model for women's leadership. We are thrilled to have her here to celebrate her many achievements, but also to learn more about the important issues that she and her office are engaged in, including increasing women's and girls' access to education and health care, combating violence, and, importantly, ensuring that women's rights are fully integrated with human rights in the development of US foreign policy.

I am thrilled that all of you could join us today and show your support for the Women's Foreign Policy Group. It's a special time for us as it's our fifteenth anniversary. Hard to believe. [Applause.] We are truly excited to be here with such an accomplished group of women leaders, and our male friends, who show the breadth of the WFPG family: ambassadors and government officials, as well as representatives from corporations, non-profits, international organizations, and the media.

I want to begin by recognizing the WFPG Board Members who are here with us today. They are truly engaged and have done a great job: Carolyn Brehm, Theresa Loar, Tracey McMinn and Mary Catherine Toker. Let's give them all a round of applause. [Applause.] I especially want to recognize WFPG Associate Director Kimberly Kahnhauser, who coordinated this event, and all of our wonderful WFPG interns and volunteers who made this event possible. They are our future leaders who we are mentoring! Please give them a big round of applause. [Applause.]

Next, I want to thank our Host Steering Committee. Thank you so much for making this event a success. Any Host Steering Committee members here, please stand. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

I also want to thank our sponsors. I'm just going to read everybody's names first and we will hold the applause until the end. Our sponsors, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company and Vital Voices. Our supporter Exxon Mobil Corporation and our special friends, The Coca-Cola Company, General Mills, Ruth Harkin, and the UNDP Washington Office. If you can all please stand so we can give you a round of applause. [Applause.] I also want to thank Coca-Cola again for its donation of drinks, and the embassies of Argentina and Canada for their wine donations.

I would also like to recognize the numerous ambassadors here today and those who served on the event's Honorary Committee. I want to begin with the women ambassadors, who are our great friends and who we work very closely with. If the women ambassadors can all stand so that we can give you a big round of applause. [Applause.] If there are any other diplomats in the room, please stand so we can recognize you too. [Applause.] We also have senior State Department officials here. We would like to recognize them, so if you could please stand. [Applause.] Thank you.

It's been a really great year for the WFPG. We started the year off with a wonderful conversation with Richard Holbrooke, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. We have held a number of Embassy Series events celebrating women diplomats at the Croatian Embassy and, most recently, at the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago, where we had a lot of fun. We've had these wonderful Author Series events on foreign policy issues and also on women's leadership, and our annual mentoring fairs in New York and DC, which were all wonderful activities. I want to thank those WFPG members who know us well and have come to our events. We really, really appreciate your support. Your participation means a lot to us. For those who don't know us and are here for the first time, we hope that you will come back again, join the organization, and become a part of the family. We hope to see you all soon in the fall when we're going to have a lot more exciting events, including our next Embassy Series event with the Ambassador of India—who is here with us today—and our next Celebrating Women Leaders Luncheon—which we already have a date for, November 1st—when we will be celebrating another amazing woman leader, this time from the corporate community. Anne Mulcahy, the former CEO and Chairman of Xerox Corporation, will be talking about leading a global corporation. We're opening registration today on our website. It should be another fantastic event and we hope we're going to see all of you there!

We really need your support and participation to keep all these fabulous programs on foreign policy, our mentoring activities, and events where we celebrate women leaders going. I think together we can really make a difference and ensure that women's voices are heard on all these important international issues that we care so much about. Thank you so much again for joining us for this wonderful occasion, and for joining us in celebrating Melanne.

It's now my pleasure to introduce today's MC and moderator, Judy Woodruff, Senior Correspondent for the *PBS NewsHour*, who I am happy to say is a friend and former colleague.

Judy, thank you so much for joining us and for doing this for us and for all the women here in the room.

Judy Woodruff: Thank you, Pat. I'm so honored to be with all of you. As everybody knows, there's nothing going on in the world of news today, so it's easy for the journalists who are here to be here. [*Laughter.*] But seriously, what it means is that this is an event that people wanted to come to. I am delighted to be here. I do want to pay tribute just quickly to the wonderful work that Pat Ellis has done in creating the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We were colleagues at the *NewsHour* and I have been thrilled to watch the success Pat has had in launching this important organization which she is so passionate about. So let's take a moment to congratulate Pat on what she has done. [*Applause.*]

Now, it is my great pleasure to introduce the person you are here to hear: Ambassador Melanne Verveer. She was confirmed as the first Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues on April 6th of last year. She's been at this job for well over a full year.

In this capacity, she travels frequently overseas—as you can imagine—to meet with partners who are working on behalf of women's empowerment around the world. She has just returned from a trip with Secretary Clinton to Ukraine, Poland, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. We may hear a little about that trip in a moment. Following her trip in late May to China with Secretary Clinton, she went to Kiev for the tenth anniversary of the Ukrainian Women's Fund and then on to Pakistan. She also recently visited Afghanistan and India. Even when she is in town, she has a hectic schedule. Today, we are so lucky to catch her before she goes to testify before the Tom Lantos' Human Rights Commission on the problem of child marriage.

Before joining the Obama Administration, Melanne Verveer served as chair and co-CEO of the Vital Voices Global Partnership—an organization I know so many of you are familiar with—an international non-profit that she co-founded, dedicated to identifying, training, and empowering women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe. Before that, Ambassador Verveer served as Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady in the Clinton Administration. She was Chief Assistant to then-First Lady Hillary Clinton. She's had an amazing career in public policy, in public life, throughout the years that she's been an adult and maybe when she was younger. [*Laughter.*] Melanne, you can tell us about that. Before I turn the lectern over to Ambassador Verveer, just think of that adage—I don't know who said it, but I love it—"If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman." [*Laughter.*] Apologies to the men in the room. Please join me in welcoming someone who does both so well. Ambassador Melanne Verveer. [*Applause.*]

Ambassador Melanne Verveer: Thank you so much. Thank you so much Judy.... It is such a pleasure to be here with so many women leaders, so many dear friends (I think we've decided this is the only way we can see each other anymore) and to be with the good guys who stand with us on all the critical issues. It is truly meaningful to have this opportunity.

I too want to thank my friend, Pat Ellis, who has done so much in leading the Women's Foreign Policy Group over many years. We are all very indebted to her for the way she has put a

spotlight on these issues of particular concern to women, but issues that should be of concern to everyone.

I want to thank Under Secretary Maria Otero from the State Department and who stands with us on so many key issues of the day in a very extraordinary way. And my friends, the female ambassadors serving in Washington who are partners, colleagues, and co-collaborators on so many issues. The ambassadors have been extraordinary partners on so many initiatives. I think it is an example of the way women have come together from positions of leadership to join to make more possible. I have worked with them on putting women's economic issues on the APEC agenda, on training women parliamentarians in Afghanistan, on the India-U.S. Strategic Dialogue, and so much more. I am so pleased that they could be here, and I thank them for all they do.

And, dear Judy [Woodruff], who has always exemplified the best in journalism—she has always been the gold standard and continues to be the gold standard. It will be 15 years this September that Judy was in Beijing to cover the UN 4th World Conference on Women. She was then the voice for CNN. And it was in Beijing that the then First Lady of the United States inspired the world with her historic speech on “women's rights as human rights.” The record will show, that the first thing Hillary Clinton did when she left the podium, was to do an interview with Judy Woodruff.

Beijing sparked a movement, all around the world. It made a call to action for women's access to education, health care, credit, and to be free from violence, and to be able participate fully in the economic and political lives of our countries.

The Platform for Action that was adopted in Beijing by 189 countries, including the United States, remains an ambitious blueprint against which we continue to measure our progress in improving the lives of women and girls around the world. And we have made progress. Women, and the good men who stand with us, everywhere are working to advance women's equality, but there is still, unfortunately, a long road ahead on many of these issues. As Secretary Clinton has often reminded us: “We have to write the next chapter to fully realize the dreams and potential that were set forth in Beijing.”

Today, thankfully, there is a growing recognition that women's empowerment must be a central component of any effort to solve our most pressing global challenges. Because it remains a simple fact, that no country, no country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind.

We can no longer afford to relegate this global, economic, and social imperative to the category of “women's concerns.” You know, that nice category on the side—if we can get to it after all the pressing issues, we will. That's not where these issues lie. These issues must lie at the center of our consideration to create the kind of world we all want to see.

Secretary Clinton has succinctly described the stakes: “Until women around the world are accorded their rights and afforded opportunities to participate fully in the lives of their societies, global progress and prosperity will have its own glass ceiling.”

We not only shortchange the world's women, but we shortchange our world, when the potential that women represent goes untapped.

The United States Government is making women a cornerstone of our foreign policy, because we recognize that the major security, economic, environmental, and governance challenges we face as a nation, and as a community of nations—from climate change to the conflict in Afghanistan—cannot be effectively addressed without the participation of women at all levels.

I am pleased to be able to come here, in my new role. President Obama created this position to underscore the importance of global women's issues in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. And I must say, when I travel, so many people come up to me and say, "we need to do this in our own government," or "we really respect the United States for what your position represents and what your country's commitment to these issues represents." The practical implication of this position is that the issues be fully integrated into the work of the State Department, whether that occurs in our regional bureaus—that cover every part of the world, our embassies—far flung across the world, USAID, or the specific offices that work on economics to human trafficking.

Under the Secretary's strong leadership at the State Department, and with the support of many members of Congress, issues ranging from violence against women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to women's political participation, are getting greater attention on Capitol Hill. In fact, as Judy pointed out, I have to leave before lunch, because of the [event] on child marriage. I think it is unprecedented, in many ways, that the Congress would be focused on an issue like that.... There have been hearings in both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and in the House Foreign Relations Committee on violence against women...and there have been numerous hearings on women in Afghanistan and their future. All of this makes an important difference in moving these issues forward.

I have very limited time because of the strict rules from Pat Ellis to go into many issues. But let me touch upon a few.

First, leadership is essential to advancing the role of women in driving economic growth.

Today there is a mountain of data, from the United Nations to the World Bank, from think tanks, from corporations, that correlate investments in women with positive outcomes in poverty alleviation and a country's greater prosperity. The World Economic Forum (WEF), not a women's organization by any definition, puts out an annual report; the Gender Gap Report. That report looks at the equality of men and women in a given country based on 4 indicators: health survivability, access to education, economic participation, and political participation. In countries where the gap is closest to being closed—and in no country is it closed, in no country are women equal to men, certainly not on these indicators.... But in those where that gap is closest to being closed, those countries are far more prosperous and economically much more competitive.

Women-run small and medium enterprises (SME's) are the engines of economic growth. Studies show that to grow GDP, there is no better or more effective investment, "no lower hanging fruit," as it has been said, than investing in women-run small and medium size businesses.

Moreover, women have a multiplier effect, because they invest in their families and communities at much higher levels than men.

But all of that said, there are still so many barriers to women's greater economic participation, even though we know that gender equality is "smart economics." So we at the State Department are working to enable women to overcome those barriers—from the lack of training and mentors—to credit, to access to technology, to markets, to the lack of property rights and other discriminatory laws that they need to overcome, so that they can build the new businesses that they are capable of building and expand existing ones.

These issues are now on the agendas of the regional bureaus at State as well as the regional collaborations in which we engage. The APEC conference—the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting that will be taking place this year with Japan leading it—the United States next year—will, for the first time, have women's economic issues front and center on the agenda. With AGOA, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, we are making a concerted effort (and, thanks to many business represented in this room who have come on as partners) to enable women in Africa better access to what AGOA represents. In the Middle East, we have developed a number of initiatives to help women in the MENA countries to enable women to be full partners in growing the economies of their countries.

Just to give you an idea of how important women's economic participation is, it is calculated that in the Asia-Pacific region alone, the region is shortchanged in excess of \$40 billion a year in GDP because the potential of women is not tapped.

Second, women are at the center of the Administration's global development initiatives.

The \$3.5 billion commitment to strengthen the world's food supply by enhancing agricultural productivity recognizes that men and women farmers need different tools, different kinds of training, to be able to be more productive in the agricultural sector. We have made a concerted effort with this initiative to ensure that women, who are the great majority of small hold farmers around the world, will have the kind of access to the particular needs they have—whether it is credit, or it is the type of crops, or it is extension training, or it has to do with land tenure rights which are absolutely critical.

The Climate Change Initiative recognizes that women are the primary users, managers, and stewards of natural resources, and they are severely affected by climate change, more severely than men because they are out doing the kind of work that so much of the bad weather and other consequences of climate change—whether it's droughts or tsunamis—can impact. We rarely hear that women are critical to addressing the challenges of climate change, yet they are uniquely suited to do that. We are working to ensure that women have access to programs and technologies to enable them to participate in adaptation and mitigation solutions—from farming techniques, to cook stoves, to solar lanterns, to a whole array of green technologies so they can be actors in reducing the carbon footprint.

The Administration's \$63 billion Global Health Initiative, a commitment to improve health and strengthen health systems worldwide, is focused on a women-centered model of care. Because we recognize that women not only face unmet health needs, they are also the key care givers for

their families and their communities. We are eager to reduce maternal and child mortality—and there has not been progress for far too long. Hopefully, we will make progress now to reduce those terrible numbers, and to grow access to family planning which is critically needed around the world. We are also working to reduce increases in HIV/AIDS infections. AIDS has the face of a woman today, and the alarming increases in infection is occurring among adolescent girls. So, we need to address violence against women which contributes to this, as well as help young girls avoid the serious situations in which they often find themselves.

In her major address this year on development, Secretary Clinton underscored that women are front and center in our development policies and the application of the gender lens on development initiatives, three programs which I've just mentioned, are examples of this commitment.

Third, leadership is essential in promoting the role of women in peace and security.

Where women are oppressed and marginalized, societies are more dangerous and extremism is more likely to take hold. Secretary Clinton has noted that the subjugation of women is a threat to the national security of our own country. It is also a threat to the common security of our world, because the suffering and denial of the rights of women, and the instability of nations, go hand in hand.

In Afghanistan, for example, we recognize that women are critical to their country's future; in securing it and rebuilding it. Our development policies are focusing on women's and girls' education, literacy; access to income generation—in agriculture, animal husbandry and small business; protecting them from violence, which is a very serious problem.

Ten years ago, the UN Security Council adopted a Resolution which has come to be known simply as 1325. It recognizes that women have a critical role to play in conflict resolution, in peace negotiations, in political transitions, and in post conflict reconstruction. If countries are to stabilize, and peace is to be secured and sustained in these situations, women have a key role to play. Nowhere is this more true than in Afghanistan where we recognize the important role that they must play. The United States was a leader in ensuring Afghan women's political participation in parliament and in the provincial councils through the adoption of quotas.

This is a particularly critical time, as discussions are begin to take place on reintegration with the insurgents. We have also said that those who are integrated into society must renounce al Qaeda, violence, and uphold the constitution, including women's rights. Afghan women are extremely worried that if they are not part of the discussions, they will have their hard-earned rights potentially sold out, without their knowing about it until it's too late. The Secretary and our policies have illustrated time and again why it is important for Afghan women to be involved in these discussions that so keenly affect them. Next week, there will be the conference in Kabul, a ministerial conference, with ministers from the countries participating in the effort there. These issues are going to come up again, because if a sustainable peace is to take hold, women must have an equal role in shaping it.

One night in Kabul, several months ago, I sat with a group of extraordinary Afghan women and as the discussion opened, one of them said: “Please, do not look at us as victims, but as the leaders that we are.”

Our global challenges are numerous, but in advancing women we can make giant steps for progress that will benefit men and women, boys and girls everywhere.

Nick Kristoff, whom I’m sure many of you read on regular basis, noted that in the 19th century our moral imperative was to end slavery; in the 20th century it was to defeat totalitarianism. He said, in this 21st century, our moral imperative must be women’s equality.

With the leadership of so many of you, and so many more around the world, women’s equality will be closer to becoming a reality as a result of that hard effort. We know that “women’s rights are human rights,” and we cannot settle for anything less.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Woodruff: We know that Ambassador Verveer, as she said, does have to leave shortly to testify, to be part of this investigation that’s underway. So we want to get right to the questions. I’m going to do this in kind of a rapid fire way, because I know that’s what you like, right? [Laughter]. In Afghanistan, since that’s the last thing you spoke about, how high is the level of receptivity on the part of Afghan leaders themselves to women playing the role that you said is absolutely essential?

Ambassador Verveer: Well, it’s difficult. It’s not something that many of the key people enthusiastically endorse, but it’s something that many of them have understood that they need to ensure happens. Now for people who have spent any kind of time with Afghan women and on these issues over the years—I know many in this room have, from late 2001-2002—what they have reminded us time and time again, was there was a time where women were the majority of teachers, they were the majority of physicians, they were the backbone of the society. This interpretation of their role, or their culture, as something alien to that kind of possibility is unfair to them and unfair to what they represent.

There are many extraordinary women in Afghanistan. There was recently a peace *jirga* in which about 20-25% of the participants were female. I’ve talked to several of them since that meeting. They said that, while some were kept away because they had been too outspoken about what needed to be done, others who were in the rooms for the first time, confronting people whose views are not exactly similar to theirs, said that they felt a sense of real strength, power, and possibility being able to hold their own in those discussions, because, while they may have not had the ultimate critical mass, there were sufficient numbers of them. The test for us, for everybody engaged, the test for them, for the government, will be how engaged they will continue to be as this process gets defined in the weeks and months ahead and what role they will have in ensuring that there will not be the kind of turning-over of power to people who have been engaged in gross atrocities and the kinds of persecution we’re all too familiar with from reading the newspapers. So, there are those who welcome it, and there are many who do not welcome their participation. But the United States and many, many of our colleagues who are engaged

there have been extraordinary leaders on this issues. When the Secretary is back there next week, this will again be a very serious undertaking.

Ms. Woodruff: But, in a word, is the Karzai Administration hearing this?

Ambassador Verveer: They are hearing it. In fact, we had a strategic dialogue with Afghanistan several weeks ago when many of their Ministers were here in Washington, both in a range of meetings at the State Department and on Capitol Hill. Time and time again in the meetings, this issue got raised. And I must say, among the most vocal endorsers and advocates are the women members of Congress, who have been going back to Afghanistan in a series of codels. They are intimately understanding of the situation, and they are really quite sincere and determined to make sure that this is very high on the agenda, as the Secretary is and others at the State Department are.

Ms. Woodruff: Ambassador Verveer, let's broaden this out. I know it's impossible to translate in one country and say this applies everywhere else. The global war on terrorism, against terrorists, whatever form they take around the world. You've seen a lot of this, you hear about it all the time. What are some of the things that you think that women can be doing in these countries that are faced with these terrible challenges, whether it's Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia—and so many other places that I won't list—that could make a difference in dealing with what, right now, looks like an intractable foe?

Ambassador Verveer: They are very tough situations. What many of them, if not all of them, have in common is the oppression and subjugation of women. In many of the predominantly Muslim countries, what has been most inspirational, is the way that the women who are on the front lines are fighting back, and taking back their religious values and their religion from those who define their religion as endorsing the oppression of women, or endorsing throwing girls out of school, or endorsing some of the worst kinds of violence that we know about and read about. And what they are saying is, "This is not what our religion stands for. Our religion stands for the opposite and stands for the progress of women."

A lot of work has been going on with mullahs, with imams who are taking these issues and weaving them into their Friday sermons, who are locating girls' schools in some of these places around the area of the mosque, and realizing how important the culture is—the religious culture—and having that culture endorse the rights of women in a way that is certainly consistent with their interpretation of the faith, has been something that has been most useful. Obviously whatever we can do, and our allies can do, and partners around the globe, to support development efforts that provide access to education for a girl—which is the single best investment that can be made bar nothing in development, in terms of the positive outcomes it produce—as well as to provide economic opportunity, which is at the root of so many of the problems, is the fact that you've got such terrible economic conditions, that are just fanning the flames of a lot of this behavior. So we need a really strong dose of good development assistance, as well as close work with women.

So many times people say, "Why are we imposing Western values on these people?" These are not Western values. Each woman I have met anywhere in the world, from the village shack to the

skyscraper knows deep down her worth as a human being and she wants to be respected and she wants her rights protected. Muslim women have been increasingly articulate leaders in this struggle, saying “Don’t use our faith against us, because our faith does not condone this type of oppression.” Women need to be made aware of their rights and education is absolutely critical, literacy programs are critical, and so is protecting them from violence.

Ms. Woodruff: You touched on what I wanted to ask next, which is, when an entire movement is built, in large part, around hatred of the West, hatred of the United States and everything we stand for, how delicate is it to be seen as pushing values that are seen as US or uniquely Western values?

Ambassador Verveer: Well, they may be seen as such, but the women who are living in those places see them as their values and they are reaching out to us for support, for help, to help them raise their voices, because obviously they often can’t raise their own voices. That’s where I think we do the best work that any of us does, which is listening to them, hearing what their needs are, what they need support for, but not going in and saying, “We know exactly what you need and this is how you should do it.” It’s really addressing the underlying conditions in ways they know they best need to have that kind of support.

Ms. Woodruff: So many questions here I want to touch on and I’m going to jump around a little bit. There have been a number of questions, including from the audience, about the new UN agency devoted to women’s issues. Help everybody here who may not understand what that’s all about and what difference you think it can make.

Ambassador Vervver: Well, first of all, I’m proud of the United States’ leadership in working on this issue, as many of our ambassadorial colleagues in their countries have worked on this issue. The women’s issues at the United Nations find themselves in four different entities. UNIFEM is probably the one most known and the strongest, but even it has a miniscule budget comparatively, and it is really part of UNDP. There has been a great effort over many years to say that these issues need their own agency. They need a voice at the Secretary-General’s hand on these issues where there is none today. What has been voted on, last week in the General Assembly, finally is the creation of what’s called a gender entity. The hope is that a woman of extraordinary global stature, somebody extremely confident with good management skills, will come in. It will merge the existing entities and we will hopefully have a robust agency at the United Nations that will address these issues from the voice of an Under-Secretary, with the Secretary-General, to really elevate them in ways they have not been elevated and not been funded and not been supported as they ought to have been.

Ms. Woodruff: One of the guests today, Maryam Elahi, Director of the Women’s Program at the Open Society Institute, asks: “Does the United States have a leading candidate for that position?”
[*Laughter.*]

Ambassador Verveer: Maryam is persistent on this issue. I have heard from her several times.
[*Laughter.*]

Ms. Woodruff: All right, well, we’re just getting it out in the open here then.

Ambassador Verveer: We have sent up some names we are putting forward. They are not completely different from what many countries and NGOs are also espousing. Probably, the most talked-about, hoped-for candidate is recent President Michelle Bachelet of Chile, but it is not clear whether or not she is interested in the position at this stage. This is something that will be addressed. The Secretary-General has put out a request to countries to put forward their candidates. There will be a high-level search committee. So this is moving forward with some serious alacrity that's been missing for a long time.

Ms. Woodruff: Back to a region that we were just discussing, but it's a different country: Pakistan. This is a question from Rachel Hess from MEDA. She says, "Ambassador Verveer, in your recent visit to Pakistan, what did you see as the greatest challenges faced by Pakistani women and what opportunities do you see to assist them in addressing those issues?"

Ambassador Verveer: Pakistan is a real challenge, to make for an understatement. We have been able, working with their government, to establish as part of our strategic dialogue between our two countries, dialogues on issues like water that Maria is heading up for the United States, and electricity, and a range of critical needs. But one is certainly on women's empowerment. When I was there a few weeks ago, it really struck me how exceedingly challenging the needs are for women. The illiteracy rate is very high. The Human Development Index, in many ways, are very low. Girls aren't in school in the numbers they should be. A very tiny fraction of the workforce, the formal economy, is comprised of women. Most are working informally. Poverty is very high. Anybody who knows even a scintilla of information data on what countries need to do in these circumstances knows that they really need to work on changing the situation for women.

The other issue is that there's a critical need for family planning; the population has grown rapidly over the last several years and there isn't the social infrastructure to deal with the kind of growth they are experiencing. So that, on top of all of the kinds of extremist attacks that are taking place, and all of the other challenges that exist in Pakistan, take one's breath away in some ways about what needs to be done. We are working on addressing a range of those issues. We've got a major program on gender equity that provides access to justice to deal with a big problem that I didn't mention, which is violence against women. I went to some of the crisis centers and listening to the stories of the women and what they were up against was absolutely heart-wrenching. We've got a range of issues that we are addressing with respect to health. They've got one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the worlds. I participated in the graduation of a group of midwives who had just finished a several-month training program. So education, the whole range of development issues, is where we're focusing and with women needing to benefit in myriad ways so that they can make the contributions that they need to be making to move Pakistan forward.

Ms. Woodruff: We're conscious of your time, so I have just two more questions.

Ambassador Verveer: I'm conscious of the fact they're not eating. [*Laughter.*]

Ms. Woodruff: But it's worth waiting for.

Ambassador Verveer: I don't know about that. [*Laughter.*]

Ms. Woodruff: Human trafficking is something that you are very focused on as an issue. Just give us an update on where it stands and how encouraged or not you are in terms of what you see around the world right now.

Ambassador Verveer: Well, first of all, let me say to all of you that we're fortunate to have with us Maria Grazia Giammarinaro. I can never pronounce her last name exactly right. But she is the Special Representative to the OSCE on Human Trafficking. Her work takes place in Vienna and all around the world. I'm sure many of you can talk to her afterwards. This is a very serious problem. It is like so many manifestations of violence against women in the world. We're going up to the Hill to talk about child marriage, honor killings, gendercide, selling of brides, abductions.

Human trafficking is really modern-day slavery: it's the buying and selling of women, and children, and men in some places and certain circumstances. They are entrapped into believing that a better life awaits them in terms of a great job someplace—not necessarily where they're living, but someplace else—only to find themselves in a nightmare. We have been working over many, many years on this issue. Several people in this room have given their lives in some way to ensure that the United States has been a leader. We've got a strong law. I'm always proud to say that this is a bipartisan issue. Whether Democrats have been in power, Republicans have been in power, we send a strong signal to the world on this issue. We publish an annual report on looking at countries under a mandate from legislation, looking at countries and what they need to be doing to address it.

But there are several critical needs. One is to find ways to prevent and the greatest prevention tool is to deal with poverty and the lack of economic opportunity, because, at its root, that's what this is about, and that's why people are so desperate. But other kinds of prevention tools: certainly to make people aware of ways in which they can become entrapped. But to protect the victims who find themselves in these dire circumstances, who manage to escape, to see them not as people who have broken the law, but as people who genuinely have found themselves on the other side of a nightmare, innocent in what has happened to them, and to ensure that they are able to be healed and to be able to be witnesses against those who have perpetrated these crimes against them. I always feel that if we could get these people locked up with long sentences for the kinds of horrendous acts they have perpetrated, we would begin to have some impact. But this is a billion dollar industry, a several billion dollar industry. It affects every country and we need to be working much more closely with each other, across borders, within countries, to set up processes that will better help us to address these issues.

We have made progress. More and more countries today have laws. The laws need to be better implemented and enforced, but there are far more prosecutions than there were. Countries really understand the nature of this problem. It is a big problem and unfortunately, the progress that is made is never enough. But we've got to keep at it because, in my view, at its root—particularly with respect to women and girls—it is part of the very serious reality in the world and that's that women and girls are not valued, and if they are not valued—you buy them, you sell them, you

subject them to all kinds of violence—they don't have the worth of what their human dignity should represent.

Ms. Woodruff: Final question and you've touched on this. And we know that progress has been made in so many of these issues that are defined as women's issues. What's the best way to make sure that going forward that women's issues are not marginalized and seen as "over here," as this basket of women's issues separated from the really serious issues that the grown-ups are talking about?

Ambassador Verveer: Well, this is probably the fundamental question and one certainly that my position, but not me alone, is trying to rectify. We will only be as successful in our own government in this area and on these issues, if we are fully integrated into the overall work of, for example, of the State Department. So that when one is working on something that's happened in Africa or working on economic issues or human rights issues, that the lens, the gender lens, is applied, as we have done in these major initiatives I talked about, whether it's food security, or climate change, or health. We cannot address those issues adequately if we don't look at the gender component in each of them so that we can do a better job. So we've got to find ways to institutionalize them in our institutions, in our decision-making bodies to ensure that we have gender main-streaming in our budgets. That is an effort we are all working at: how to measure how these programs impact women, what are the indicators, how do we measure the outcomes. And then, certainly working with our partners, whether they are in other governments, whether they are in other branches of government, like Capitol Hill, in the civil society-NGO community. Together, I think we can do a better job of institutionalizing what women's issues represent to the kind of progress we want to see in our world. But it will only be when we bring that consciousness to bear in a way that is not longer that added thing that comes in, but where we just do it because it's the obviously right thing to do. As I often say, I wish my position didn't have to exist. Because if it didn't exist it would mean that we are really addressing these issues in every other way. So until that day comes, I hope that it continues to exist.

Ms. Woodruff: Ambassador Melanne Verveer. [*Applause.*]

Ms. Ellis: Melanne, thank you so much. Before we let you go, if you could please come up here. It's just been wonderful having you and I want to present you with this certificate of appreciation for your leadership and commitment to all these vital issues and for the advancement of women. Thank you so, so much. Judy, please come up here. Thank you so much again for making this such a wonderful program. I now invite you all to enjoy your lunch. So thank you and you can go off to Capitol Hill and good luck. Thank you all again for coming.