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Promoting Democracy Through Diplomacy

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It is a particular honor and pleasure for me to be here today, for I am representing a President and a Secretary of State who have made the democracy agenda the defining theme of our nation's role in the world. Promoting freedom has been a hallmark of this Administration's foreign policy. We know now more than ever that the way a government treats its own people bears directly on how it acts in the international arena. We know that the best defense of our own borders comes from the growth of freedom abroad.

The President's second inaugural address, particularly his declaration that "it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world," represents a deepening and reaffirmation of a steadfast policy. As the President proclaimed in his September 20, 2001 address to Congress, "The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us." This was reaffirmed in the National Security Strategy issued on September 17, 2002, which declared one pillar of our foreign policy to be "extend[ing] the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent," because "freedom is the non-negotiable demand of human dignity; the birthright of every person -- in every civilization." The President expanded on these principles in his November 6, 2003 address to the National Endowment for Democracy. "The advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country...And we believe that freedom -- the freedom we prize -- is not for us alone, it is the right and the capacity of all mankind."

In her first months in office, Secretary Rice has already traveled to Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. On each continent, in each capital, she has made promotion of freedom and democratic institutions central to her agenda. In public speeches and private meetings, she has made clear our government's firm commitment to this cause and the need to pursue "transformational diplomacy." We do not simply accept the world as it is today. Accordingly, the Secretary has called on each of us to be activists, to have a vision of a free world, and to partner with those who themselves are

trying to foster democratic change.

I know that many in Congress share these pro-democracy sentiments. In appearing before this committee, I am in the company of some treasured friends and longtime colleagues in the common cause of freedom. Because of your past efforts, many former prisoners of conscience are free, former dissidents now help lead democratic governments, religious believers worship openly, and entire nations live in freedom and at peace with their neighbors. I commend you for this, and I count myself privileged to have partnered with many of you in these endeavors.

Yet, I know we also share the conviction that as long as injustice, oppression, and tyranny continue as a blight on the globe, our work is not done. Our striving will not flag. And that is in part why we are here together today -- for me to share with you the Administration's ongoing and expanding efforts to advance the cause of freedom, and for us to consider together how we might continue to strengthen our partnership to pursue this calling. Let me assure you that this Administration knows that our freedom agenda will be even stronger with the active partnership with Congress. The ADVANCE Democracy Act is just the latest tangible demonstration of Congress' commitment to this cause.

On behalf of the Department of State and the Bush Administration, I want to commend Rep. Wolf, Rep. Lantos, Chairman Hyde, the HIRC Members, and others in Congress who have labored over this bill. We appreciate the tremendous amounts of thought, energy, and innovation that have gone into it thus far. And we appreciate your interest in working with the Administration to pursue such ideas.

We believe the expansion of ordered liberty to be the most effective long-term deterrent to the security threats posed by religious extremism, instability, tyranny, and terrorism. Besides being in our national interest, promoting human rights and democratic institutions is also consistent with our national ideals and international agreements. The American tradition and universal human rights standards both recognize the intrinsic and inalienable dignity of the human person, and the rights and freedoms that stem from that dignity. It is the responsibility of governments to respect and secure those rights for their citizens. And it is the responsibility of democracies to promote the protection of these rights and freedoms wherever they may be threatened or violated.

We recognize the great challenge, particularly in light of global problems. We believe promoting democracy is the most realistic policy possible, because it is the system of government most consistent with human nature. Democratic institutions give restraint to humanity's base instincts, and give freedom to humanity's noblest inclinations. Even as we witness great advances in human freedom, such as the crumbling of the Iron Curtain and the demise of Soviet communism a decade and a half ago, we know that history has not come to an end, that new challenges and threats always arise. As Secretary Rice said just last week to the Community of Democracies, "we must usher in an era of democracy that thinks of tyranny as we think of slavery today: a moral abomination that could not withstand the natural desire of every human being for a life of liberty and dignity."

We see that freedom's call is resonating with more and more people around the world. Even a cursory glance at the global headlines of the past two years shows that these principles have moved from dream to reality for many citizens. From Georgia to Ukraine to Iraq to Lebanon to Afghanistan, the cynicism of skeptics and the oppression of autocrats have been answered by peaceful protests, ballot boxes, and constitution drafts. Even those nations that are furthest from democracy perversely honor it in the breach -- I think here of the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea," as just one vivid example. It is no accident that Kim Jong Il's regime seeks to legitimate its barbaric rule by claiming to be "democratic." Meanwhile, the dream of democracy persists for many citizens who are yet denied it. We say to those

who yearn for their freedom in Iran, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Belarus, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Burma, Turkmenistan, Zimbabwe, Sudan, North Korea, and elsewhere, that hope and history are on your side. We will not forget you, and we will support you in your struggle. Just last week, at the Community of Democracies Ministerial in Santiago, Chile, I met with democracy activists from some of these countries to hear their concerns and support them in their efforts.

So though we are optimistic about the human yearning for liberty, we are realistic about the challenges and obstacles. Freedom's appeal is resilient, yet freedom itself can be fragile.

In fact, the Department of State remains fully committed to this endeavor. We see it as the calling of our time. As Secretary Rice has said, "In all that lies ahead, our nation will continue to clarify for other nations the moral choice between oppression and freedom, and we will make it clear that ultimately success in our relations depends on the treatment of their own people." Furthermore, the Secretary has observed that "the survival of liberty in our land is dependent on the growth of liberty in other lands." This is why she has tasked the State Department with reviewing our organizational structure and resources to ensure that we are equipped to carry out this mandate effectively.

Today, I want to share with you an overview of what the State Department is doing to put the President's priorities into practice, and explore how we can deepen our partnership in this shared goal. The President's vision is being implemented with bold new programs and initiatives. No less important, his agenda is also being carried out through the countless daily acts of faithful service performed by thousands of State Department staff around the globe. In particular, the Secretary has directed our Ambassadors to give priority to democracy promotion, to make it central to their mission strategies and their daily diplomatic activities.

Our comprehensive democracy strategy, constantly being adapted even as it is being carried out, includes technical assistance, reporting and advocacy, public and private diplomacy, educational and cultural exchanges, and punitive measures. It is bilateral and multilateral. It is willing to consider and use a wide array of means to achieve a common end: the advance of democratic institutions, the affirmation of human dignity, and the ultimate end of tyranny around the globe.

From the beginning of the Administration, we have participated in the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) on Democracy Promotion convened by the National Security Council. This PCC meets periodically to coordinate our government's interagency efforts to promote democracy and human rights, and to ensure that the overall strategy of President's agenda is being advanced.

Our security concerns and the indigenous drive for freedom and reform have focused much of our efforts on the broader Middle East and North Africa. The Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative built on a powerful vision of progress and reform in the region. Elections in Afghanistan, Palestinian territories, and Iraq, and most recently, events in Lebanon have shown this vision is shared by millions of people in the region.

BMENA initiative's strength is in engaging the region's government, civil society, and business leaders and bringing them together to advance common reform goals. The historic Forum for the Future held in Rabat last December was a partnership among the countries of the BMENA region, the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized democracies, and others, all united around a common agenda that advances the universal values of human dignity, democracy, economic opportunity, and social justice. In Rabat, Foreign, Finance, and Economy Ministers from 28 countries gathered to discuss and develop collaborative efforts to support political, economic, and social reform in the BMENA region. Civil society

and business representatives also participated in the Forum. The next Forum for the Future will take place in November in Bahrain. We are exploring with our G-8 and regional partners ways to strengthen the Forum so that it can better support the democratic trends on the ground.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative, announced by President Bush and funded with bipartisan support from the Congress, has sought to bring the resources, experience, and determination of the United States to bear in an effort to bolster the reform movement in the Middle East. MEPI works with partners in the region to develop programs that help put in place the building blocks for democratic change. Our partners include non-governmental organizations, businesses, universities, international institutions, and in some cases, Middle Eastern governments themselves. Its four-"pillar" structure focuses efforts on political governance and participation, economic liberalization and opportunity, educational quality and access, and the empowerment of women, recognizing that progress in each of them complements and facilitates -- and is often a requirement for -- progress in the others. During the first three years of its existence, the Middle East Partnership Initiative set in motion more than 130 programs in 14 countries of the Middle East.

We are matching resources to policy priorities, and making clear that in word and deed we stand with those courageous voices for reform, human rights, and freedom. The fate and future of these regions depends ultimately on their own people. But those leaders who stand up to advance democratic principles will know that they have a steadfast ally and partner in the United States. And not the United States alone -- the G-8 industrialized nations and the nations of the BMENA region are playing vital roles in helping lead this collaborative effort. For example, Yemen, one of the countries leading the Democracy Assistance Dialogue, has recently proposed at the Community of Democracies Ministerial the creation of an Inter-Arab Democracy Charter.

USAID Administrator Natsios is committed to implementing the vision for democracy promotion outlined in President Bush's second inaugural address. USAID manages over \$1 billion in democracy promotion assistance in over 80 countries around the globe. In providing direct support to Iraq's transition to democracy; assisting the development of democratic institutions in Afghanistan; supporting innovative approaches to community policing in Colombia; and playing a crucial peace-building role through comprehensive support to establish a new Government of South Sudan, USAID programs are moving our agenda forward.

Our Human Rights and Democracy Fund stands as another one of our key tools. Through this relatively modest-sized fund, we seek maximum impact by identifying and supporting dynamic, innovative organizations and cutting-edge programs that are already working in a number of areas vital to democratization, including rule of law, election standards, labor rights, political party development, civil society development, and institution building. HRDF seeks to cultivate the seeds of democratization, so that when political change comes, the structures and culture are in place to embrace and sustain democracy. We have developed its capability to respond quickly as needs and opportunities emerge. The HRDF has grown in a very short time to \$36.7 million this fiscal year. Kyrgyzstan provides just one visible example of HRDF's impact. Our programming there, including support for the region's only independent printing press, enabled the people of Kyrgyzstan to make their voices be heard and contributed to a vibrant civil society that demanded accountability for flawed election races. Zamira Sydykova, a leading opposition journalist, recently testified to that fact before the Helsinki Commission. In her words, U.S. support and programs "spurred on ordinary citizens to realize their role in the elections" and "imparted confidence to the [Kyrgyz] independent mass media."

We see our focus on women's concerns as a vital component of our overall democracy agenda. As the First Lady has said, "No society can prosper when half of its population is not allowed to contribute to its progress. Educated

and empowered women are vital to democracy -- and important for the development of all countries." To take just two prominent examples, the United States has funded more than 200 different projects in Afghanistan supporting Afghan women in education, microenterprise, and political, legal, and media training, and we intend to provide significant additional resources to support Iraqi women and their role in the political and economic reconstruction of their country. The President created in 2002 the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, which I have the honor of co-chairing. This partnership brings together women leaders from the United States and Afghanistan to partner in addressing some of the problems, but also opportunities, facing Afghan women. In the words of Massoda Jalal, the current Minister of Women's Affairs and the first woman to run for President in Afghanistan's 5,000-year history, "The commitment of the U. S.-Afghan Women's Council has allowed Afghan women to be heard and to help lead their country."

We also see our ongoing advocacy in the areas of human rights, religious freedom, anti-trafficking, and law enforcement training, among other areas, as indispensable components of our overall democracy strategy. For example, when our Trafficking in Persons office takes the lead in determining which governments are not taking sufficient steps to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and punish perpetrators, we are also taking measures that strengthen rule of law, protect minority rights, undermine organized crime, and enhance the social status of vulnerable or marginal populations. All of these are indispensable to a democratic system. Or when our International Religious Freedom Office takes the lead in designating Countries of Particular Concern, we are also taking measures that promote tolerance, pluralism, adherence to international standards, and a comprehensive array of civil liberties -- again, all of these are essential building blocks to a democratic system.

Likewise, our annual reporting on human rights, religious freedom, and trafficking in persons makes clear our commitment to democratic rights and freedoms. And our "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy" report details the efforts we are undertaking in nearly 100 countries around the world to promote human rights, democracy, and rule of law. These reports direct a spotlight on these issues and hold governments accountable.

The process of producing these reports is as important as the final product. Throughout the year, our chiefs of mission and other embassy and consulate staff are instructed to meet regularly with local political and religious leaders, dissidents, journalists, activists, and other voices for democratic values in each country. We learn from them and, where appropriate, encourage and support them. We make clear that when democracy activists peacefully speak out or stand up for freedom, the U.S. Government stands with them.

These reports are sources of accountability and empowerment for citizens of each country. We now translate the introduction of each of the four major reports into seven languages, and posts are instructed to translate each country report into the host country language and post it on our embassy websites within 30 days. It is also a reminder and guide for free nations to remember the plight of those who are not. Accurate information alone does not bring democratic change, but democratic change is nearly impossible without accurate information.

In this same spirit, we are bolstering our public diplomacy efforts, particularly our broadcasting into restrictive nations. Tyrannical regimes seek to maintain their grip on power by maintaining a monopoly on knowledge. They deny their citizens access to independent media and even basic facts about the world. We support broadcasts, print media, and other outlets that equip peoples in closed nations with open truth. These initiatives include Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Sawa, Alhurra, and Radio and TV Marti.

We also maintain a robust series of programs of cultural and educational exchanges, in which we bring foreign leaders

and students from many nations and vocations to the United States. Exposing them to our way of life, our values and traditions and system of government, has been invaluable in helping cultivate potential democratic leaders and reformers. The short time they spend in the United States on these programs often pays a lifetime of dividends. To take just one example, 14 members of Georgian President Saakashvili's Administration have been exchange visitors to the United States.

While the United States is able and willing to show leadership here, we realize that we cannot do it alone. Just as democratic values are not reserved to the United States, neither is democratic advocacy. We need partnerships and coalitions with other nations. And while the truth of democratic values may be known in the abstract, it is realized most vividly in the diverse experiences of different nations and cultures around the world who have all, in their own unique ways, come to embrace and demonstrate democracy.

The Secretary and I just returned from the third ministerial meeting of the Community of Democracies in Santiago, Chile. This meeting represented a new level of unity and cooperation among the world's democracies. It provided a forum for developing and implementing several specific initiatives, including our Electoral Standards project to create a universal standard for assessing elections, pledges of financial support for the Democracy Fund announced by President Bush at the UN last year, and renewed commitment to the Democracy Caucus at the UN. We are also very encouraged by the leadership shown by other nations such as Hungary, which has established a Democracy Transition Center to make available the resources and expertise of countries that have undergone recent democratic transitions to nations now undergoing their own such transitions. Again, many goals of the Ministerial are reflected in your legislation -- and for that support we are grateful.

Because financial assistance must foster independence and not dependence, we have inaugurated innovative new assistance programs such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation that seek to partner with reform-minded leaders, reinforce positive trends, and reward progressive developments. Besides the obvious importance of this funding in its own right, the MCA process delivers a strategic message around the world: economic reform, rule of law, good governance, and political liberalization are all interconnected, and mutually reinforcing. Those who would be prosperous must govern with justice.

Much as we are pleased with these ongoing efforts, we realize that more can be done. The Department is in the process of strengthening our diplomatic, programmatic, and public outreach as well as reviewing our internal organizational structure to ensure that we are organized most effectively to carry out the ambitions that the President has set for us.

Regarding the ADVANCE Democracy Act, the Administration has provided to you our specific comments in written form. There are some provisions in this bill about which the Administration is especially supportive, and a number of specific provisions that give us concern. I hope that we can work with Congress to address these concerns. Let me make clear that overall we support the spirit and intentions of this bill. It has the potential to be an effective and even historic partnership between Congress and the Administration on advancing our nation's foreign policy at a momentous juncture in history.

For information, please contact Christian Whiton (202-647-1038).

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