

Secretary Clinton's Speech at U.S.-Islamic World Forum

Cites mutual respect and shared values of U.S. and Muslims worldwide

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REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Remarks and Question and Answer Session at The U.S.-Islamic World Forum

February 14, 2010
Doha, Qatar

MR. TALBOTT: (In progress) has worked assiduously on behalf of peace and better understanding around the world, and especially in this region.

As Secretary of State, she has traveled the globe, including several visits to the Islamic world from Africa to Asia. Moreover, when she travels, she does so not just to explain American policy candidly and respectfully, but also to listen carefully and to learn other people's perspectives. In short, to engage in dialogue, which of course, makes it especially appropriate that she would take part in this forum.

Two personal notes, if I might. I am sure that I speak for everyone not only this room, but many watching on television and listening on the radio, when I ask that she convey to President Clinton our best wishes for his speedy and complete recovery. He gave the keynote address at this forum six years ago. And he is deeply respected in the Arab and Muslim world. We all need, in this complex and sometimes dangerous world of ours, his energy, his wisdom, and his big heart, just as we need yours.

(Applause.)

MR. TALBOTT: Finally, Madam Secretary, there are, of course, limits to the number of people whose lives have been enriched by the privilege of knowing you personally. Quite a few are here tonight. But there seems to be no limit whatsoever to the number of people around the world who feel as though they know you, and who count on you to speak out for what they believe in, and what matters to them.

I have been here in Doha for several days. And I have been struck by how the local press has a way of referring to you not by your title, not by your last name, but just as Hillary. And there is no question why. It's because when you come here, you are greeted not just as a distinguished visitor, not just as a representative of our government, but as a friend who is held in respect, admiration, and affection.

So, Your Highness, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the Secretary of State of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. It is, indeed, an honor to be here, to be part of this U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

And I thank you for all of the kind words and good wishes for my husband, who is doing fine. He is in great shape. All is well, or I would not be here this evening. And he sends his best greetings to each and every one of you, and particularly to you, Your Highness. I told the Emir that, on my way to the airport today, the last instruction I received from my husband was to give his very best regards to you, Your Highness. And it is a great pleasure to convey them, both publicly and privately, and to be here with you and with the Prime Minister and the government of Qatar to, once again, engage again in this important effort to strengthen the dialogue between our countries and our people.

I want to thank Strobe Talbott and Martin Indyk and the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, for hosting this event, but for doing so much more beyond it to actually pursue the dialogue and its result. Because the work on the issue that you are doing, from Religious Leaders in Diplomacy to Science Cooperation and New Media, is exactly the kind of leadership and engagement we need right now.

And I know that the Prime Minister's inspirational words yesterday and tonight reflect Qatar's ongoing commitment to promoting mutual understanding and the progress that it holds out for us.

Since I became Secretary of State a little more than a year ago, I have had the privilege of traveling to 46 countries around the world, including many that have a Muslim majority. And while much of my time on these trips is devoted to working with governments and high officials, I also make it a point to meet with citizens, as well: civil society leaders in Indonesia, young women on a television program in Turkey, students in an English-language program in Ramallah, citizens sharing their ideas for their own future, and for the hope of a better tomorrow.

I traveled to Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Kuwait. I have met with Islamic leaders in Nigeria. I visited Tatarstan on my trip to Russia. And I have met with an array of people and groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan. And I have helped to launch the American Pakistan Foundation, to bring more Americans into the work of supporting a strong and democratic Pakistan.

And in Morocco, at the Forum for the Future, I reinforced America's support for civil society and announced programs designed to empower individuals and communities through greater economic opportunity, entrepreneurship, science, technology, and education.

I am very grateful to have had this chance to meet with so many people. And I have been grateful also to hear, to have the chance to listen to what is on your mind, just as I have heard from many American Muslims over the years who have done so much to enrich my own nation. I hope that these trips help to underscore the importance that the United States places on engaging effectively and

energetically, not only with governments in Muslim-majority countries, but with Muslim communities everywhere.

Now, this engagement is not new to the United States. It has been important throughout our history. A strong relationship between our country and many others is a hallmark of what we believe is essential to global security, prosperity, and peace. President Obama and I believe that this is both a strategic imperative and a reflection of the bonds we share—the values, the hopes, the ambitions we hold as mothers and fathers, students and workers, business leaders and social advocates, and members of the human family.

The ties between the United States and Muslim countries and communities stretch back to America's earliest days. Morocco was the first nation to recognize American independence. Later, we supported the emergence of independent Muslim-majority states after decades of colonial rule. Americans helped establish what are still some of the finest universities in this region. And we, in turn, have been enriched by a long tradition of educational exchanges. Soldiers and sailors from U.S. and Muslim-majority countries have stood side by side in peace-keeping missions worldwide, and we have worked together to rebuild after devastating natural disasters, including the 2004 tsunami, the 2005 earthquake, and now, of course, in Haiti. And the United States joins with other nations to protect Muslims in Bosnia and Darfur from violence and suffering.

So we have a lot to reflect on that is already the substance of our relationship, and what we have accomplished together. But we know that our shared purpose and values have often been obscured by suspicion and misunderstanding. It is time, as President Obama said in his speech in Cairo, for a new beginning based on a commitment to open dialogue and equal partnership, a new beginning that confronts the tensions between us and commits all of us to doing the hard work necessary to resolve them, a new beginning that acknowledges we each have a role and a responsibility in solving the common problems we face.

Now, in the eight months since the President's speech, many around the world have answered that call. But others worry that the United States' commitment is insufficient or insincere, that we have not fully embraced the spirit of mutual respect and partnership, or that we will fail to translate that spirit into the concrete steps needed to achieve real and lasting change in the world.

Now, I understand why people might be impatient. But building a stronger relationship cannot happen overnight or even in a year. It takes patience, persistence, and hard work from all of us.

It is important to remember that President Obama's vision was not one of a single country seeking to write a new chapter on our own. It was a call for all of us to take responsibility for retiring stereotypes and outdated views and for bringing a renewed sense of cooperation to.

We recognize that there is not one approach that works for all people in all places. The concerns of a mother in Indonesia may differ from that of a student in Egypt or a businessman in Doha or an imam in England. But while their concerns may be different, they all matter to us.

And during the past year, the Obama Administration has worked to alter the tone and deepen the substance of our relationships with people from all regions and all backgrounds. We are and will

remain committed to the President's vision for a new beginning. And that commitment is reflected in both what we are doing and how we are doing it. We are forging new policies and partnerships that reflect our common principles. And our new approach rests on three core pillars: relations based on mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual responsibility; a shared commitment to universal values; and broad engagement with governments and citizens alike.

It is this convergence of policies and principles that I would like briefly to talk to you about tonight.

The first and critical area is our ongoing efforts to advance a comprehensive peace in the Middle East—one that brings peace for Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese, as well as the full normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab states. Central to these efforts is the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution.

I fully understand the importance that this issue holds for people not only in this region, but around the world. It is also important to me. Every day, we see the human cost of the conflict: the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the daily indignities endured by Palestinians after decades of occupation, the constant threat of violence that Israelis bear, as well as the opprobrium that comes with years of trying to protect her citizens.

This conflict is an obstacle to security, prosperity, and opportunity for Palestinians, Israelis, and all nations in the region. And the goal of a comprehensive peace is fully in the interests of the United States. So, we are committed to our role in ensuring that negotiations begin and succeed. That is why President Obama appointed George Mitchell as Special Envoy for Middle East peace during his first week in office, and why Senator Mitchell has made monthly visits to the region. This is hard work. Some of you in the audience know that from firsthand experience. But our resolve is strong, and we are determined to settle this conflict once and for all.

I know people are disappointed that we have not yet achieved a breakthrough. The President, Senator Mitchell, and I are also disappointed. But we must remember that neither the United States nor any country can force a solution. The parties themselves must resolve their differences through negotiations. And the United States stands ready to play an active and sustained role, and to support the parties as they work to resolve all permanent status issues including security for Israelis and Palestinians, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem.

We support a two-state solution, with Israelis and Palestinians co-existing peacefully and with mutual security. We believe that through good-faith negotiations, the parties can mutually agree on an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israeli security requirements.

And we recognize that Jerusalem is a deeply important issue to Israelis and Palestinians, to Jews, Muslims, and Christians everywhere. We believe it is possible to reach an outcome that both realizes the aspirations of all parties for Jerusalem, and safeguards its status for the future.

For our part, the United States has encouraged Israel to stop the growth of settlements to preserve the chance for a two-state solution. We do see the current Israeli settlement moratorium as a positive

step in this direction, and we look for further steps. The United States' policy on settlements has not changed; we do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.

We have encouraged the Palestinians to pursue their home-grown plan to build their institutions, end incitement, improve security, to lay the foundation for a future stable, democratic Palestinian state. We are supporting President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad in their efforts to build, train, and reform their security forces, and we commend their progress to date.

The principle of shared responsibility extends to Israel's Arab neighbors, as well as countries around the world. We all have an obligation to support this effort by helping to make real the benefits that peace can bring. The region and the international community can make clear to the Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese that we support comprehensive negotiations that produce results. The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative is vital to our efforts to promote a comprehensive peace. And it lays out a vision of a better future for all the region's people. It is time to renew its spirit today and move to specifics.

A second issue that demands our cooperation based on the principles I've outlined is Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

In his inaugural address, President Obama endorsed a new era of diplomatic engagement, including with those nations who have at times been hostile to the United States. We have proven our willingness to engage. For example, we are resuming high-level contacts with the Syrian government. And we are preparing to send an Ambassador back to Damascus for the first time since 2005.

We have pursued extensive efforts to reengage with Iran, both through direct communication and through greater participation in multilateral efforts. Our goal has been, that after 30 years of hostile relations with Iran, we need to begin to build a more constructive relationship.

Our position regarding Iran's nuclear program is simple. We believe that all states, including Iran, start with the same rights and the same responsibilities. And according to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, nations have the right to nuclear power so long as they accept the responsibility of demonstrating unequivocally that their programs are used solely for peaceful civilian purposes.

But Iran has consistently failed to live up to its responsibility. It has refused to demonstrate to the international community that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful. And last year, the world learned of a secret nuclear facility near the city of Qom. The IAEA Board of Governors responded with a resolution criticizing Iran that received wide support.

In October, in our continuing efforts at engagement, the United States, for the first time, joined the so-called P-5+1 in meeting with Iran in Geneva. These were the highest level discussions between the United States and Iran in more than 30 years. We went to Geneva with the hope that Iran would seize the opportunity to begin to resolve our differences, and to pursue greater political and economic integration with the international community. We joined Russia, France, the United Kingdom, China, and Germany to endorse an offer to provide Iran with fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor, which creates medical isotopes for medical treatment. This offer demonstrated a good-faith commitment to working with Iran toward a future civil nuclear program for peaceful purposes.

Iran agreed in principle, but then refused the IAEA's terms. Now, Iran has announced that it will increase its enrichment activities to produce up to 20 percent enriched uranium, in violation of successive United Nations Security Council resolutions. And its explanation doesn't add up. It could have the very enriched uranium it says it seeks by accepting the international IAEA offer. So this has only deepened the international community's doubts about Iran's nuclear intentions, along with increasing isolation of Iranian government.

Furthermore, since the meeting in Geneva in October, Iranian officials have refused every offer to meet on its nuclear program. So these actions, understandably, have caused us to wonder: What does Iran have to hide? Why is Iran refusing to live up to its international obligations, which would lead to political and economic integration with the international community that would actually benefit the Iranian people?

Iran leaves the international community little choice but to impose greater costs for its provocative steps. Together, we are encouraging Iran to reconsider its dangerous policy decisions. We are now working actively with our regional and international partners, in the context of our dual track approach, to prepare and implement new measures to convince Iran to change its course.

And of course, our concerns about the Iranian government's intentions are intensified by its behavior toward its own people. The world has watched the events of the past several months in Iran with alarm. We know of the large-scale detentions and mass trials, political executions, the intimidation of family members of the opposition, and the refusal to extend Iranian citizens the right to peaceful assembly and expression, as we have seen again in just the last few days.

The United States joins other nations in condemning these events. If the Iranian government wants the respect of the international community, it must respect the rights of its people.

The third issue where our policies and principles converge is of great concern to all of us: violent extremism.

Many of the nations represented here today and many more worldwide have already experienced firsthand the devastating effects of violent extremism. In particular, the groups who operate from bases in Afghanistan and the border region with Pakistan have killed people of many faiths in many countries.

In just 2009, in Pakistan, roughly 2,000 civilians were murdered by Al Qaeda and its allies. These included people participating in peaceful religious processions in Karachi and women and children gathered at a local market in Peshawar.

Extremists have recently attacked pilgrims in Iraq with the intent of destabilizing the government and reigniting civil war. In Nigeria, extremists are exacerbating Muslim-Christian tensions. In Somalia, they are working to take down the government. And in Yemen, Al Qaeda seeks to exploit internal and regional divisions to create a new base for global terrorism.

Many faith leaders and citizens from Muslim communities have voiced their outrage at those who claim to kill in the name of God. And we share this view. And are determined to prevent extremists from

driving wedges between Muslims and non-Muslims—in America or anywhere. We all have a stake in this fight, and the United States is committed to working in partnership with Muslim-majority countries as we face this threat together. Because Islam is—and must be—an important part of the solution in confronting violent extremism.

Dozens of countries are doing their part in Afghanistan to fight Al Qaeda and its allies, to protect the democratic government, and to improve economic and educational opportunities. Among our partners there are Turkey, which has sent more than 1,500 troops; Jordan, which runs medical facilities that have treated thousands; the United Arab Emirates, which is supporting humanitarian operations; and Saudi Arabia, which has pledged financial support.

Now, the United States and 42 other nations may have increased our military presence, but we have also increased our civilian effort to help the government strengthen its ability to lead, especially in Afghanistan's once-thriving agricultural sector. And we are supporting Afghan leaders with the delicate, difficult work of reintegrating into society members of the Taliban—but only those who renounce violence, lay down their weapons, and sincerely want to help build their nation's democratic future.

For too much of Afghanistan's history, countries and outside groups have used it as a place to achieve their own ambitions, with little regard for the rights, talents, and dreams of the Afghan people. The United States has no interest in occupying Afghanistan. We also have no intention of abandoning Afghanistan. When international forces leave Afghanistan, our civilian presence will continue, so we can foster a long-term partnership.

That same commitment to partnership and shared responsibility is at the heart of our work in Pakistan. We stand with Pakistan's democratic government and people as they work to defeat the insurgents who are targeting their own citizens. We are not motivated by our own notion of what Pakistan needs, but by what Pakistan and Pakistanis tell us they need.

The United States passed landmark legislation last year that tripled civilian aid to Pakistan, under the leadership of Senator Kerry, who addressed you yesterday. We are working to help with their energy problems, to solve the power shortages that have caused so many blackouts, and also to improve access to water, their agricultural productivity, transportation, and education.

We are also making steady progress with our plan to responsibly end the war in Iraq, in partnership with the government and people of Iraq. Our combat troops were out of Iraq's cities by the end of last June, as we planned. We are on track to meeting our deadline of ending our combat mission by the end of this August. This month, the number of American troops fell below 100,000 from a high of more than 170,000, and that number will continue to drop as we take all of our combat troops out of Iraq.

As we decrease our military presence, we're bolstering our long-term civilian relationship. Iraq and the United States have signed a Strategic Framework Agreement that includes partnerships in education, science and technology, trade, and agriculture. And we are providing support leading up to the national elections next month.

Iraq's journey to democracy has not been easy. Just in the past few weeks, brutal attacks have killed dozens of people. But those attacks have failed to deter the determination of the Iraqis to hold their elections. And the next months are sure to be testing. Many countries can and should help Iraq through its challenges, and to reintegrate Iraq fully back into the region. Iraq does have the potential to become a force for regional stability and prosperity.

Two other issues regarding global security and violent extremism deserve greater explanation: the prison at Guantanamo Bay, and the new security regulations for international flights landing at American airports.

In one of his first acts as president, President Obama directed that the detention facility at Guantanamo be closed, recognizing that Guantanamo had become a symbol of the wrong way to make America more secure. Now, we had hoped that this task would be completed within a year. That has proven impossible. But we will close Guantanamo. And we will close it in a way that is both responsible and consistent with basic standards of justice. Our progress has been slow because this is difficult. It depends in part on the willingness of other nations to take in detainees, and we are very grateful to those nations that have already done so, and we ask others to please consider doing so, in order to help us expedite the closing of Guantanamo.

As to our new airline security regulations, they have raised legitimate questions that need to be considered within the larger reality. All responsible nations have a stake in stopping extremists who would use violence, who would seek to exploit the ease and freedom of global air travel. So we all have to work together to strengthen airport security, while treating people fairly and respectfully. This is a difficult balance to strike. And the United States, like many countries, are still working to find the best way to ensure the safety of all travelers while also preserving their dignity. The current situation is far from ideal, and we are regularly reviewing our security measures and we will modify them as circumstances and the risks of attack warrant. I can only ask for patience and understanding from travelers in the meantime.

Because airline security is a small piece of a larger issue. Without security, no community can thrive. But security requires more than strong borders, safe skies, or friendly neighbors. True and lasting security takes root in places where people have the opportunity to find jobs, to be educated, to raise healthy families, and benefit from the scientific and technological breakthroughs that have transformed the way we live in the 21st century. When these opportunities are absent, frustration and anger often follow.

So that's the fourth issue I wish to address: opportunities for young people. In many parts of the world today, from Latin America, to Africa, to Asia, including many Muslim-majority countries, people under 25 make up more than half the population. They deserve the chance to make their mark on the world and be a part of positive change.

President Obama and I believe that education and innovation are the currency of this century. That's why he announced a new era of engagement with Muslim communities to expand educational opportunities, support entrepreneurs, and promote advances in science and technology. Our goal is to identify excellent ideas and successful projects in Muslim communities and then invest in them, help

to scale them up, and to connect innovators and entrepreneurs, so that they can support and enhance each other's work.

We are creating a Global Technology and Innovation Fund, which we will launch this spring, that will provide hundreds of millions of dollars in capital to small and medium-sized businesses throughout the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. In April, President Obama will host a two-day Summit on Entrepreneurship in Washington, which will bring together innovators and entrepreneurs and business people from 50 countries on 5 continents, along with their American business counterparts, to work to establish a network that can support these kinds of advances.

And to promote science exchanges, we have launched our science envoy program. One of our envoys, Dr. Ahmed Zewail, a Nobel Prize-winning chemist, has already visited Egypt and Turkey. And another, Dr. Elias Zerhouni, a former director of America's National Institutes of Health, is here at this forum.

To extend the benefits of past breakthroughs to more people, we are working closely with the OIC to eradicate polio. We are collaborating with Qatar and others to create economic opportunity to fight hunger, poverty, and disease. And I especially want to highlight Qatar's initiatives to boost food security and output through hydroponics, innovative agricultural techniques, solar-powered desalinization of water for irrigation. That can prove to be a model for many parts of the world.

We have to continue to expand and strengthen outreach to students. And that is why we have increased funding for educational exchange programs for Muslim students. NASA, our space program, has partnered with the Arab Youth Venture Foundation in Dubai to give Arab and American engineering students the chance to work together on NASA missions. And we encourage higher-education partnerships like those between American universities in the U.S. and Qatar and the UAE, which benefit students and faculty on both sides.

These demonstrate our commitment, but our scale of success depends upon whether we can work closely with other governments, particularly governments willing to invest to build sustainable economies that are based not only on natural resources, but on the energy and ingenuity of the people.

And we want more partnerships with the private sector, universities, foundations, and people-to-people engagement. Our Special Representative for Muslim Communities, Farah Pandith, who leads our engagement with Muslims worldwide, not just in the places you would expect it, but in Europe, as well, is here today. And we are very pleased that President Obama announced our Special Envoy to the OIC, Rashad Hussein, who is also here, who will help drive progress across the range of issues that the OIC addresses.

But beyond any of these programs or partnerships—beyond national security or economic growth—we have to look at the intangible rights endowed to all human beings that provide a strong foundation for broad-based progress and greater understanding. And that is the fifth and final issue that I wish to address. Among them are the right to practice the religion of your choice freely; to have a say in your government and be treated fairly under the law; and the right to equality for women and girls. Like many nations, the United States cherishes these rights, in part because we've had our own challenges

in protecting and advancing them. And we seek to be a partner to people in other countries as they strive to obtain these rights for themselves.

This year, we rejoined the United Nations Human Rights Council. And one of our first acts was to work with Egypt on a Freedom of Expression resolution—a much-needed declaration of principle at a time when that freedom is jeopardized by new efforts to constrain religious practice. Respect for different faiths is essential to the success of pluralistic societies, as is the right to speak freely. So we stand for the vigorous defense of both freedom of religion and expression, and believe that the best way to promote tolerance and respect for all religions is through legal protections against discrimination and hate crimes, along with outreach to minority religious groups, and public education campaigns. That is why we are now working with countries on the Human Rights Council to put forth an affirmative agenda that will help make these principles a reality.

Democratic reform advances these freedoms and many others. And it, too, is a critical element of progress. We share the belief that people can best fulfill their potential when they have a say in the decisions that shape their lives; when they are free to share and access information; speak, criticize, and debate, including on the Internet, which has become a vital tool for activists for democracy and women's rights.

We supported and will continue to support those who build the foundations of democracy: transparent and trustworthy institutions, the rule of law, a vibrant civil society that shines a light on government abuses and those overlooked corners of society where the powerless and disenfranchised can be found.

But none of this can—or should—be imposed from the outside. It must emerge from citizens themselves. And as nations strive to build and strengthen governments that reflect the will of their people, grounded in their own traditions, they can count on the United States to be their partner.

But the will of the people means the will of all the people—men and women. Women's rights are an issue of singular importance to me personally and as Secretary of State.

So many studies have shown that educating women and girls leads to healthier families, improved economic growth, greater prosperity. As the Egyptian poet Hafez Ibrahim said, "A mother is a school. Empower her and you empower a great nation." I could not agree more. And many Muslim-majority countries are demonstrating that. They are proving that women's rights and national progress go hand in hand. And yet, in many countries across the world, we still see the subjugation of women continue. And what do we find? Poverty, poor health, and social unrest.

Even today, in 2010, women are still targets of violence. And all too often, religion might be used to justify it. But there is never a justification for violence against women. It is not cultural. It is criminal. And it is up to religious leaders to take a stand for women, to call for an end to honor killings, child marriages, domestic and gender-based violence. No country can achieve its full potential when half the population is left out or left behind.

Now, the five challenges that I have discussed tonight are critical to our dialogue. But there are certainly others that I am sure will be raised in the questions, and be part of our continuing

discussion. But I came to this forum because I believe that talking and listening to each other are essential to any progress we hope to make. We have to have a meaningful dialogue. The power of conversation has been proven time and time again to me. Wherever I go, whether it's Pakistan, Indonesia, or Iraq, I ask for an open dialogue and I invite honest criticism. And that's exactly what I have gotten.

People ask hard questions about my country's policies, about our intentions, even our basic values. And I listen. And then I respond. Sometimes I correct what I believe are false statements. Sometimes I offer explanations or alternate views. Sometimes I agree with the questioner. And others I disagree passionately. And in almost every instance, I come away convinced that we've reached greater understanding. And that understanding serves as the base for whatever else we expect to do together.

Open and rigorous dialogue helps create the conditions for change. That's what the President did in Cairo. That's what we are doing here in Doha. But on its own, dialogue is not enough. Both President Obama and I believe that our policies must match our principles, and that it is results, not rhetoric, that matter in the end. And that is why I look forward to working with all of you in the weeks and months ahead to build, strengthen, and advance our understanding and our partnerships, on behalf of our countries, on behalf of all people everywhere.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. TALBOTT: Madam Secretary, I am going to put a question to His Excellency, picking up on the last part of your terrific speech, about democracy. But I am going to preface the question that I am going to put to him with a comment to you about the discussions that have taken place here over the last couple of days.

I know not in all contexts are you in favor of preempting. But you have actually preempted a question you might very well have gotten, because a number of the participants here in this forum have welcomed the emphasis that the Administration, the White House, have put on issues like jobs, health, and education in the partnership between the United States and the Islamic world. But they have sensed that the issue of democratic reform has been deemphasized. And I think what you had to say at the end of your speech forcefully pushed back against that impression. And if you want to add anything, by all means do.

But Your Excellency, as I have had a chance, along with Martin, to tell you and the Emir one reason that we are so pleased to have your support for the forum, and we so welcome and appreciate it, the initiative of the Brookings Doha Center here, was because there are a lot of things that could be said here that cannot be said elsewhere in the region.

So, against that backdrop, would you give us your response to what Secretary Clinton said so eloquently about the importance of democracy, and also the extension of all rights to women in this part of the world?

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: Since we are talking about women's rights, we will let the Secretary start.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: That's why he's so good. Let me say this. We do not see any contradiction or conflict between supporting the human rights aspirations of all people, promoting elections, as we do around the world, standing with governments and civil societies that are attempting to forge more democratic forms of governance, and recognizing that there is not one size that fits all, that, as I said in my speech, democratic governance is an institutional and structural decision that is often found to be grounded in the experience and traditions of a country.

Human rights, however, are universal. And we believe that human rights should be respected, regardless of the form of governance. We happen to think that moving towards democracy makes it more likely that human rights will be both strengthened and respected over time. But they are not at all in contradiction; they reinforce each other.

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: Well, I remember, Talbott, when we talked about Brookings Doha three years ago in Washington, me and you and Martin, we said, "What we are looking for, opening another institute? It's -- you are not for that, and we are also not for that." We thought that in this part of the world, we need to have kind of (inaudible) in different aspects, and some also studies and some data. And you know, we have many institutions and many universities in Qatar open. And for us, what is important: we need to understand each other more between your region and our country, between your country and our countries in this region. And one of these things is to open (inaudible) Brookings Institute Saban Center in Doha.

And I think we benefited a lot. This is the seventh time we did this dialogue. And every time it's growing. I remember the time, it was around 60 persons we invited. And we were pushing to bring the 60 persons. And this year we have 300, because we put a limit of 350, and (inaudible), but now we are looking for more quality. We are looking for the dialogue to have a Doha Center of dialogue.

Our dream and His Highness's dream, how to make Doha Center for everybody to meet, to have different opinions, to have different ideas, but to have same values, and to have same principles of solving all the problems by talking to each other. And I think we, as you know, succeeded by last year. We were having 107 conferences in Doha. And I am talking 107 conferences over 150 persons -- we don't count the smaller conferences. And we were glad to have all the people here for the culture. It's good for people to meet each other. And also, it's good to know why we are angry from each other.

You know, the Secretary mentioned that there is (inaudible). Either I agree or I respect what you say, or I don't agree, which is fine. That is the way we have to treat each other. If I (inaudible) for democracy, which you did not ask me, since we are not a complete democracy country, but I will answer the question. I think democracy is needed. Okay, the model is different everywhere, but the principle is the same: human rights, which Madam Secretary mentioned, this is a value that is the same everywhere, our human rights. Democracy is needed. Part of our problem in the region is less democracy.

But also, part of our problem happened because we pushed democracy because one day we dreamed to have democracy in a week in this region. And we remember this period. And also, under democracy, it brings something you don't like or we don't like, we need to cancel democracy. If we need democracy, we have to accept the outcome. Sometimes the outcome you don't like. Sometimes the outcome, we don't like it. So that is also something important we should take it in our consideration, and we let the region mature. And what we are doing now is mature, you know.

People, before, they are not used to kind of these dialogues here, for either you are with me or against me. But now, there is a new era. And I have to say what President Obama and Madam Secretary said today, and from their policy, which we hear, that they respect the other opinion. They would like to have a dialogue. They don't say, "You are with me or against me." And that (inaudible).

And we need to support this policy in the United States. There will be disappointment. There will be ups and downs in the peace process on the security side, and the terrorism side, but we have to fight it. Because these people, they want to stop us from going forward. And we should not let them be as an obstacle.

I am sorry to be so long. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. TALBOTT: If I could pick up on one other theme that Secretary Clinton more than touched on in her remarks about Iran, and put a question to both of you, and then perhaps we can open up to the participants in the forum.

Madam Secretary, you stressed how important it is to have maximum solidarity in various groups, including the P-5. I know that you, in particular, have been working very hard to ensure that that solidarity will be manifest in one of the two tracks that you spoke of, namely the likely necessity to proceed with sanctions.

Would you be good enough to give us a sense of what you see as the prospects for the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, in particular, to remain or become, as the case may be, supportive of what may be necessary there? And if there is anything that you want to add with regard to the role -- presumably the helpful role -- that countries in this region can play, particularly given how intensely involved China is commercially and diplomatically in this region.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, as this forum well knows, you know, President Obama was determined to pursue engagement with Iran. And for whatever combination of reasons, that has not been reciprocated. The President has personally reached out, he has sent messages through others. But there has not been a response that the Iranian leadership was really interested or willing to engage. We do not know and cannot divine the reasons for that. But the fact is that the President has said that he remains open to engagement. But engagement has to be a two-way street. It cannot be just done in a room, talking to yourself.

At the same time, the President was realistic enough to recognize that there had to be a second track, the so-called dual track. Because part of the goal -- not the only goal, but part of the goal -- that we

were pursuing was to try to influence the Iranian decision regarding whether or not to pursue a nuclear weapon. And, as I said in my speech, you know, the evidence is accumulating that that's exactly what they are trying to do, which is deeply concerning, because it doesn't directly threaten the United States, but it directly threatens a lot of our friends, allies, and partners here in this region and beyond. It also serves as an excuse or a motivator for other countries pursuing their own nuclear weapons program, which creates a level of instability that is not particularly useful.

So, having said that, we have been quite grateful for the strong international support. On several critical issues both Russia and China were with us: in the IAEA; with the criticism that rightly flows to Iran, because of its secret facility at Qom; in supporting our outreach on the Tehran research reactor, and the like. Russia, both publicly and privately, has said that it can and will support sanctions. We are working on the language and trying to make sure that they are as effective and targeted as we can make them.

China has raised questions. It has not in any way rejected or prevented the work that is going forward as we speak. And I think, for China, it comes down to some very tough questions. China has a lot of investment in this region, in Iran and other countries. China gets a healthy percentage of its oil from Iran. And it has to ask itself if there is a trade-off between going along with the status quo, which could lead to greater instability, which could actually end up interfering with their oil supply, or standing with the international community to try to change Iran's strategic calculus.

And I think that the Chinese are very thoughtful. They are looking at that closely. But I think that the weight is maybe beginning to move toward not wanting to either be isolated or inadvertently contributing to instability that would undermine their economic interests. And yet it is -- we have a ways to go to get the language of the resolution, to try to talk to a number of countries, including some represented here, about the way forward.

MR. TALBOTT: Thank you. Your Excellency, since the problem that the Secretary has identified and the solution that she and the U.S. Government are pursuing matters so much to the security of your region -- at least because of the proximity of Iran, would you give us your perspective on the issue, both in terms of Iran itself, and what it would mean if it had nuclear weaponry, and the danger that the Secretary just alluded to, that if Iran gets the bomb, others in this neighborhood will too?

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: Let me first start with the official answer the Iranian -- official answer that they are not seeking to have a bomb, nuclear bomb. Although I said this, but I have to say that if there is a nuclear race in the region, it will be an unhealthy race for all of us.

We have a good relation with Iran, as Qatar. And we have continuous dialogue with the Iranians. And they explain to us that their intention is to use these facilities for their peaceful reactors for electricity and medical use. The other side, if we talk about the nuclear agents, sometimes they told us that they have some suspicions about this program.

I think the best thing for this problem is a direct dialogue between the United States and Iran on this. And I believe -- and we talked about this today -- dialogue through messenger is not good. Also, I know United States makes a big decision by joining the P-5+1, and that is a very important decision.

And we hear today the Secretary say that they are willing to talk to the Iranians, and they send many messages to Iran. And I believe we cannot talk through messenger, in my opinion. I think this problem has to be talking with the Iranians directly, and try to see if we have a deal or we don't have a deal in this.

Of course, if there is nuclear race in the region, it is disturbing for us. There is no doubt about it. But this region has a lot of turbulence. And as you know what happened in Somalia and Yemen and Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iraq, and the conflicts between the Israeli and the Palestinians, all these conflicts, plus the problem with Iran, it will be too much to handle in this region. This is a very small, tiny region. We are not talking about a big space, you know.

And also, this place is very important for the international economy. The international economy is very important. As you know, most of the oil of the world goes through (inaudible), and that also -- we have to take it in consideration.

So, for us, as a small country, stability and peace is very important. And for that always we push both sides to try to find a peaceful solution, meaningful solution to solve this problem.

MR. TALBOTT: Madam Secretary, before I turn to the group gathered here, is there anything you would like to say in response to what His Excellency just said?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, we share His Excellency's concern about what will happen in the region. But we think that it is time for Iran to be held to account for its activities, which do already -- and can continue to have -- destabilizing effects. And what we want is to look for a way to change Iran's calculations.

But I fear that the rise of influence and power by the Revolutionary Guard -- which is really tragic, because that is not in keeping with what the Iranian people had hoped for, and thought they were getting in their democratic system -- poses a very direct threat to everyone. And I would like to figure out a way to handle it in as peaceful an approach possible. And I certainly welcome any meaningful engagement, but we don't want to be engaging while they are building their bombs.

And, therefore, we think the time has come for the world community to take a position which perhaps will penetrate into all of the decision-making arenas that exist now within Iran, and cause some reconsideration not of their peaceful program, which I know the Iranian people support and have every right to have, but of their nuclear weapons military program.

MR. TALBOTT: Thank you. We have time for just a couple of questions. And I am going to begin with an apology, which is I am semi-blinded by the lights. But I will do the best I can to call on participants. But I also want to make an exhortation, which is please keep the question as succinct as possible.

I am not -- yes. Right. I'm sorry. Please. Sorry.

QUESTION: Well, thank you.

MR. TALBOTT: Blind as a bat up here.

QUESTION: I am delighted that the U.S. and the Egyptian Government have reached an agreement on the declaration for freedom of expression. I want to tell you we have freedom of expression in Egypt. The question is freedom of the expression, that is what is lacking. And I think --

(Applause.)

QUESTION: -- as a man on the run, because he dared to speak his mind, and now he is (inaudible) in court in Egypt. Six cases are pending against him. And I may say, speaking also for my colleague, Amar Ibrahim, who has the same last name, and who was in prison at the same time I was in prison, both of us were in prison for the same freedom of expression that we practice but, as I said, freedom of the expression that is lacking.

So, what is the U.S. stand on the rise of (inaudible) in the Muslim world, this is a U.S.-Muslim world forum. And since you have mentioned Egypt, and go to Egypt, and (inaudible) as well, and from my colleague, who asked me to -- if I -- whoever gets recognized will speak on each other's behalf, we have the same last name -- Amar Ibrahim and Tad Ibrahim, and we are both victims of our own government.

So I would like you to please comment on that, and (inaudible) speak for both of us with the Malaysian Government and with the Egyptian Government. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: And I appreciate the position that both of you have taken on behalf of human rights, political rights, civil society, democracy, the pantheon of rights that we do support. And we raise that at every session that we have. And, obviously, as a friend to both of your countries, we hope that there will be a greater awareness of the importance of supporting these rights within society.

We don't have any magic wands that we can wave, but we will continue to provide financial support to civil society activists, to human rights activists. We will continue to fund education and dialogue programs. We will continue to state, as we have on numerous occasions, that we don't think it's in any country's interest to stifle the free expression of its people. And we can only hope that, both because of the courage of the people inside, like yourself, and your brother Ibrahim, from Malaysia, that there will be more fertile soil for these changes to take root.

It is a difficult balancing act for the United States, because we do want to encourage change from within, which we think is the most lasting change. When we walk away from a country, when we sanction a country, when we give up on a country, it's rare that we see change.

So, all during the Cold War, for example, where the old Soviet Union had missiles pointed at us, and we had missiles pointed at them, we never stopped talking to them, but we also never stopped supporting human rights dissidents, the whole panoply of democratizing influences. And that is what we are going to continue to do in countries around the world.

MR. TALBOTT: I think I saw Muslan L'Hani's hand go up. And, if I'm not mistaken, Cardinal McCarrick's. So perhaps in that order.

QUESTION: Just wanted to ask you that -- the women in the Muslim-Islamic world have a lot of potential. And since it's very close to your heart, what is it that, in your program, that you have in the recent days -- I know in Pakistan what you've done. And I would just like to have an opinion on the Muslim women in this part of the world.

SECRETARY CLINTON: First, thank you for that question, because it is very close to my heart. We are running a lot of programs to support women, in particular, their education, their health care, jobs training, other efforts to give women the opportunities that they are seeking. I will be visiting a women's college in Jeddah on Tuesday. Tomorrow I will be meeting with a group of young students from Doha. And I think that a lot of the emphasis that we are placing on education for girls and women is critically important to the kind of advance that you are referencing.

Some of the most remarkable women I have ever met come from the Muslim world. And they were women who had a father or a husband who encouraged them to fulfill their own God-given potential. I think that is what we should want for all girls and women, no matter who their family is, or where they live in today's world. It's not only, in my view, the right thing to do, but it's the smart thing. There is so much potential in half the population. So any country which does not help to unleash that potential cannot possibly progress to the extent that it would, otherwise. So, it is a plea that it not only be done because it's right, but be done because it's smart.

MR. TALBOTT: Your Excellency, obviously I would invite you to come in at any point on any of these issues that you wish to.

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: No, I just have a problem, because my friend, when he talks, he would put Qatar in problem now. They will not blame United States for (inaudible) Ibrahim. Now I will receive another problem. And you know, I have enough problem with your government.

(Applause.)

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: So I am now -- I am thinking now I want to swear to them that I did not ask you all -- I did not (inaudible) --

(Laughter.)

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: You know, the American could handle this. But for me, you know, I am --

(Laughter.)

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: So I am sorry. I don't know what to do now.

SECRETARY CLINTON: We will take responsibility.

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: Fine, fine.

MR. TALBOTT: Having heard from His Excellency, let's hear from His Eminence, Cardinal McCarrick.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. If I may, before I ask the question, Madam Secretary, I want to speak on behalf of my brother and sister religious leaders. I -- before I ask the question, I want to associate with the very gracious remarks of our distinguished chairman, Strobe Talbott, when he sent his regards to President Clinton, by saying that we religious leaders also send our prayers that the Lord may grant the President many, many -- a perfect recovery, and many, many continued happy, healthy, and effective years of service.

Madam Secretary, my colleagues are standing to express their solidarity with the question that I am about to ask. During this conference, the religious leaders have been addressing the moral imperative of bringing peace to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, we have especially been concerned about the critical issue of the suffering of the people of Gaza.

Would you talk to the question of how the United States can become more proactive in resolving this tremendous humanitarian crisis? Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much, Cardinal, and thank you all for standing to show your support, as leaders in the faith community.

As I said in my remarks, the humanitarian suffering in Gaza is very deeply concerning. And we have made a number of statements and provided a lot of money through the Palestinian Authority to try to alleviate the suffering. We have pushed the Israelis to end the -- to increase the trickle to a flood of goods into Gaza. And I hope that we are going to see some progress. In meeting with the Emir and His Excellency, the Prime Minister, as well as earlier with Prime Minister Erdogan, there are so many countries standing ready to help the people of Gaza rebuild. And we just want the chance to be able to do that.

I do think, though, it is important to recognize that the comprehensive peace that we seek between the Israelis and the Palestinians is the best answer to everything. It is what will hopefully resolve the conflict and create opportunities for people to pursue their own dreams and ambitions. And to do that, we need partners who are committed to renouncing violence, to ending, in this case, rocket attacks into Israel territory.

We could do so much, and the Palestinian people are so immensely talented at living under the most difficult circumstances. They have such an enormous untapped potential, and we want to try to help unleash that. But, in order to do so, there has to be both sides of the equation satisfied: the security for the Israelis; ending the bomb and rocket fire, and all the rest of it; and respect and recognition for the needs of the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

That is what I am committed to in the short term. We hope to alleviate the suffering. But in the medium term, we want to see the people of Gaza empowered to make decisions for themselves. And

that means without interference or without objection from any political entity, but instead, on their own, choosing their own path.

Remember, violence preceded the suffering in Gaza with a violence -- as the Palestinian Authority uses it -- a violent coups d'état, instead of working in the elected parliament that represented both Hamas and Fatah and other minor parties. There was a takeover of Gaza, and then it was used as a launching pad. And it's just historically so painful.

And yet, if we are looking backward in our rearview mirror, we can't go forward. So, let's try to alleviate the suffering in Gaza, let's try to get comprehensive peace negotiations underway. Let's try to get them resolved. Let's stand by the Palestinians and the Israelis, as they do this hard work, and try to, once and for all, put this truly behind us.

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL THANI: Yes. First of all, I thank the Christian community and -- for this question. It is a very important question. It touches all our hearts. I have no doubts the good intention of the President Obama and Secretary Clinton about their intention about Gaza. And I remember when we talked about it in Washington, I know that she is not accepting seizing the people and leaving them like this.

This is a very important problem for all of us, to see 1.5 million at siege. Yes, there is problem. Maybe we agree, maybe we don't agree how the problem started. But that's not the question now. The question now is how we build the houses for these people. We build their schools, we build their hospitals. We send them their needs, medical needs, food needs. I think this is a very important thing.

If we don't do this, we build more hate against us, against the United States, against our allies in Europe. And I think the only way -- okay. The problem cannot be solved today between Hamas and Fatah. That is another problem. But also, the policy which may be done by some of our regional brothers or friends, or Israel, which says let us show the good example of how the West Bank live in prosperity and Gaza (inaudible), so we can change the mood of the people. The mood of the people cannot be changed under pressure. The mood of the people can be changed (inaudible) how we can treat them well as a human being.

We were talking about the human rights. Human rights. Now they are living more than one year without home, a lot of families with children, with women, old and young. We should not accept this by all means, even if we have differences. But I am sure all the world -- of course, United States has the means to move in this aspect, and let us try to diffuse some of the hate, and build the houses, build the schools, build the hospitals. And later we talk about what mistakes been done, who did this, who did that. This is another question. Of course we might not agree with their opinion, how they would like to solve the problem between the Israelis and themselves.

We in Qatar feel the only way -- and this is long time ago, and we have been criticized for this because for a long time we have an office here, Israeli office here, and our also consulate in Gaza. And for a long time we have been concerned about this relation. But we believe in peace. We believe that the only way to solve this problem, to talk to the Israelis, and they talk to us as Arabs, and we try to solve it according to the Security Council resolution, according to your speech, Madam Secretary, which you say about (inaudible) with some swap. Both sides have to accept the swap.

But we cannot put in condition that will not let these people eat or live as we live, as a human being, until this problem is solved. Because that will make them more stubborn, and we will build more hate for no reason. So I -- my advice, my sincere advice, all of us have to work to let these people live like us. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. TALBOTT: We have gone a bit over the scheduled time, and to very, very good effect. Before bringing the session to a close, Madam Secretary, I want to underscore the resonance that I am sure, first of all, many passages in your remarks had tonight. But one in particular, and it had to do with the point that you made about the dilemma that our colleagues in the U.S. Government face as they try to balance security, particularly airplanes and airports, with respect for the dignity of our visitors, and fairness.

I have only been in Doha for a couple of days. I have had about 12 conversations with people who you see in front of you who have experienced the downside of that dilemma. And I think that the sensitivity that you expressed, both to the problem, but also the way in which you explained the reason why the problem comes about, will help instill in them -- I hope it will instill in them -- the patience that you are asking for.

Because, in due course, it would be great to have one of these forums back in Washington, D.C. And I hope everybody will have an easy time getting there, including because of the weather.

But, in any event, do you want to say something on this?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, look. There are so many concerns that we can't even get to. But I think that, on this particular issue, we are going to do everything we can to re-evaluate it and to consider it. And we ask the cooperation from everyone else, particularly around the departure of passengers from any one of your countries. Because you never know who might be on the plane. It might be someone in your family or someone in my family. And that is our only goal here, is to maintain the safety and security of airline travel. But we recognize, as I said, that that causes some very unfortunate feelings among many people. So I am not surprised you have heard a lot about it.

And finally, just let me say, look, we believe that we actually have so much more in common than what separates us. The real challenge is how we work together to solve these common problems that we face, whether it's Gaza or airline security or Iran. But that is what we're committed to try to do. And as His Excellency, the Prime Minister said, we are not always going to agree. We are not always going to disagree. We ought to narrow the areas of disagreement, enhance the areas of agreement, and look for ways to try to solve problems in between. And that's what we are committed to doing.

MR. TALBOTT: Martin, I think that is a pretty good executive summary for the whole session. And we thank you for summing it up so well.

I hope all of you will join me in thanking Sheikh Hamad and Secretary Clinton -- in his case, for coming to be with us twice in 24 hours, and in your case, Madam Secretary, for flying 7,000 miles to be with us. Please join me in thanking them both.

(Applause.)

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