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**Mrs. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir**  
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Iceland

*Women in Leadership and their Impact on World Affairs*

**Ambassador Albert Jónsson:** Foreign Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to host this event tonight. My wife and I, we are honored by it. It was back in May that Patricia Ellis and I met. We sat together at a dinner in New York. She told us about the Women's Foreign Policy Group and I told her that Ingibjörg Gísladóttir was becoming Foreign Affairs Minister of Iceland following a general election a couple of weeks earlier. I pointed out to Patricia that the Foreign Minister had a long and prolific career. As we were discussing of course, the conclusion was that the Women's Foreign Policy Group would to invite Ingibjörg Gísladóttir to meet them, address them and have a discussion with the group. And here we are. And without any further ado I give the floor to Patricia Ellis, who is the President and Co-Founder of the Women's Foreign Policy Group.

**Patricia Ellis:** Ambassador Jónsson and Mrs. Baldvinsdóttir, I just want to thank you both so much for opening your beautiful home to us. As the Ambassador said, little did we know when we sat next to each other at this dinner in New York that this would happen. But when you get two movers and shakers together with a good idea and wonderful opportunities, this is what happens. I'm going to say a few words of introduction about the Women's Foreign Policy Group and then introduce the Foreign Minister. We're just thrilled that everyone has joined us tonight. We have an absolutely fantastic crowd. We have some Ambassadors with us and a number of diplomats. I have already recognized Ambassador Jónsson, we also have the Ambassador from Lichtenstein and the new Ambassador from Norway, as well as the wife of the Ambassador from Monaco. We also have representatives from a number of embassies: Sweden, the UK, Yemen, Romania, and Panama. Welcome and thank you so much for coming. I also wanted to recognize the Women's Foreign Policy Group Board Members who are here tonight: Gail Kitch, Donna Constantinople, Theresa Loar, Tracey McMinn, and we have our Pro Bono Counsel with us Sarah Kahn, so thank you all for coming.

Just very briefly about the Women's Foreign Policy Group, what we're all about, and that's why this event is so exciting tonight, is promoting women's leadership, women's voices, and pressing international issues of the day. This is one of our most popular series, the Embassy Series. We also have a State Department Series, series with scholars on Islam, a series up in New York on the UN, and one of our other favorites is the Author Series. Our next program will be an Author Series event with the Senior Diplomatic Correspondent from USA Today, Barbara Slavin, who will be talking about her book on Iran, *Bitter Friends Bosom Enemies Iran, the U.S., and the Twisted Path to Confrontation*, so we hope you can all join us. The last announcement I'm going to make regarding the WFPG is regarding our Annual 1Event coming up on December 10th. We're pleased to announce that Secretary Rice will be our keynote speaker so we hope you can all join us for that. I also would like to thank the staff and interns, if you're in the room raise your hands, because honestly we wouldn't be here without you tonight. Let's give them a round of applause.

Because we work with a lot of women ambassadors, foreign ministers, and government officials, it is a special pleasure to have a newly appointed foreign minister with us this evening, and it is Foreign Minister Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. She became the Foreign Minister of Iceland in May 2007, but she is very well known in Iceland for the major roles she's played in the political life of her country over

the last 10 years. She founded the Women's Party in 1982 and served as their representative and MP in the 90's from 1991 to 1994. She's also very well known as the Mayor of Reykjavik. She was elected not once, not twice, but three times starting back in 1994, then in 1998 and 2002. She also was a founding member of the Social Democratic Alliance, became an MP for the party, and was elected party leader. This is second largest party in Iceland, which is affiliated with the Forum for Social Democrats of Nordic countries. She's chaired many different organizations including the Central Bank of Iceland. When she was an MP she had special interest in environmental and European issues. I'd just like to add a few other things. She also is an author and wrote a major book about a pioneer Icelandic woman, and for that she earned a nomination to receive the Icelandic literature prize. She also edited a feminist journal. She was educated at the University of Iceland, did studies at the University of Copenhagen, and was a visiting Fellow at the European Institute of the LSE. She's here in town for the World Bank meetings and has also had some meetings on Capital Hill today. We're really lucky to have her, so please join me in welcoming the Foreign Minister.

**Foreign Minister Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir:** Thank you and good evening to all of you. My ambassador said in his introduction that I had a long and interesting career. Long, okay, it's 25 years since I entered politics, but probably there will be many more yet to go. Interesting, yes, there has never been a dull moment, I tell you. This is probably because I haven't gone the traditional way in politics. I have come a long way from being on the edge, as I describe it, in politics. Being one of those who participated in establishing or formulating feminist party, a women's party in Iceland in 1982, that is of course being on the edge of politics. And then being a Minister of Foreign Affairs in a coalition government, which is a center issue actually. So I can tell you there has never been a dull moment.

I'm very happy to see you all there, and so many in number and such a distinguished group of experts from international politics and diplomacy. I would like to thank the Women's Foreign Policy Group and Patricia Ellis for giving me the opportunity to speak here tonight. I welcome wholeheartedly opportunities such as this to have a dialogue with people with extensive knowledge and experience to share views and beliefs in politics. Politics has been my profession for 25 years, half of my life, and it is moments like this that have always been my source of nourishment. Ever since we started the Women's Party in Iceland in 1982, I have recognized open and frank dialogue between spirited women and men as political power second to none. Tonight I would like to share with you my view of feminism and the way in which what I call "women power" can have an effect on the international community.

My experience is that discourse in political life is the best way to succeed in providing political solutions to new circumstances and challenges. It takes time to have discussions and dialogue, but it works. I learned that in the Women's Movement, sometimes we became very tired of it. We sat and discussed things hour after hour, again and again, but we found solutions. It's my opinion that when I come to think back to these years, a lot of those things we were saying then have proven to be realistic and important for solutions today.

Coming from the Women's Movement and being one of the founders of the controversial Woman's Party in Iceland in 1982, my political career has not been very traditional, as I said before. I have come from representing a women's party that was initially only intended to be one of political action, but to our surprise got 10% of the vote the first time we ran for City Council—we started in the city council of Reykjavik in 1982— and the first time we ran for Parliament in 1983. We got 10% for both the City Council and for the Parliament in our first election. I've come from there into being a leader of a coalition of politicians in the city of Reykjavik that had 55% or more of the vote for the three consecutive elections and now to a coalition government that scored a record of 83% in a Gallup approval rating this summer. I have experienced being a woman without power in a hopeless opposition party, and I have experienced being a mayor in our capital city for nine years with a lot of executive power. I have had periods where nothing seemed to go right, as it is sometimes in politics, and I've seen changes and ideas come true. And I tell you I am a feminist.

What does that mean? What does it mean to be a feminist? Some people think it's like a curse, that you

shouldn't say it. But I am not afraid of saying it. It means for me, seeing the world from a certain angle. It means having a certain outlook to the world. And I want to share with you a thought or a vision of feminism that I think is fundamentally important. Feminism is, among other things, to view political power not as a finite sum— where you simply need to secure your share, get your share and hold it and take care no one takes it away from you, this is your share in power – but to look at this as an infinite source of opportunity. Power is not exclusive. It can be shared. We all know now that formal rights do not secure equality. Women have always needed more than just formal equality. The core of feminism is to fight for politics to mean empowerment. To see political power in society as something that grows as engagement and participation grows without anyone having to bear a cost. Extra participation means extra power. Politics should always mean empowerment of people, of countries, and of ideas.

One of my duties as Foreign Minister is to carry forward Iceland's candidacy to the UN Security Council for the years 2009 and 2010. We are first-time candidates to the Security Council, and we're competing with bigger countries, with Turkey and Austria, and the voting will take place exactly a year from now. As you may know Croatia was winning the vote the day before yesterday. They were competing with the Czech Republic, and I am of course glad on behalf of my colleague, the Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is a lady. Obviously Iceland is not a big country. Our campaign is small compared to the ones our competitors run, but it is both cost-effective and well organized.

Iceland is independent minded in its foreign policy. We are a Nordic candidate supported actively by other Nordic countries, and our focus within the Security Council will be on protection of civilians in conflicts, particularly women and children, on nonproliferation, on threats to human security including climate change, and on women's participation in peace negotiation and peacekeeping.

I'm often asked, why doesn't the mere smallness of Iceland rule the country out automatically? We are so small compared to many other countries, compared to Turkey for example or Austria. My answer is true to my feminist principles that, as an independent and sovereign state, Iceland should never shrink from participating where decisions are made. It's like women. Women should never shrink from participating where decisions are made. They should sit at the table where decisions are made, where the policies are formed. Engaging means empowerment, not only for Iceland but also for others in similar circumstances. Let us not forget that 98 out of the 192 member states of the UN are small states.

This summer I had bilateral meetings with over 30 African ministers of foreign affairs. I went to the African Union Summit in Ghana in June, and there I had a lot of bilateral meetings with African Ministers. I've been explaining to them what Iceland would bring to the Security Council. I talked about our democratic values, our emphasis on equality, and expertise in sustainable harnessing of natural resources, particularly our fishing stocks and our geothermal and hydropower resources. The most important point is the message the Iceland brings to the world by example. It is the story of how Iceland progressed from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the most prosperous. Now a small but a very dynamic state, Iceland was a Danish colony until the beginning of the last century and was defined as a developing country until the 1970's. Frankly, I didn't realize it myself. It wasn't part of our self image as Icelanders. It's not part of our identity to have been a colony and a developing country, but actually we were. But it is important that you can tell this story when you go to Africa. We were one of the poorest countries, if not the poorest in Europe, at the beginning of last century, and now we are one of the most prosperous.

Of course we have to realize that we have had the good fortune to be able to build a Nordic welfare society on the sustainable harvesting of our natural resources, but human resources have been equally important. It is not a coincidence that Iceland's rise from poverty to riches did historically go together with the emancipation of women in Iceland. Nowhere in Europe or elsewhere do you find more women participation in the labor market than in Iceland. That is not a new phenomenon that has been the case for quite a long time. Over 705 of mothers in Iceland are working mothers and are active in the labor market. As I said it had been like this for at least 30 maybe 40 years. Until now they have had more

children on average than women in other European countries. I was attending the United Nations General Assembly three weeks ago, and I gave a speech there. What I said in my speech was that Iceland regarded women's empowerment and full participation at all levels was a fundamental issue for the new millennium. Whether it be in relation to peace and security, health, poverty, or climate change – empowerment of women is key to success.

Women and men need to be equally represented and listened to everywhere. The job of being the Foreign Minister of Iceland also includes being Minister of Defense, Minister of Development, and Minister of Foreign Trade. We wear many hats. These are all hard-core issues involving hard-core assessments of national interests. In each field, the feminist angle provides added value to policies and practice. Iceland has entered a new period in security and defense following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iceland. That happened last year in 2006. We are now in the process of building a new security policy based on our participation in NATO, our defense agreement with the U.S., and bilateral cooperation with allies and neighbors around the North Atlantic. Iceland has no military, but still has a lot to offer within NATO and to other allies. The concept of security is changing in every international arena. Our candidacy to the Security Council should be viewed as a part of our own security policy. In development aid, everyone now recognizes the necessity of including women's issues. Iceland will be among nations that would put that knowledge into practice, and in foreign trade, open markets and fair trade would allow new commerce and often create opportunities for women that they would not enjoy otherwise.

One issue that I would like to mention here in the end is peace and security in the Middle East. After this government in Iceland was established in May, in our policy program we stated that we are going to be more proactive in the international arena. That also goes hand in hand with the fact that we are candidates for the Security Council. It means we have to be more interested in issues in the Middle East and Africa. My first trip after I became Minister of Foreign Affairs was to Africa and the second was to the Middle East, to Israel and to the Palestinian occupied territories and to Jordan. I did it also because I wanted to see for myself how things are there. I wanted to hear it directly from those who are involved and I also wanted to see for myself what the consequences are of all the refugees who are going from Iraq to this area. I did this because the former government of Iceland decided to declare Iceland among the coalition of the willing regarding the invasion of Iraq, a decision which I was very much opposed to.

Therefore, I went to see what we could do in these matters. In Jordan, we discussed the situation regarding the refugees from Iraq now – thought to be 2 million in general – most of them in Syria and Jordan. We decided to donate money to projects aimed at bring Iraqi children to school in these countries. In Jordan, there are only 17 children that attend go to school, but there are 500,000 to 700,000 Iraqi refugees in these countries, which means that most of the children are not attending school. We donated the money to bring them into school, but I also had a lot of discussion with both the politicians from the Israeli side and the Palestinian side.

As we all know now, the possibility is of a peace conference in the U.S. in November and it is becoming very real that this conference will be held. In that connection, I would like to say that as an integral part of Iceland's candidature to the Security Council, we have decided to make a particular part of Resolution 1325. Maybe you do not know Resolution 1325. It is a resolution which emphasizes women's participation in peace talks and negotiations. I would very much like to make that a priority in our policy regarding the Security Council. Such participation would undoubtedly give it extra dimension and deeper legitimacy. The Women's Coalition for Just and Sustainable Israeli and Palestinian Peace is a group of prominent women from both sides at the conference. They will be traveling to the U.S. in the next few weeks lobbying for participation in one sort or another in the peace talks that they will get a seat at the peace conference and that they will be able to speak out and be heard as women talking about peace. This coalition has offered me to become an honorary member of this group along with other wonderful women such as Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, Helen Clark of New Zealand and Tarja

Halonen of Finland, the President of Finland. We are all going to actively support their efforts in the weeks to come. Therefore, I wanted to draw your attention to this coalition of women from both sides, from Israeli and Palestinian sides, who are trying to have a seat at the table and to have their voice heard. Allow me in the end to say that established power needs to be reestablished regularly with new ingredients each time. The best attitude to have as a politician I think is to bear in mind that that goes for your own mandate just as anybody else. Otherwise, you will not have anything to offer other people if you do not reestablish regularly your power and you give it new ingredients each time. Politics in general in my view should also mean empowerment. Thank you very much.

**Ellis:** You can see why we are so lucky to have the Foreign Minister with us. We were just talking about what foreign ministers and women Presidents can do, and you mentioned that there are 22 women foreign ministers who get together somewhat informally during the UN General Assembly. I'm just wondering if there are any plans afoot for getting the women foreign ministers together and taking actions like what you were discussing on the Middle East and in other parts of the world, let's say Darfur or other such conflicts. And my second question relates to energy and climate change which is obviously something that Iceland is very involved in. I'm wondering what kind of leadership and help can you give to the rest of the world, whether it's through geothermal energy, or something else?

**Foreign Minister Gísladóttir:** I was telling Patricia Ellis about the women foreign ministers. I counted at the UN General Assembly when we had the breakfast meeting of women ministers in foreign affairs and we are 22. That is more than I had myself realized. I think it is impressive that we are 22 now, out of 192 countries, but we still have a way to go. We had this breakfast meeting and it was very interesting to sit there with women like the Foreign Minister of Nepal for example, and to hear about her experience, and all these women's experiences in life. It is very empowering to sit at a table with all these ladies. We discussed issues like for example Burma/Myanmar, and we sent out a resolution about Burma because we found that it was important for us to do that in our capacity both as women and as foreign ministers. This is something. This meeting of women ministers of foreign affairs is something that has happened two or three times before, but we are still developing this. It hasn't been formalized in any way. But of course we could play a more interactive role in many ways. We have to take some steps, we could send out more resolutions like we did before, and probably it's time we did so.

About Iceland's role in environmental issues and climate change, we discussed this at the World Bank this morning at the IFC meeting. One of the things we are emphasizing is our expertise in geothermal energy and how to harness geothermal resources in a sustainable way. In Iceland, 70% of our energy consumption comes from renewables, either from hydropower or geothermal energy. There are a lot of countries in the world who could harness geothermal resources for central heating of houses and for producing electricity. If you look at the developing world, about 39 countries could maybe have all their energy consumption from geothermal resources. This hasn't been developed in these countries until now. Probably even more of them could do it with the new technique that we are experimenting with in Iceland. It's a deep drilling technology that we are developing now. It probably can be activated in five to ten years. I think we have a lot to offer in that field. It is not only developing countries that could use this technology. Alaska has a lot of geothermal resources; the U.S. has a lot of geothermal resources as well, so there are many countries that could use it, both for central heating and for producing electricity. I think we have in Iceland the biggest geothermal power company in the world. 90% of all houses are heated geothermally.

**Question:** I'm Stanley Kober with the CATO Institute. There is another issue before the Security Council and that's Kosovo. It will come up for a decision by the end of this year. Negotiations are not going to succeed. Kosovo will declare independence. The United States and President Bush have said that we will recognize, and the Russians will oppose. That will put you in a dilemma if you want to be on the Security Council. I don't see any way you can avoid taking a position. You have to side either with the United States or side with Russia, antagonizing one of them. You may not want to discuss this openly, but I was wondering what you could say on the subject.

**Foreign Minister Gísladóttir:** I think the idea put forward by the former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, on how to deal with Kosovo is a good one. I think all the Nordic countries support it. It means that Kosovo would have sovereignty but under some kind of European Union control. I don't know if that will be adopted in the Security Council. Probably not, and then we'll have to see what happens.

**Ambassador Claudia Fritsche:** I'm Ambassador Claudia Fritsche of Liechtenstein. Foreign Minister, mine is more of a comment. I very much wish that Iceland will make it to the Security Council. Your country would be a trailblazer for many of the small countries who haven't aspired so far. I'm absolutely sure that one of your priorities would be addressing resolution 1325. I think that if 1325 was wholly implemented there would be at least 200 issues that we wouldn't have to talk about any longer. I just wish you a lot of success. I think you could rest assured that most small countries will follow your reasoning.

**Question:** I'm Harriet Fulbright, and I just wanted to say that I spent a week in your country last winter, and I loved it despite the fact that it was winter. I spoke at several universities and I came away feeling extraordinarily impressed with your educational system. I know that some of the best Fulbright Scholars come from Iceland. I was wondering if you had any advice as to how your extraordinary educational system was built for us who are struggling.

**Foreign Minister Gísladóttir:** Well, it's difficult to say. I think that one reason why we have a good educational system is that education has always been free for all. Everybody has had access to education, higher education, university education, without having to pay for it. I think so you don't have this economical hindrance. Also we have a quite extensive system of study loans for young people. I think actually that has played a major role in our educational system—Free access to higher education and study loans. So it gives young people that maybe come from a difficult economic background equal opportunity, and I think that is very important. And another thing I also think is very important is that a higher proportion of the Icelandic students went abroad to study in other countries. Much higher proportion than in other countries, I think because we haven't had universities. If you are going to specialize you have to go to other countries to do that, more or less, but also there has been this tendency to go abroad and study. But most of the people – I think 80% – come back, and they come from different countries with different experiences and different views and it becomes a melting pot with people coming from all over the world with different views and experiences. And I think that is a strength – especially now in this globalized world – that people have been all over in different countries and different states. I think that's part of it.

**Ellis:** I would just like to take a moment to recognize the Ambassador of Monaco who just joined us. Welcome, we heard you had a rough trip getting here, but you made it... Thank you so much for joining us.

**Question:** Caroline Vicini, Chargé d'Affaires from the Swedish Embassy. I just wanted to hear about your experience with the feminist party. As it was such a long time ago you can speak to it, I think, with a historic perspective. We have experience you know in Sweden with a feminist party created not many years ago, and I wouldn't like to call it a success by any means. The only result actually was that all the other party leaders needed to declare themselves feminists. Besides that I think it created more controversy than any kind of results. If you could speak to your experience because this is an avenue I think many women in other countries ponder when they can't break through the ranks of their established parties.

**Question:** Jerry Hagstrom from the National Journal. Would you also tell us, what were you doing before you founded this party and why you decided you needed to do so?

**Foreign Minister Gísladóttir:** I had been active, like many other women, in what was called the New Women's Movement in Iceland. It was established around 1970, and I participated in it from 1975 to

1980. Many of us young women, at that time a little bit over 20, felt that this New Women's Movement was too negative. Of course women didn't have the same possibilities, they didn't have the same access to power, education, or jobs that men had, and there were a lot of things like maternity leave and daycare, that had to be changed.

We felt that the members of the New Women's Movement were too negative when they were speaking about women's conditions. They never emphasized what was positive in women's experiences in women's lives, which should be nourished by the society in general. So we were a little bit tired of these negative attitudes and we felt that we had to change this. We had to discuss things in a more positive way, and we should emphasize all the positive things women had to offer to the society, and that was actually very positive to be a woman in society although there were some negative sides as well.

We also decided that women had to be represented more in both our city council and parliament, that at that time the proportion of women in the city council was 13% and in the parliament 6% so that was the women's share in these leading organs of society. We felt we had to change that and we had to change this force about women's issues. So we decided to run for both the city council and the parliament, and we did it like an action. It was supposed to be a one-time action, so everyone would have to take a stand and decided whether they were satisfied with this proportion of women, and whether they were satisfied with the conditions that women were facing in the society and whether they were content with not having access to women's power and women's experiences.

That is why we did this, and that was I think why we were successful. There was a need for it in society. Therefore we got 10% of the votes which we had no idea of when we started. We were 12 when we started in December 1981, and then we had this election in May 1982, just five months later, and we got 10% of the vote. I think the reason was that it was needed and women's proportion was so low at the time. But that's different from Sweden today.

**Question:** Donna Constantinople, do you find now currently in Iceland, are there more women entering the fields that you were pioneering before and what are you doing to nurture younger woman? I think one of the things we're very keen on in the Women's Foreign Policy Group is our mentoring programs, and we're working with some of the major universities here to make sure that we encourage women to enter this arena. Do you similarly do that?

**Foreign Minister Gísladóttir:** Of course we have seen a lot of successes in Icelandic politics for the last 20 years. Women's proportion in the parliament, city council, and government has changed tremendously over the last 20 years. I think one of the reasons was that we started this women's party because all the parties in Sweden certainly said they were feminists and all the parties in Iceland started putting women in their lists. They had to compete on the voting market, so that is what they did when the Woman's Party was established. They all started having more women in secure seats on their lists. They all also started to have issues in their policy programs that they hadn't had before that were very important for women. We saw dramatic changes in maternity leave and in building of daycare centers. I have seen in my lifetime very dramatic changes in this.

About the young woman, of course we are trying to train them in our political parties. We have special unions of young people in our parties where we try to train them, and we also have women's movements within the parties where we also try to train the young women. Also of course role models are very important. When I think of it, when I was young it wasn't part of our self image that we could become ministers or Presidents. I sometimes think of our first woman President in Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, who was elected President in 1980. She was the first woman to be democratically elected in the world. It took courage to do this. She didn't stand there and think ok "I'll be President" just like that – she didn't have any role models to look to. I think it was very daring for her to do. I think when one takes a step like that it's very important for young woman.

**Question:** I'm Juliet Eilperin from the Washington Post, and I have a climate change question. I spoke to your President last week who was here in California talking about geothermal energy and launching a joint venture between Iceland and the United States. I'm interested in what Iceland is doing to engage policy makers beyond the Bush Administration on the question of climate change because the sense I get from a lot of European leaders is that they're meeting with state leaders and local leaders to address the issue of climate change and I would be interested in what you personally have been doing, who you have been engaging in this issue, or to whom your President or others might have been talking.

**Foreign Minister Gísladóttir:** I haven't had any discussion with people from the Bush Administration on climate change. I became Minister of Foreign Affairs in May and I haven't had the opportunity to discuss those issues with people from the Administration, but I know our President has been very active in doing so. Of course we are emphasizing this at the UN General Assembly summit that Ban Ki-moon held about global warming. This is something that we are discussing at the World Bank meetings and it's just the issue. I think most countries agree on the importance on having this as a UN matter and having a new binding agreement on climate change after Kyoto in 2012.

**Question:** Joanne Young and I have my own firm here in Washington where had have done a lot with Iceland. I see a trend in Iceland and many other Scandinavian countries of women not getting married and having children, in many cases by different men, and in many cases there's no marriage. I'm wondering how that is impacting the social fabric in Iceland and whether you think that trend is going to continue or go the other way. Also, how is it impacting the opportunities for younger women to become involved?

**Foreign Minister Gísladóttir:** Actually that is not a new phenomenon in Iceland. That has been the case for centuries, that women have had children outside of marriage. Maybe the new trend is that people are living together without getting married. Maybe they stay together for a long time. Sometimes they get married after living together for a long time. Having children before marriage and being a single mother is not a new thing in Iceland and is not a moral issue. If they are young single mothers it can affect their possibilities in life. What we have in Iceland is an extensive daycare system for single mothers and married mothers. So you have good access to daycare centers, and for single mothers the cost is lower. They have access to free education. They have access to study loans, to support their child or children while they are studying, so in many ways I think it is not as difficult in Iceland as in many other countries. But I'm not saying that being a young single mother can of course be an obstacle. But they are not attacked morally for being single mothers, for having children with out being married, and they have access to more facilities than they would here in the States.

**Ellis:** This has been an absolutely wonderful evening. Ambassador, thank you so much for making this possible. This is a true role model for women's leadership. We are so lucky to have you here with us this evening. I know we learned a lot. We want to keep in contact with you were also talking about being an honorary member of another group, so we don't want to let this opportunity pass without making you an honorary member for Women's Foreign Policy Group. So thank you so much for coming and speaking with us.