



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on International Women's Day

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 12, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I would like to thank the Canadian delegation for reminding all of us why we celebrate International Women's Day. It is, in fact, to reflect upon the challenges that we all face in this area. In North America, not only was Canada celebrating International Women's Day, but it was also being celebrated in the United States, where two very strong women leaders presided over a ceremony in Washington—Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Michelle Obama. I would like to relay some of the points that Secretary Clinton made during that ceremony, which reflect the views of the United States government on the challenges we face:

“Put simply, we have much less hope of addressing the complex challenges we face in this new century without the full participation of women. Whether the economic crisis, the spread of terrorism, regional conflicts that threaten families and communities, and climate change and the dangers it presents to the world's health and security, we will not solve these challenges through half measures. Yet too often, on these issues and many more, half the world is left behind.

“This is not simply a matter of emotion or altruism. A growing body of research tells us that supporting women is a high-yield investment, resulting in stronger economies, more vibrant civil societies, healthier communities, and greater peace and stability. But even so, no nation in the world has yet achieved full equality for women.

“Women still comprise the majority of the world's poor, unfed, and unschooled. ... They are subjected to rape as a tactic of war and exploited by traffickers globally in a billion dollar criminal business. ...

“Like all people, women deserve to live free from violence and fear. To create peaceful, thriving communities, women must be equal partners. That means making key resources available to women as well as men, including the chance to work for fair wages and have access to credit; to vote, petition their governments and run for office; to know they can get healthcare when they need it, including family planning; and to send their children to school—their sons and their daughters.

“Women also have a crucial role to play in establishing peace worldwide. In regions torn apart by war, it is often the women who find ways to reach across differences and discover common ground as mothers, caretakers, and grassroots advocates. One need only look to Northern Ireland, ... [or to] the Balkans ... to see the impact of women working in their communities to bridge divides in areas of sectarian conflict.

“This week, as we celebrate the accomplishments and the untapped potential of women around the world, we must remind ourselves that ensuring the rights of women and girls is not only a matter of justice. It is a matter of enhancing global peace, progress, and prosperity for generations to come.

“When women are afforded their basic rights, they flourish. And so do their children, families, communities, and nations.”

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.