



**Annual Celebration of Women Diplomats
Tuesday, March 19, 2013
Washington, DC**

**Lean In: Encouraging the Next
Generation of Women Leaders**

Patricia Ellis: Good evening everyone, and thank you all so much for coming. This is our eighth annual Celebration of Women Diplomats. We do this every year in both Washington and New York. It's one of the highlights of the year, and we are so glad that you could join us and meet this very impressive group of women diplomats, and many of our members and friends who are here with us tonight. I would just like to begin by thanking our host, Ambassador Marina. [Applause.] Okay, I'll try the last name Kaljurand. How did I do? Kind of okay? [Laughter.] ...for opening up the beautiful embassy to us, having us here, serving this wonderful food and drink. And we're just so, so pleased to come and to be here. She [Ambassador Kaljurand] is not only a friend of the organization, but has been a very active participant. Most recently, she was a mentor at the Women's Foreign Policy Group's mentoring event at GW.

Ambassador Marina Kaljurand: Together with Patricia.

Ellis: She and I sat at the same table, and we were advising students, and we just had a ball.

Kaljurand: We enjoyed it. [Laughter.]

Ellis: We had a great time. We hope the students did [too]. [Laughter.] I think the students were really lucky to have such a wonderful woman leader to benefit from. She began her career as a lawyer, and has served in many senior government and diplomatic posts. Prior to being here, she was Ambassador to Russia, amongst other assignments. So, once again we're so happy to be here. Most of you know me. But for those who don't, I'm Patricia Ellis. I'm President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote women's leadership and women's voices on pressing international issues. We're also glad to see some of our male colleagues here today. We always like to have men. [Applause.] We're all in it together and we need to be together all the way. So thank you so much for coming. And before I introduce the ambassadors, I want to make two announcements. One, [to] remind everyone about our very exciting event next week with the first woman executive editor of *The New York Times*, Jill Abramson. It's a luncheon event. It's one of our very special events, and we hope that you can all join us. I also want to recognize one of board members here with us tonight, Isabel Jasinowski. So thank you so much for coming. [Applause.]

And now, what I'd like to do—and for this I will have to have the list. I'm going to ask the women ambassadors to please step up, and have all the women ambassadors—please, come up front. I'm going to give you everyone's names, and then we're going to call on people in alphabetical order. Some people may have to leave a little early and, of course, our host has asked to go last, so we will be out of alphabetical order but that's okay. [Laughter.] And [we have] one recent addition, so we'll be a little out of alphabetical order.

So, the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina Jadranka Negodic, Ambassador Seretse of Botswana, then we have Ambassador Ritva Koukku-Ronde, Finland, Ambassador Claudia Fritsche of Liechtenstein, Ambassador Jacinth Henry-Martin of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Ambassador Deborah Mae Lovell of Antigua and Barbuda. [Applause.] Okay, so every year we have a theme. Last year, it was the big anniversary of International Women's Day. The year before, we talked about mentoring.

And this year, we decided, in light of all the buzz and discussion of the articles by Anne-Marie Slaughter and Sheryl Sandberg on *Lean In*, that we would ask the ambassadors to say a few words—and we really will keep it brief so we can get to everybody and also recognize the DCMs here, too—and to say a few words about the encouragement and motivation for younger women to take on these challenges, and how this might have affected your career. So, we will begin with the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ambassador Jadranka Negodic: Thank you Patricia. I am really happy to be here, and [to] see so many females—and few men, of course, we need that [*Laughter.*] I am coming from the country, a small country, post-war country, a country in transition where human rights and women's rights are still a big issue almost every day. So it makes me think, actually, what can we do? Each of us, individually, not just rely[ing] on parliament, government, or the other. Because I realize—for instance, in Bosnia we have legal framework. We have all the laws we need to have. See, from that side of the situation, it's perfect. But what's missing? It's implementation. So, I think the most important thing is to raise the awareness of the importance of human rights. But first of all, the women—they have to think about that. They have to stand for their rights. They have—they need to know that anything is accessible, anything is affordable. But that's one crucial thing. I think what's essential, that's education. So, education as the first step that actually gives the women possibility of making choice, of making decisions, of standing for their rights, standing for their careers, positions they want to take, and at the end of the day, for their life. So in that regard, I think—also the examples of successful women, political leaders who are the women, experts are really important. To be emphasized, to be in [the] public eye just to show that that's possible, that that's what can be achieved, and what is possible to achieve and it's the only thing important to the women is, first of all, to think about themselves and to take decisions and to direct their lives and direct their own destiny and place in society. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

Ellis: Thank you. And now to the Ambassador of Botswana.

Ambassador Tebelelo Mazile Seretse: Thank you Patricia, and good evening to all of you beautiful people, and to my colleagues. It gives me great pleasure particularly to see us with younger women because they're the future leaders; they are our future mothers. And we have a duty as older women, especially women who are deemed who have made it in their countries, to mentor them. If today, each and every one of us can adopt at least one mentee, regardless of what country they come from, I think we'll all be moving in the right direction.

Lucky for us, Botswana—as you know Botswana is a member of the Human Rights Council. Our human rights record is not that bad. We eliminated all sorts of laws, which were discriminating against women. Women used to sit around and you[']d just hear somebody say, “the house has been sold, move out.” So those laws—we changed the deeds laws to say that there must be consent regardless of whether you are married, in or out of community of property. And lucky for us, Botswana is one of those countries which gives free education to its people, from primary to university. Free at government expense, free healthcare. That has ensured that the girl child, which was one of the topics we chose from [*Inaudible.*], the girl child is not left behind. They are moving along and coming in there. Our Attorney General, for instance, is a woman, our Governor of the Bank is a woman, and our Speaker of the National Assembly is a woman. And all of you ladies and gentlemen would know that the number one country, which is leading in terms of women in parliament, is Rwanda, a country ravaged by the worse genocide known to men. So all I can say is to encourage you to start looking and not talking about Africa, but talking about the individual countries, because when you unveil and talk about Rwanda, and talk about Botswana, and talk about Mauritius, and you are going to really find some positive things, and that we can get rid of the African negative stigma.

But, to the young ladies who are with us today, we stand ready. The embassies—you are fortunate if you are in Washington, because the embassies are lined up on Embassy Row. [*Laughter.*] The idea of embassies is to get in there, find out about the country. There is no single embassy in Washington, DC that you can get into and not be welcome. So get in there, find out the culture, find the differences

about the countries, but above all, come and talk to us. We will mentor you. [Laughter.] We will be very happy. [Turning to Patricia Ellis], we congratulate you for a job well done, this continuing getting us together. And we have our senior women ambassadors, who are also trying to get us together. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

Ellis: Thank you. Now we will have the Ambassador of Finland, who is a good friend of the organization. Last year, she hosted a wonderful embassy event for us.

Ambassador Ritva Koukku-Ronde: Thank you, Patricia. [Laughter.] I am coming from a country who is actually having the issue at the moment that—not only of the women’s rights or girl’s rights, but we are [also] discussing about the men’s rights and the boy’s rights. And I think it is a very good one in the sense that, first, in the Foreign Ministry we have more than 50% women diplomats, more than 40% female ambassadors. And it is a quite nice feeling. [Laughter.] I am the first female ambassador from my country to the US. [Applause.] By the way, all the government positions and some other positions are held also by women, even Minister of Defense, can be a woman. And actually, when we had a Minister of Defense woman in 19—early 1990’s, when we had really bad recession, she made one of the really key decisions in enhancing our relations between the US and Finland because she fought for our Air Forces to [get] Hornets [F/A-]18. [Laughter.] It was [an] incredibly expensive deal, by the way. [Laughter.] But she had the courage to do it. I’d say the last sort of resort there is the companies. But this I don’t actually catch, because there are studies that show that those companies—which are in private companies, which are in stock—they have federal resources, for both women and men. So I think we need a little bit here of work still to be done, but there will be more women on board. I think it starts all of the men also. I like to have more and more men in meetings where I discuss about gender and equality. And I totally agree—education, education, education—that is how my country started really developing in a very short time, from an agrarian poor country to a [country] very many respect, to a very well to do, one of the very few familiar countries, by the way, in northern Europe. That is education. Then also, I think, as parents. Whether you are father or mother, I think it’s very important that you raise your children in a very equal manner, in the sense they respect both—both sexes, opportunities for both, both boys and girls. And I think that is a task set for both parents as well. My mother also said, “Never vote [for] a man before there is 50/50 percent in Parliament.” [Laughter.] And my father was supporting this. [Laughter.]

Ellis: Okay, and now the Ambassador of Liechtenstein. A very good friend, with whom we go way back, and last year she hosted our wonderful Celebration of Women Diplomats. So Claudia Fritsche! [Applause.]

Ambassador Claudia Fritsche: Thank you so much. Dear friends, in my more than 22 years of service here in the United States—first at the UN and now here in Washington—I have learned many great things about this country. One of them is an abundance of positive attitudes. It’s just inbred. It’s something that many of us, certainly in my country, could learn a lot from. Also, opportunities to succeed, and most of all, a society that encourages and supports and admires. When it comes to women, especially when we talk to younger women, we tell them, “The sky is the limit.” As it should be. But I think that we all know that, not only us but even some of you who are considerably younger than most of us here or some of us here, you will find out there are invisible ceilings on your way to the sky. So I think most of us here in this room, we have made attempts or are making attempts or will make attempts to shatter some of those ceilings. I have decided to keep my remarks very personal today, [to] forego my elevator speech on Liechtenstein. You can come to my embassy and hear that. [Laughter.] So my personal remarks may be helpful in your attempts to shatter the ceilings, or they may not, but I’m making them anyway.

I’d like to start with keyword number one—and I have four. I will keep it short. Keyword number one: authenticity. I have learned a long time ago that I am best served when I am myself. Attempting, learning to, pretending to be someone or something else is really not a good idea. Number two keyword: passion. I hope you are all fortunate as I am to love what you are doing. We are spending so

much time at work, more time than anywhere else. So, in order to succeed, we really need to love what we're doing, to be passionate about it, to be passionate about our responsibilities and about the people we interact with. And when all that is happening, work doesn't feel like work. The next keyword is: listening. I, in my experience, have had some of the most precious and impressive encounters in my life with people who [have] mastered the art of listening. I try to listen, and by doing that—and if we are all doing that—I think we render one of the most important basic courtesies to other human beings, namely respect. What was my last keyword? [*Laughter.*] Ah yes, very important: live. Have a life. I try very hard, and I have to admit, I am successful at it! [*Laughter.*] [You have] to make room for family, for friends, for trips, for whatever you like. I try to fulfill some of my dreams, or help other people to fulfill theirs. Whether it is running a marathon—not for me [*Laughter.*]—climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, yes, spending a night in the desert, listening to jazz in Washington DC, going in a hot air balloon ride, whatever your choices are. All I would like to say is never forget to stop and smell the roses. [*Applause.*]

Ellis: The Ambassador of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Ambassador Jacinth Henry-Martin: Thank you very much. I am Jacinth Henry-Martin, Ambassador of Saint Kitts and Nevis. And, like the ambassador who spoke before me, Liechtenstein, I am going to keep it rather personal, because I like to speak to something that I can immediately relate to. In 2000, I became the first female elected to parliament on a Labor Party ticket. [*Applause.*] And I was the first female ambassador of Saint Kitts and Nevis appointed to the White House, and to the Organization of American States. And very often in my country, I have been asked, “What made you think you could do it?” Well, I think my frame of reference would have been the fact that I am also the mother of three sons, one who's 28 and identical twins who are 25. [*Applause.*] And I have replied very often to the young ladies of Saint Kitts and Nevis, where most of the households are headed by women, “at what point do we lose the confidence?” At what point does our intuitive nature fail us? At what point will we forget that we have mastered the art of making judging calls? Of being in charge of the most valuable resource in our country, our children, as mothers. And somehow, we lose sight of the fact that this is exactly the level of confidence and capacity required to run our country. We have done it all before, self-evaluating along the way. And suddenly we get into government, or we are afraid to get into government, because we want to be validated by someone else, primarily the men. [But] we have been validated ourselves. We ensured for years that the men were elected to government. We ran the campaigns. We mastered the strategies. We knocked on the doors. And at what point do we lose the confidence that made us make winners of the men? And I said to the young ladies who asked me, “take your intuitive capacity to government, because there is no society that is optimizing its potential if it is being led only by 50% of the population.” We need to be equitable. We need to be representational at its best—the contributions of men and of women in equal measure. So, on the topic of leaning in, [*Laughter.*] I say lean right in. Lean inside of yourself. You don't have to dig deep. Just remember the skill sets of organization, and stretching a dollar, and making possible the impossible in running your homes, and just to build on that. We are as capable. We are as educated. We are as committed. And we certainly are better able at being the masters of the destinies of our countries—we birthed the men. [*Applause.*] We birthed the men, and we have led from behind for ages. It's time to lead from in front. This comes from the mother of three sons. And I am proud to say my husband of 31 years and my sons agree with me. [*Applause.*]

Ellis: The Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda.

Ambassador Deborah Mae Lovell: Good afternoon. [*Laughter.*] I am the ambassador who crashed the party. I know, wherever women are gathered, I am at home. [*Applause.*] So thank you very much for allowing me to crash the party, but I wanted to be able to tell my story. Because, as diplomats, we are storytellers. Every day we tell a story because we are asked to be generous. So, permit me to give a few chapters. An abbreviated version of my story! [*Laughter.*] Chapter one: why am I here? Why am I a diplomat? This is because, at age 11, I made a to-do list for my life. [*Laughter.*] I tell everybody that I decided at age 11. I was flipping through a magazine. I saw a picture of an African diplomat, and I said, “I will be just like her.” Now, what's amazing is that we were still a British colony. But at that point, no

one told me I couldn't do it. So I didn't imbibe the negative [idea] that it was impossible. I was also raised in a household that was headed by my mother because I lost my father at age four. She headed the women's movement in Antigua, and she said, "Debbie, if you believe it, you go after it." And I did. I knocked on the door of the Foreign Minister, "Hi, I'm Deborah." [Laughter.] I said—I mean, no one told me I couldn't—I passed the guy and said, "Hi, I'm Deborah," I said, "I want to be a diplomat." He said, "What? It's people like you we need. Please sit down." And simply because of the fact that I just believed that it could happen, I did not see a barrier. I was able to now stand before you as the first female Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States. [Applause.] I am here. I've been in this job—I've been a diplomat for 30 years.

Now, chapter two, very briefly. [Laughter.] In my job, I am asked to be a generalist. But I focus on three main issues. I focus on youth. I focus on women. I focus on the plight of Afro-descendants. Let's start with youth. I seek not to make a distinction between the girls and the boys. I seek to embrace gender. Because, as I said before, there is a situation in Antigua and Barbuda, and the Caribbean, where we have the boys and the men left behind. And so what we find [is that] the girls are mainly the university students. The girls are the ones who are succeeding. That's wonderful. But for a society to move forward, we have to bring *all* of the young people together. So I speak on behalf of the empowerment of young people. I speak also on behalf of women, especially the whole question of equal pay for equal work, the question of domestic violence—that must stop—and the question as well of the feminization of AIDS. That's a silent killer, and it must be spoken about; I speak about that. I speak as well about the plight of the Afro-descendants, especially in certain parts of the world, in Latin America. And it is important that, as we seek to move forward as a hemisphere, we seek to be as inclusive as possible, and to include all segments of the population, if we are to be truly competitive. So that is the end of chapter two, the work that I do.

One last chapter. As a storyteller, I want to be able to share this with you. I want to show the connection between my country and the United States of America. Do you know that [Inaudible.], had there been not Antigua and Barbuda, there might not have been a Barack Obama? How, you ask. How's that so? It is because in 1807, when the slave trade had been abolished, we had a plantation owner in Antigua and Barbuda called Mr. Isaac Royall. And he decided to sell his plantation—which was no longer profitable—and to give the proceeds to establish what? Harvard Law School. And so, because [of] Antigua and Barbuda, you have Harvard Law School. [Applause.] And I made this point because, very often, one does not see the connection. You think of Antigua and Barbuda, you think of rum and Coca-Cola. You think of limbo, you think of great times, fine. When you think of Antigua and Barbuda, think of Harvard Law School. And so that ends chapter three. [Laughter.]

As I approach the end of my abbreviated storybook, I want to be able to say that, as women, we must take the reins because as you all know, the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world. Thank you so much. [Applause.]

Ellis: Thank you. Now the Ambassador of Estonia.

Ambassador Kaljurand: Well dear friends, I would like to recognize and introduce. I would like to recognize the Women's Foreign Policy Group. What you're doing—that's great. Although you call this event the Celebration of Women Diplomats, you are the true ambassadors. And you are the true diplomats who are doing lots of work every day. It's not easy because so many things happen in DC, and your work is remarkable. So Patricia, your ladies, your interns, thank you so much.

Ellis: Where is my team? All the interns, volunteers, thank you.

Ambassador Kaljurand: I would like to recognize my dear sisters, lady ambassadors, Deborah, Jadranka, Tebelelo, Jacinth, Ritva, Claudia. I've heard you speaking several times, but the speeches tonight were *the best*. [Applause.] It's impossible to add something to what you said, but maybe as an inspiration, if you see—where's my group? [Laughter.] We love each other. We enjoy each other. We

are interested in each other's professional life, in personal life. We support each other. So I think maybe as a group, we can be a kind of inspiration.

I would like to recognize one more ambassador, Laurie, who came a month ago from Copenhagen. [Applause.] Laurie was US ambassador to Denmark for five years—four years. I met her a couple years ago when she organized a fabulous seminar, together with NATO, with Secretary General of NATO Rasmussen [when he was] going to Copenhagen, on women empowerment, Women International Security Resolution 1325. Laurie, we're so happy and glad to have you here. [Applause.] I would like to recognize all our DCMs, all our first secretaries, second secretaries, attachés from all the embassies, because you make our lives here easier. You let us shine. [Laughter.] And you let us work in a wonderful company, being it woman and men diplomats.

I would like to recognize my staff. And we are represented today, 50/50. [Laughter.] Lea, who definitely will be our future ambassador before I retire, and our two wonderful diplomats, Oleg and Kristjan. I hope that today's event was eye-opening to you, and you see that there is a wonderful and powerful company of woman ambassadors and people's ambassadors in Washington. And finally, I would like you to remember two things from today's event. First, that Skype was invented in Estonia. [Applause.] And second, that Estonians eat healthy food. And as a special guest we have here today Marika Blossfeldt. You can turn your back to me and face to her. Marika is a special person. She was behind the snacks and food that were served and that are going to be served. And her idea is to make food healthy, or as it was said in one of the reviews, "your cuisine brings fun to your kitchen, well-being to your body, clarity to your mind, and joy to your heart." What else can we wish? [Laughter.] I would like to invite Marika to say a couple of words [on] what we have been eating here tonight and please, come to Estonia to see that we really eat healthy food. [Applause.]

Ellis: Thank you. Thanks to all the ambassadors, you were all so wonderful and inspiring. And thank you all for coming, and thanks to all the other diplomats here. We have a number of DCMs here. I see Denmark, and Mexico, and Romania. I know there's someone here from Vietnam. I haven't—I don't want to miss anybody, but you can shout out your name if we missed your country. Go ahead. Yes. You're not? Okay. [Laughter.]

Julia Elizabeth Hyatt: Jamaica.

Ellis: Jamaica. Dominican Republic. Somalia. Uganda. Ghana, yes. Anyone else that we missed? Yes?

Daniela Kristo Nesho: Albania is over here. [Laughter.]

Ellis: Thank you all. You're all wonderful, and congratulations on the fantastic work that you all do. [Applause.]