

Opening Remarks by Secretary of State-Designate Dr. Condoleezza Rice

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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Thank you Chairman Lugar, Senator Biden, and Members of the Committee. And let me also thank Senator Dianne Feinstein who, as a fellow Californian, I have long admired as a leader on behalf of our state and our nation.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, it is an honor to be nominated to lead the State Department at this critical time - a time of challenge and hope and opportunity for America, and for the entire world.

September 11, 2001 was a defining moment for our nation and the world. Under the vision and leadership of President Bush, our nation has risen to meet the challenges of our time: fighting tyranny and terror, and securing the blessings of freedom and prosperity for a new generation. The work that America and our allies have undertaken, and the sacrifices we have made, have been difficult -- and necessary -- and right. Now is the time to build on these achievements -- to make the world safer, and to make the world more free. We must use American diplomacy to help create a balance of power in the world that favors freedom. And the time for diplomacy is now.

I am humbled by President Bush's confidence in me to undertake the great work of leading American diplomacy at such a moment in history. If confirmed, I will work with members of Congress, from both sides of the aisle, to build a strong bipartisan consensus behind America's foreign policy. I will seek to strengthen our alliances, to support our friends, and to make the world safer, and better. I will enlist the great talents of the men and women of the State Department, the Foreign and Civil Services and our Foreign Service Nationals. And if I am confirmed, I will be especially honored to succeed a man I so admire -- my friend and mentor, Colin Powell.

Four years ago, Secretary Powell addressed this committee for the same purpose I do now. Then as now, it was the same week that America celebrates the life and legacy of Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. It is a time to reflect on the legacy of that great man, on the sacrifices he made, on the courage of the people he led, and on the progress our nation has made in the decades since. I am especially indebted to those who fought and sacrificed in the Civil Rights movement so that I could be here today.

For me, this is a time to remember other heroes as well. I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama -- the old Birmingham of Bull Connor, church bombings, and voter intimidation -- the Birmingham where Dr. King was thrown in jail for demonstrating without a permit. Yet there was another Birmingham, the city where my parents -- John and Angelena Rice -- and their friends built a thriving community in the midst of the most terrible segregation in the country. It would have been so easy for them to give in to despair, and to send that message of hopelessness to their children. But they refused to allow the limits and injustices of their time to limit our horizons. My friends and I were raised to believe that we could do or become anything -- that the only limits to our aspirations came from within. We were taught not to listen to those who said to us, "No, you can't."

The story of Birmingham's parents and teachers and children is a story of the triumph of universal values over adversity. And those values -- a belief in democracy, and liberty, and the dignity of every life, and the rights of every individual -- unite Americans of all backgrounds, all faiths, and all colors. They provide us a common cause in all times, a rallying point in difficult times, and a source of hope to men and women across the globe who cherish freedom and work to advance freedom's cause. And in these extraordinary times, it is the duty of all of us -- legislators, diplomats, civil servants, and citizens -- to uphold and advance the values that are the core of the American identity, and that have lifted the lives of millions around the world.

One of history's clearest lessons is that America is safer, and the world is more secure, whenever and wherever freedom prevails. It is neither an accident nor a coincidence that the greatest threats of the last century emerged from totalitarian movements. Fascism and Communism differed in many ways, but they shared an implacable hatred of freedom, a fanatical assurance that their way was the only way, and a supreme confidence that history was on their side.

At certain moments, it almost seemed to be so. During the first half of the 20th century much of the democratic and economic progress of earlier decades looked to be swept away by the march of ruthless ideologies armed with terrible military and technological power. Even after the allied victory in World War Two, many feared that Europe, and perhaps the world, would be forced to permanently endure half enslaved and half free. The cause of freedom suffered a series of major strategic setbacks: Communism imposed in Eastern Europe -- Soviet power dominant in East Germany -- the coup in Czechoslovakia -- the victory of the Chinese Communists -- the Soviet nuclear test five years before we predicted -- to name just a few. In those early years, the prospect of a united democratic Germany and a democratic Japan seemed far-fetched.

Yet America and our allies were blessed with visionary leaders who did not lose their way. They created the great NATO alliance to contain and eventually erode Soviet power. They helped to establish the United Nations and created the international legal framework for this and other institutions that have served the world well for more than 50 years. They provided billions in aid to rebuild Europe and much of Asia. They built an international economic system based on free trade and free markets to spread prosperity

to every corner of the globe. And they confronted the ideology and propaganda of our enemies with a message of hope, and with the truth. And in the end - though the end was long in coming - their vision prevailed.

The challenges we face today are no less daunting. America and the free world are once again engaged in a long-term struggle against an ideology of tyranny and terror, and against hatred and hopelessness. And we must confront these challenges with the same vision, courage and boldness of thought demonstrated by our post-World War Two leaders.

In these momentous times, American diplomacy has three great tasks. First, we will unite the community of democracies in building an international system that is based on our shared values and the rule of law. Second, we will strengthen the community of democracies to fight the threats to our common security and alleviate the hopelessness that feeds terror. And third, we will spread freedom and democracy throughout the globe. That is the mission that President Bush has set for America in the world -- and the great mission of American diplomacy today.

Let me address each of the three tasks I just mentioned. Every nation that benefits from living on the right side of the freedom divide has an obligation to share freedom's blessings. Our first challenge, then, is to inspire the American people, and the people of all free nations, to unite in common cause to solve common problems. NATO -- and the European Union -- and our democratic allies in East Asia and around the world will be our strongest partners in this vital work. The United States will also continue to work to support and uphold the system of international rules and treaties that allow us to take advantage of our freedom, to build our economies, and to keep us safe and secure.

We must remain united in insisting that Iran and North Korea abandon their nuclear weapons ambitions, and choose instead the path of peace. New forums that emerge from the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative offer the ideal venues to encourage economic, social and democratic reform in the Islamic world. Implementing the Doha Development Agenda and reducing trade barriers will create jobs and reduce poverty in dozens of nations. And by standing with the free peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan, we will continue to bring hope to millions, and democracy to a part of the world where it is sorely lacking.

As President Bush said in our National Security Strategy, America "is guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations." If I am confirmed, that core conviction will guide my actions. Yet when judging a course of action, I will never forget that the true measure of its worth is whether it is effective.

Our second great task is to strengthen the community of democracies, so that all free nations are equal to the work before us. Free peoples everywhere are heartened by the success of democracy around the globe. Together, we must build on that success.

We face many challenges. In some parts of the world, an extremist few threaten the very existence of political liberty. Disease and poverty have the potential to destabilize whole nations and regions. Corruption can sap the foundations of democracy. And some elected leaders have taken illiberal steps that, if not corrected, could undermine hard-won democratic progress.

We must do all we can to ensure that nations which make the hard choices and do the hard work to join the free world deliver on the high hopes of their citizens for a better life. From the Philippines to Colombia to the nations of Africa, we are strengthening counterterrorism cooperation with nations that have the will to fight terror, but need help with the means. We are spending billions to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases, to alleviate suffering for millions and help end public health crises. America has always been generous in helping countries recover from natural disasters -- and today we are providing money and personnel to ease the suffering of millions afflicted by the tsunami, and to help nations rebuild their infrastructure. We are joining with developing nations to fight corruption, instill the rule of law, and create a culture of transparency. In much of Africa and Latin America, we face the twin challenges of helping to bolster democratic ideals and institutions, and alleviating poverty. We will work with reformers in those regions who are committed to increasing opportunity for their peoples. And we will insist that leaders who are elected democratically have an obligation to govern democratically.

Our third great task is to spread democracy and freedom throughout the world. I spoke earlier of the grave setbacks to democracy in the first half of the 20th century. The second half of the century saw an advance of democracy that was far more dramatic. In the last quarter of that century, the number of democracies in the world tripled. And in the last six months of this new century alone, we have witnessed the peaceful, democratic transfer of power in Malaysia -- a majority Muslim nation -- and in Indonesia -- the country with the world's largest Muslim population. We have seen men and women wait in line for hours to vote in Afghanistan's first ever free and fair presidential election. We -- and I know you Mr. Chairman -- were heartened by the refusal of the people of Ukraine to accept a flawed election, and their insistence that their democratic will be honored. We have watched as the people of the Palestinian Territories turned out to vote in an orderly and fair election. And soon the people of Iraq will exercise their right to choose their leaders, and set the course of their nation's future. No less than were the last decades of the 20th century, the first decades of this new century can be an era of liberty. And we in America must do everything we can to make it so.

To be sure, in our world there remain outposts of tyranny -- and America stands with oppressed people on every continent -- in Cuba, and Burma, and North Korea, and Iran, and Belarus, and Zimbabwe. The world should apply what Natan Sharansky calls the "town square test": if a person cannot walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment, or physical harm, then that person is living in a fear society, not a free society. We cannot rest until every person living in a "fear society" has finally won their freedom.

In the Middle East, President Bush has broken with six decades of excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the hope of purchasing stability at the price of liberty. The stakes could not be higher. As long as the broader Middle East remains a region of tyranny and despair and anger, it will produce extremists and movements that threaten the safety of Americans and our friends.

But there are hopeful signs that freedom is on the march. Afghanistan and Iraq are struggling to put dark and terrible pasts behind them and are choosing the path of progress. Just months ago, Afghanistan held a free and fair election, and chose a president who is committed to the success of democracy and to the fight against terror. In Iraq, the people will soon take the next step in their journey toward full, genuine democracy. All Iraqis, whatever their faith or ethnicity - from Shias to Sunnis to Kurds -- must build a common future together. The election later this month will be an important first step as the people of Iraq prepare to draft a constitution and hold the next round of elections -- elections that will create a permanent government.

The success of freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq will give strength and hope to reformers throughout the region, and accelerate the pace of reforms already underway. From Morocco to Jordan to Bahrain, we are seeing elections and new protections for women and minorities, and the beginnings of political pluralism. Political, civil, and business leaders have issued stirring calls for political, economic and social change. Increasingly, the people are speaking, and their message is clear: the future of the region is to live in liberty.

And the establishment of a Palestinian democracy will help to bring an end to the conflict in the Holy Land. Much has changed since June 24, 2002, when President Bush outlined a new approach for America in the quest for peace in the Middle East, and spoke the truth about what will be required to end this conflict. Now we have reached a moment of opportunity -- and we must seize it. We take great encouragement from the elections just held for a new Palestinian leader. And Senators Biden and Sununu, I want to thank you for representing the United States at these historic elections. America seeks justice and dignity and a viable, independent, and democratic state for the Palestinian people. We seek security and peace for the State of Israel. Israel must do its part to improve the conditions under which Palestinians live and seek to build a better future. Arab states must join to help -- and deny any help or solace to those who take the path of violence. I look forward to personally working with the Palestinian and Israeli leaders, and bringing American diplomacy to bear on this difficult but crucial issue. Peace can only come if all parties choose to do the difficult work, and choose to meet their responsibilities. And the time to choose peace is now.

Building a world of hope, prosperity and peace is difficult. As we move forward, America's relations with the world's global powers will be critical. In Russia, we see that the path to democracy is uneven and that its success is not yet assured. Yet recent history shows that we can work closely with Russia on common problems. And as we do so, we will continue to press the case for democracy, and we will continue to make clear that the protection of democracy in Russia is vital to the future of U.S.-Russia relations.

In Asia, we have moved beyond the false assumption that it is impossible to have good relations with all of Asia's powers. Our Asian alliances have never been stronger -- and we will use that strength to help secure the peace and prosperity of the region. Japan, South Korea, and Australia are key partners in our efforts to deter common threats and spur economic growth. We are building a candid, cooperative and constructive relationship with China that embraces our common interests but still recognizes our considerable differences about values. The United States is cooperating with India, the world's largest democracy, across a range of economic and security issues. This, even as we embrace Pakistan as a vital ally in the war on terror, and a state in transition toward a more moderate and democratic future. In our own neighborhood, we are cooperating closely with Canada and Mexico, and working to realize the vision of a fully democratic hemisphere, bound by common values and free trade.

We also must realize that America and all free nations are facing a generational struggle against a new and deadly ideology of hatred that we cannot ignore. We need to do much more to confront hateful propaganda, dispel dangerous myths, and get out the truth. We will increase our exchanges with the rest of the world. And Americans should make a serious effort to understand other cultures and learn foreign languages. Our interaction with the rest of the world must be a conversation, not a monologue. And America must remain open to visitors and workers and students from around the world, without compromising our security standards. If our public diplomacy efforts are to succeed, we cannot close ourselves off from the world. And if I am confirmed, public diplomacy will be a top priority for me and for the professionals I lead.

In all that lies ahead, the primary instrument of American diplomacy will be the Department of State, and the men and women of its Foreign and Civil Services and Foreign Service Nationals. The time for diplomacy is now -- and the President and I will expect great things from America's diplomatic corps. We know from experience how hard they work, the risks they and their families take, and the hardships they endure. We will be asking even more of them, in the service of their country, and of a great cause. They will need to develop new skills, and rise to new challenges. This time of global transformation calls for transformational diplomacy. More than ever, America's diplomats will need to be active in spreading democracy, fighting terror, reducing poverty, and doing our part to protect the American homeland. I will personally work to ensure that America's diplomats have all the tools they need to do their jobs -- from training to budgets to mentoring to embassy security. I also intend to strengthen the recruitment of new personnel, because American diplomacy needs to constantly hire and develop top talent. And I will seek to further diversify the State Department's workforce. This is not just a good cause; it is a necessity. A great strength of our country is our diversity. And the signal sent to the rest of the world when America is represented abroad by people of all cultures, races, and religions is an unsurpassed statement about who we are and what our values mean in practice.

Let me close with a personal recollection. I was in government in Washington in 1989 to 1991. I was the Soviet specialist in the White House at the end of the Cold War. I was lucky to be there, and I knew it. I got to participate in the liberation of Eastern Europe. I

got to participate in the unification of Germany and to see the Soviet Union collapse. It was a heady time for us all. But, when I look back, I know that we were merely harvesting the good decisions that had been made in 1947, in 1948, and in 1949, when Truman and Acheson and Vandenberg and Kennan and so many wise and farsighted statesmen -- in the Executive and Legislative branches - recognized that we were not in a limited engagement with communism, we were in the defining struggle of our times.

Democrats and Republicans united around a vision and policies that won the Cold War. The road was not always smooth, but the basic unity of purpose and values was there -- and that unity was essential to our eventual success. No President, and no Secretary of State, could have effectively protected American interests in such momentous times without strong support from the Congress, and from this Committee. And the same is true today. Our task, and our duty is to unite around a vision and policies that will spread freedom and prosperity around the globe. I have worked directly with many of you. And in this time of great challenge and opportunity, America's co-equal branches of government must work together to advance freedom and prosperity.

In the preface to his memoirs, published in 1969, Dean Acheson wrote of the post-war period that "those who acted in this drama did not know, nor do any of us yet know, the end." Senators, now we know -- and many of us here bore witness to that end. The end was a victory for freedom, the liberation of half a continent, the passing of a despotic empire -- and vindication for the wise and brave decisions made at the beginning. It is my greatest hope -- and my deepest conviction -- that the struggle we face today will some day end in a similar triumph of the human spirit. And working together, we can make it so.

Thank you.

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