

The World We Need to Create

March 29, 2012

The World We Need to Create
Speech to Mark Women's History Month
Ambassador Howard Gutman

Het spijt me dat mijn Nederlands niet zeer goed is. Ik heb zo veel respect voor de schoonheid van uw taal, dat ik niets meer ga zeggen in het Nederlands

Et mon français est également mauvais – j'étudie le français un jour et le néerlandais l'autre, cinq jours par semaine, mais les deux sont difficiles et donc, je continuerai en anglais.

Welcome to Women's History Month. For those who don't know me, let me introduce myself. I am Michelle Loewinger's husband.

I am delighted to be here today. It is a truly exciting day for me.

You see, I often give a speech to youth – to universities, to young entrepreneur groups and the like. And I tell them that my generation has made a mess of things. My generation got it wrong in the latter part of the 20th Century and most of the beginning of 21st. On so many fronts.

We have left most of the critical components and institutions of our society badly bruised. We have left our economies struggling, our security under constant threat, our environment nearly choking, and our relations with others who are different from us tense and distrustful. We have rendered our political systems nearly dysfunctional to the point where they are clearly part of the problem, instead of being the source of the solution, and our media, once the last great hope, contributing mightily to the hurdles facing our political systems.

I often explain to these groups of young leaders that it is therefore up to them to save the planet. I acknowledge that it is a hard job – but after all, someone has got to do it.

Yet in preparing for today's speech, I realized that my prior speeches to tomorrow's leaders did not go far enough. For it is indeed up to the young people to save the planet. But approaching that challenge will take the talents of the best and the brightest of both genders. For the world of tomorrow to be better than the world of yesterday, for us to leave a better planet to our children than the one we received from our parents, women are going to have to be a far greater part of the process and the solution. In a very real respect, women may hold the key to the better tomorrow. But if women indeed hold the key, they must be provided access to the door. The door to our economy of tomorrow and to the peace and security that remain on the horizon.

Now we have come a long way to giving women access to such doors. The United States has.

Belgium has. The World has. I was in Washington DC a couple of weeks ago for the meeting of all U.S. ambassadors. One of the most senior career State Department officials was reviewing developments over the past couple of years. He talked about how extraordinary Secretary Clinton has been in the position of Secretary of State. And he noted that he had spent the first 17 years of his career, beginning in 1981, working for seven consecutive white male Secretaries of State. But he noted that, in the past 14 years, he had the opportunity of working for 3 women and one African American male. With Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton, the State Department has come a long way. Women have indeed been shown more doors. And women have now been on Presidential tickets in the U.S. for both parties. In fact, a woman was one of the leading candidates for U.S. President in each of the past two races.

A McKinsey study has found that, in the United States, women went from holding 37 percent of all jobs 40 years ago, to nearly 48 percent of the jobs today. Other studies have shown that women-run

SMEs are particular accelerators of economic growth – one of the highest yield investments to grow GDP. Women own nearly 8 million businesses in the United States, accounting for \$1.2 trillion of our GDP. According to Guardian Life's Small Business Research Institute, future jobs growth in the US will be created primarily by women-owned small businesses and by 2018, women entrepreneurs will be creating between 5 and 5.5 million new jobs.

The fact is that American women generate more than three and a half trillion dollars per year, a sum larger than the GDP of Germany and more than half the GDPs of both China and Japan.

More women indeed have access to more doors in the U.S. today.

Belgium too has changed. Governments and coalitions at every level in Belgium look different today than 10 and 20 years ago. Every day, I have occasion to work with impressive and effective senior women in leadership positions in Belgium. Belgium has also recently passed a law enhancing the percentage of women on corporate boards. In media, for every Michiel, there is a Phara. You take Phillippe Gilbert in sport and I will counter with Kim Clijsters. I am a huge fan of Prince Phillippe but as big an admirer of the talents of Princess Mathilde.

In Europe, Belgians will point to my dear friend Herman Van Rompuy as raising Europe's game today.

But Herman will be the first to explain the critical role performed as well by Catherine Ashton. I give Nicholas Sarkozy a great deal of credit for helping to save the Euro but can anyone deny the critical role played by Angela Merkel? Yes, we have indeed come a long way in the United States, in Belgium and in the world in providing women with access to the doors of building a better future for us all.

But make no mistake . . . we have a long way still to go. A long way. And again, that is true of the United States, Belgium and the world. You see, in the United States, for example, women are free to run for Congress or Senate and we know famous female Representatives and Senators. Yet, in fact, women account for just 16.8 percent of our elected officials in Congress. According to the Washington Post, at a mere 16.8 percent of House and Senate membership, women's representation in the United States' national legislature last year ranked 78th in the world, tied with Turkmenistan. In other words, in world of 193 countries or so, despite all of the laws guaranteeing equality in the U.S. and our self-conception of ourselves as a fully free, open, and democratic society, women are better represented in legislatures in 40 percent of the countries in the world than they are in the U.S.

In Belgium, legislation has done a good job of creating better representation in legislatures and on corporate boards. But in Belgium too, old stereotypes still prevent full participation. As many of you know, I have pledged to visit every city, village and commune – 589 in total. So I travel all over the country and have been to over 410 cities. I visit local governments and have met my share of female mayors. And there are female city council people and alder people in every town. But I sometimes see a different story as I travel to many factories in the same towns. I often see factories that have 100 per cent male workers or 100 per cent female workers on the factory floor, depending on what is being made or produced. To an American, that is an odd sight as no company could follow that pattern in the U.S. So both countries have made long strides towards better representation of women in the economy and in the full fabric and leadership of society, but both can still do better.

But why does it really matter? Why does empowering women to participate fully in our economic engine and to undertake their share of the march to peace and security matter? Can't we get to prosperity while women simply remain at home? Can't we still build that peaceful and stable world just as easily?

The answer of course is that we cannot.

As Secretary Clinton has recently explained: "If women around the world are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have

a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations will flourish.”

The World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Report measures the progress that countries have made toward gender equality. It looks at the gap between men and women in a given country on 4 indicators: access to health, education, economic opportunity and political empowerment. Where the gap is closest to being closed – where men and women are more equal – those countries are more prosperous and economically competitive. As the World Bank has said, gender equality is smart economics. Greater progress is being made around the world in access to health and education than in economic and political participation. In no country has the gender gap been closed.

Countries today in the West are struggling with how to achieve growth without increasing debt. A Goldman Sachs report shows that a reduction in barriers to female labor force participation would increase America’s GDP by 9 percent. It would increase the Eurozone’s by 13 percent and Japan’s by 16 percent.

And of course, rising income means increased spending, which in itself helps to fuel more growth.

This is important for Europe, because my own experience here has convinced me that there is still plenty to spend on in Europe.

Women constitute the world’s biggest emerging market. A Boston Consulting Group survey concludes that, globally, women will control \$15 trillion in spending by the year 2014. Yet only about 3% of global Fortune 500 companies are led by women. So companies with leaders who actually understand women’s experiences, perspectives and motivation will have a competitive advantage over those who don’t do so. The World Bank in its Women’s Development Report finds that by eliminating discrimination against female workers and managers, companies could significantly increase productivity per worker by 25 to 40 percent.

The simple fact is that no country can hope to move ahead if it is leaving half of its people behind. By ensuring women’s inclusion at all levels and in all segments of our economies, more of us can contribute to the global GDP. We would have more brains humming; more eyes analyzing the genetic make-up of cancers and pursuing the cure; more instincts assessing the next Google or Facebook start-up investment.

I have talked to a leading coalition of microfinancers. I never understood how they could lend in developing countries among the poor and expect to be paid back. How could finance work when no collateral existed? Time and again, the microfinancers gave me the same response. “We know we will get paid back,” they explained, “because we lend the money to the women. Women look to the long term. They see today’s successful loan repayment as tomorrow’s larger loan.” Getting the picture? Getting the hint?

And thus, at the U.S. State Department, promoting the participation and prosperity of women around the globe is a major element of our foreign policy. We are working to lower barriers to their economic participation so more women in more places have the opportunity to own their land, start their businesses, access markets -- steps that will ultimately lift up not only their families but entire economies and societies.

As we honor achievements, as we recount the progress, we must also be reminded that Women’s History Month is an opportunity to renew the call for action, investment, and commitment to women’s equality. To peace. To our joint futures. In developed countries and in developing countries.

Indeed, helping women advance is often a key factor in improving life in developing countries and in those rebuilding and reconstructing society after war and violence. In Afghanistan, for example, in 2001, the life expectancy for women was 44 years. Today, just 10 years later, the life

expectancy for women is 62 years. Ten years ago, nearly no Afghan girls went to school – today 3 million do so. Girls account for nearly 40 per cent of the grade school enrollments in Afghanistan. Nearly 120,000 Afghan girls have graduated from high school, 15,000 are presently enrolled in universities and nearly 500 women today are on the faculty of Afghan universities.

Can you imagine that? A young girl leaves a village, as one of the first to leave the town to study at university. And she meets college professors who are Afghan women. And she learns of a new constitution that respects her rights as a citizen in the emerging new society. And she learns that business means more than tending to a home.

We in the West often feel good with a handful of success stories. When we look at women in Afghanistan, we have hundreds of thousands of success stories. Afghan women helped pass a constitution that respects their rights. Women now serve at all level of government and on the Afghan High Peace Council and on local peace councils. Women are opening and running businesses of all kinds and they are therefore creating jobs and an economic prosperity for the future.

Clearly women are a crucial part of the future of Afghanistan—they have to be if we all are going to realize a future of greater peace and prosperity. But to get to that future, for Afghans to get to that future, we – those who helped root out influences of exported terror and local oppression – must stay wedded to supporting the rise of women and the progress of Afghan civil society as we move forward. In the years after 2014, when NATO plans to complete the transfer of military activities in Afghanistan from Americans and Belgians and other members of NATO to the trained Afghan security forces, civilian support, financial support, from Americans and Belgians, from NATO countries and partner countries, must help provide the resources that will enable civilian society to continue to grow and will allow women to continue to flourish, helping to build the better tomorrow in Afghanistan and therefore a more peaceful planet for us all. All Western countries face budget crises, but we all need to help fund the future in Afghanistan to ensure that that future gets built. And we are absolutely committed to the principle that the reconciliation dialogue in Afghanistan must include women and ethnic minorities. We have come too far now to reverse directions on the gains made by women.

As I noted, the advancement of women is not just crucial to our economic recovery and future, but as well to the peace and security of the planet. Women have an essential role in bringing peace to areas torn by strife and in keeping peace in areas at risk today.

In December, President Obama released the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, charting a roadmap for how the United States will advance women's participation in preventing conflict and keeping peace. You see, this is another area in which for far too long, the status quo has not worked as well as we would have hoped. Even when the international community has brought their best and their brightest to negotiate a peace, the results around the world have been mixed. So this is not just a woman's issue. It is an issue as fundamental as peace throughout the planet for every man and woman, for every boy and girl. There is a growing body of evidence that shows how women around the world contribute to making and keeping peace, and that these contributions lead to better outcomes for entire societies. From Northern Ireland to Liberia to Nepal and many places in between, we have seen that when women participate in peace processes, they focus discussion on issues like human rights, justice, national reconciliation, and economic renewal that are critical to making peace, but often are overlooked in formal negotiations. They build coalitions across ethnic and sectarian lines, and they speak up for other marginalized groups. They act as mediators and help to foster compromise. And when women organize in large numbers, they galvanize opinion and help change the course of history.

At the same time, women are too often excluded from both the negotiations that make peace and the institutions that maintain it. That is an unacceptable waste of talent and of opportunity. Is the key to a lasting peace in the Middle East, in Sudan, in Syria or wherever violence reigns to expand the gender perspective at the negotiating tables? And across the Middle East and North Africa, nations are emerging from revolution and beginning the transition to democracy. And here too, women are being excluded and increasingly even targeted. Can't we do better? How can we afford not to?

Under the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, the U.S. government will partner with women in vulnerable areas to prevent conflicts from breaking out in the first place.

Women are bellwethers of society and, in fact, sometimes they do play the role of canary in the coal mine. They know when communities are fraying and when citizens fear for their safety. Studies suggest that women's physical security and higher levels of gender equality correlate with security and peacefulness of entire countries. The United States will invest in early warning systems that incorporate gender analysis and monitor increases in violence and discrimination against women, which can be indicators of future conflict. We will also support grassroots women's organizations that work to stop violence and promote peace. And because women's economic empowerment leads to greater prosperity for their societies, we are putting women and girls at the center of our global efforts on food security, health, and entrepreneurship. Our National Action Plan is strengthening protection for women and girls during and after conflict. We will work with partners on the ground to crack down on rape as a tactic of war, hold perpetrators of violence accountable, and support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The United States will encourage our international partners to include women and civil society organizations in the design and implementation of relief efforts and reconstruction planning.

Around the world, our embassies are developing local strategies to empower women politically, economically, and socially. In the Belgian context, this would mean working together with your foreign policy and development ministries to partner on our international programs for women's empowerment and increase our effectiveness.

Together the partnership between Belgium and the United States can work to promote the role of women in economic prosperity and world peace. Together, we can send a message that where fathers have failed before to build a better planet for our children, mothers and fathers together can indeed succeed.

Can we afford to try anything less?

Thanks so much and all the best.

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Yet in preparing for today's speech, I realized that my prior speeches to tomorrow's leaders did not go far enough. For it is indeed up to the young people to save the planet. But approaching that challenge will take the talents of the best and the brightest of both genders. For the world of tomorrow to be better than the world of yesterday, for us to leave a better planet to our children than the one we received from our parents, women are going to have to be a far greater part of the process and the solution. In a very real respect, women may hold the key to the better tomorrow.

But if women indeed hold the key, they must be provided access to the door. The door to our economy of tomorrow and to the peace and security that remain on the horizon.

Now we have come a long way to giving women access to such doors. The United States has. Belgium has. The World has. I was in Washington DC a couple of weeks ago for the meeting of all U.S. ambassadors. One of the most senior career State Department officials was reviewing developments over the past couple of years. He talked about how extraordinary Secretary Clinton has been in the position of Secretary of State. And he noted that he had spent the first 17 years of his career, beginning in 1981, working for seven consecutive white male Secretaries of State. But he noted that, in the past 14 years, he had the opportunity of working for 3 women and one African American male. With Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton, the State Department has come a long way. Women have indeed been shown more doors. And women have now been on Presidential tickets in the U.S. for both parties. In fact, a woman was one of the leading candidates for U.S. President in each of the past two races.

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GDP. According to Guardian Life's Small Business Research Institute, future jobs growth in the US will be created primarily by women-owned small businesses and by 2018, women entrepreneurs will be creating between 5 and 5.5 million new jobs.

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But make no mistake . . . we have a long way still to go. A long way. And again, that is true of the United States, Belgium and the world. You see, in the United States, for example, women are free to run for Congress or Senate and we know famous female Representatives and Senators. Yet, in fact, women account for just 16.8 percent of our elected officials in Congress. According to the Washington Post, at a mere 16.8 percent of House and Senate membership, women's representation in the United States' national legislature last year ranked 78th in the world, tied with Turkmenistan. In other words, in world of 193 countries or so, despite all of the laws guaranteeing equality in the U.S. and our self-conception of ourselves as a fully free, open, and democratic society, women are better represented in legislatures in 40 percent of the countries in the world than they are in the U.S.

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But why does it really matter? Why does empowering women to participate fully in our economic engine and to undertake their share of the march to peace and security matter? Can't we get to

prosperity while women simply remain at home? Can't we still build that peaceful and stable world just as easily?

The answer of course is that we cannot.

As Secretary Clinton has recently explained: "If women around the world are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations will flourish."

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And of course, rising income means increased spending, which in itself helps to fuel more growth. This is important for Europe, because my own experience here has convinced me that there is still plenty to spend on in Europe.

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As we honor achievements, as we recount the progress, we must also be reminded that Women's History Month is an opportunity to renew the call for action, investment, and commitment to women's equality. To peace. To our joint futures. In developed countries and in developing countries.

Indeed, helping women advance is often a key factor in improving life in developing countries and in those rebuilding and reconstructing society after war and violence. In Afghanistan, for example, in 2001, the life expectancy for women was 44 years. Today, just 10 years later, the life expectancy for women is 62 years. Ten years ago, nearly no Afghan girls went to school – today 3 million do so.

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Clearly women are a crucial part of the future of Afghanistan—they have to be if we all are going to realize a future of greater peace and prosperity. But to get to that future, for Afghans to get to that future, we – those who helped root out influences of exported terror and local oppression – must stay wedded to supporting the rise of women and the progress of Afghan civil society as we move forward.

In the years after 2014, when NATO plans to complete the transfer of military activities in Afghanistan from Americans and Belgians and other members of NATO to the trained Afghan security forces, civilian support, financial support, from Americans and Belgians, from NATO countries and partner countries, must help provide the resources that will enable civilian society to continue to grow and will allow women to continue to flourish, helping to build the better tomorrow in Afghanistan and therefore a more peaceful planet for us all. All Western countries face budget crises, but we all need to help fund the future in Afghanistan to ensure that that future gets built. And we are absolutely

committed to the principle that the reconciliation dialogue in Afghanistan must include women and ethnic minorities. We have come too far now to reverse directions on the gains made by women.

As I noted, the advancement of women is not just crucial to our economic recovery and future, but as well to the peace and security of the planet. Women have an essential role in bringing peace to areas torn by strife and in keeping peace in areas at risk today.

In December, President Obama released the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, charting a roadmap for how the United States will advance women's participation in preventing conflict and keeping peace. You see, this is another area in which for far too long, the status quo has not worked as well as we would have hoped. Even when the international community has brought their best and their brightest to negotiate a peace, the results around the world have been mixed. So this is not just a woman's issue. It is an issue as fundamental as peace throughout the planet for every man and woman, for every boy and girl. There is a growing body of evidence that shows how women around the world contribute to making and keeping peace, and that these contributions lead to better outcomes for entire societies. From Northern Ireland to Liberia to Nepal and many places in between, we have seen that when women participate in peace processes, they focus discussion on issues like human rights, justice, national reconciliation, and economic renewal that are critical to making peace, but often are overlooked in formal negotiations. They build coalitions across ethnic and sectarian lines, and they speak up for other marginalized groups. They act as mediators and help to foster compromise. And when women organize in large numbers, they galvanize opinion and help change the course of history.

At the same time, women are too often excluded from both the negotiations that make peace and the institutions that maintain it. That is an unacceptable waste of talent and of opportunity. Is the key to a lasting peace in the Middle East, in Sudan, in Syria or wherever violence reigns to expand the gender perspective at the negotiating tables? And across the Middle East and North Africa, nations are emerging from revolution and beginning the transition to democracy. And here too, women are being excluded and increasingly even targeted. Can't we do better? How can we afford not to?

Under the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, the U.S. government will partner with women in vulnerable areas to prevent conflicts from breaking out in the first place. Women are bellwethers of society and, in fact, sometimes they do play the role of canary in the coal mine. They know when communities are fraying and when citizens fear for their safety. Studies suggest that women's physical security and higher levels of gender equality correlate with security and peacefulness of entire countries. The United States will invest in early warning systems that incorporate gender analysis and monitor increases in violence and discrimination against women, which can be indicators of future conflict. We will also support grassroots women's organizations that work to stop violence and promote peace. And because women's economic empowerment leads to greater prosperity for their societies, we are putting women and girls at the center of our global efforts on food security, health, and entrepreneurship. Our National Action Plan is strengthening protection for women and girls during and after conflict. We will work with partners on the ground to crack down on rape as a tactic of war, hold perpetrators of violence accountable, and support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The United States will encourage our international partners to include women and civil society organizations in the design and implementation of relief efforts and reconstruction planning.

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