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Beijing - Other Speeches

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. list	Contact List [partial] (4 pages)	8/22/1995	P6/b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Melanne Verveer (Subject Files)
OA/Box Number: 10254

FOLDER TITLE:

Beijing - Other Speeches

2006-0198-F
wr780

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
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PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

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- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
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- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

Estelle -

Are we discussing -

The Conger wine photos

Thanks.

Alie

(prepared for delivery)

REMARKS OF
AMBASSADOR MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT
U.S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS
CONCERNING THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
CENTER FOR NATIONAL POLICY BREAKFAST
WASHINGTON, D.C.
AUGUST 2, 1995

Good morning. I am pleased to be here. I may be prejudiced, but I think the Center for National Policy is a great organization, and I appreciate its willingness to sponsor this timely event.

The Fourth World Conference on Women will convene in China in 33 days and, let there be no doubt, the United States will be there.

We will be there because this conference is a rare opportunity to chart further gains in the status and rights of more than half the people on earth.

As leader of the American delegation, I am confident that U.S. goals will have strong support. These include--

- o promoting and protecting the human rights of women and ending violence against women;

- o expanding the participation of women in political and economic decisionmaking;

- o assuring equal access for women to education and health care throughout their lives;

- o strengthening families through efforts to balance the work and family responsibilities of both women and men; and

- o recognizing the increased role of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) in building strong communities--at the local, national and international levels.

The conference in Beijing will be the fourth in a series begun 20 years ago in Mexico City. These gatherings have spurred legal, social and political reforms that have enhanced the lives of women and girls around the globe. Our goal now is to build on past gains and to hasten the removal of continuing obstacles to the full and equal participation of women in society.

As someone whose family was driven from its home twice when I was a child, first by Hitler, then by Stalin, I believe it is the responsibility of every free person to do what he or she can to advance the freedom of others. And I intend to see that the U.S. delegation to the Women's Conference serves as an unabashed advocate for freedom and human rights.

Unfortunately, today, in countries around the world, appalling abuses are being committed against women. These include coerced abortions and sterilizations, children sold into prostitution, ritual mutilations, dowry murders and official indifference to violence.

The Clinton Administration will use the conference in Beijing to underline the truth that violence against women is no one's prerogative; it is not a cultural choice; it is not an inevitable consequence of biology--it is a crime that we all have a responsibility to condemn, prevent, punish and stop.

Now, there are those who say that we should withdraw from the Women's Conference because of the human rights policies of the host country. Those suggestions are well-motivated, but they miss the main point. American withdrawal would not stop the conference or cause it to be moved; it would lead, instead, to a conference in which 130 million American women would be unrepresented and in which American influence and leadership would not be felt.

It just does not make sense, in the name of human rights, to boycott a conference that has, as a primary purpose, the promotion of human rights.

The way to help women, in China and elsewhere, is not to abandon the field to others, but rather to attend this conference, to debate head-on the differences of philosophy and ideology that exist, to lay out before the world the abuses we want to halt and the obstacles to progress we want to remove, and to gain commitments to change from the societies most in need of change. That is what leadership and a commitment to free and open discussion are all about.

With respect to Harry Wu, our position is clear. He should be released immediately and unharmed. His case is a top priority for the United States. I can understand why some would want to tie conference participation to Mr. Wu's release, but that assumes falsely that our attendance would be some sort of favor to Beijing. We have no cause to believe that our approach to the conference will have any impact on China's decisions concerning Mr. Wu.

We do have reason, however, to hope that the conference will have a positive effect on the status of women in China.

Conference preparations already have contributed to a heightened awareness within China of women's issues. There is public discussion of previously taboo subjects, including violence against women. Chinese returning from the preparatory meetings have described their heightened sensitivity to the treatment of women in the media and to the economic exploitation of women. It matters a great deal that more than 5,000 Chinese women will participate in the NGO forum and will take their impressions back to their communities.

Given the nature of China's human rights record, I do not mean to exaggerate the impact of this one conference. But as a former board member of the National Endowment for Democracy, I know that one of the best ways to promote democratic thinking is to expose people to new ideas on matters that relate directly to their own lives.

Exposure to such thinking matters to us not only in China, but around the world, because countries in which women have a fair share of power tend to be more stable, democratic, prosperous and just than those in which women are marginalized and repressed.

The Women's Conference will contribute to a freer and more equitable world. As its recommendations are implemented, it will also strengthen families around the world. We know from our own experience that when families are strong, children are cared for, socially constructive values are taught and an environment is created in which civility and law may thrive.

So we want momentum to build around the idea that women and men should share fairly in the responsibilities of family life; we want to see girls valued to the same degree as boys; we want parents and prospective parents to be able to make informed judgments as they plan their families; and we want to see domestic violence curtailed and condemned.

Each of these is a central element of the Conference draft Platform for Action. And effective action on each will help families and communities everywhere.

Despite recent gains, women remain an undervalued and underdeveloped human resource. This is not to say that women have trouble finding work; in many societies--especially in rural, agriculturally-based areas--they do the vast majority of the work; but they don't own the land, they are not taught to read, they can't obtain personal or business loans and they are denied equal access to the levers of political decisionmaking.

It is no accident that most of those in the world who are abjectly poor are women, often caring for children without the help of the children's father; many trapped from an early age in a web of abuse, discrimination, ignorance and powerlessness from which only a few are able to escape.

We cannot be indifferent. It is reported that, in Angola, one-third of all homicides are perpetrated against women, usually by their spouse.

In Thailand, child prostitution is growing because clients believe older prostitutes are more likely to be infected by HIV.

In Senegal, females receive less than one-third the schooling received by males.

In Sierra Leone, women perform much of the subsistence farming and all of the child rearing and have little opportunity for education.

And almost everywhere, women are restricted by discriminatory attitudes and social and economic structures that are unjust.

The Women's Conference will not solve these problems overnight, but it will call attention to them and promote remedial action. Women the world over are prepared to be full partners in sustainable development, but they need access to education and health care; they need access to credit; and they need equality under the law. Releasing the productive capacity of women is one key to breaking the cycle of poverty; and that will contribute, in turn, to higher standards of living for all nations.

Since the first Women's Conference 20 years ago, opportunities for women have expanded throughout the world. It is no longer a question of whether women from all countries will have a strong voice in controlling their destinies, but only when and how that goal will be achieved.

But building inclusive societies is still a work in progress. The United States has been working on it for two centuries. For more than half our nation's history, until 75 years ago this month, American women could not even vote. Many traditional or authoritarian societies still have a very long way to go. The Fourth Women's Conference will offer guidelines and promote commitments for every state to move forward, whatever current practices and policies may be.

In preparing for this conference, I was reminded of an old Chinese poem in which a father says to his young daughter:

We keep a dog to watch the house;
A pig is useful, too;
We keep a cat to catch a mouse;
But what can we do
With a girl like you?

For me, the Women's Conference will be a success if it brings us even a little closer to the day when girls all over the world will be able to look ahead with confidence that their lives will be valued, their individuality respected, their rights protected and their futures determined by their own abilities and character.

In such a world, the lives of all of us--men and women, boys and girls--will be enriched.

And it is to make progress towards such a world that the United States will be participating actively, forcefully and proudly in Beijing.

Thank you very much. Now, I would be happy to respond to any questions you might have.

US DELEGATION TO THE
UN FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

CONTACT LIST

DELEGATES:

Ambassador Madeleine Albright

phone: (202) 736-7555

fax: (202) 736-7551

U.S. Department of State

Room 6333

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Laila Al-Marayati

phone: (818) 241-1174

fax: (818) 241-3018

610 N. Central Ave, Suite 202

Glendale, CA 91203

Maria Antonietta Berriozabal

phone: (210) 434-2550

fax: (210) 436-0824

Center for Women in Church and Society

Our Lady of the Lake University

411 SW 24th St

San Antonio, Texas 78207

Veronica Biggins

phone: (404) 577-7826

fax: (404) 577-4048

Heidrick & Struggles

One Peachtree Center Suite 3100

303 Peachtree St.

Atlanta, GA 30308

Evan Bloom

phone: (202) 647-6771

fax: (202) 736-7116

U.S. Department of State

Room 5425

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Myrna Blyth

phone: (212) 351-3579

fax: (212) 351-3628

Ladies Home Journal

100 Park Ave, 3rd Floor

New York, NY 10017

Withdrawal/Redaction Marker

Clinton Library

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[001]

Carol Browner

phone: (202) 260-4700

fax: (202) 260-0279

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

401 M St SW

Washington, D.C. 20460

Iris Burnett

phone: (202) 619-4742

fax: (202) 619-6705

United States Information Agency

301 4th St., SW

Washington, D.C. 20547

Bonnie Campbell

phone: (202) 616-8894

fax: (202) 307-3911

U.S. Department of Justice

10th Constitution Ave, NW rm 5302

Washington, D.C. 20530

Elizabeth Coleman

phone: (404) 876-7296

fax: (404) 607-0095

Maidenform, Inc.

1355 Peachtree St.

Atlanta, GA 30309

Mary Curtin

phone: (202) 647-3129

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State

Room 1318

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Lynn Cutler

phone: (202) 223-8700

fax: (202) 659-5559

c/o The Kamber Group

1920 L St., NW

Washington, D.C. 20008

Nils Daulaire

phone: (202) 647-8415

fax: (202) 647-9747

U.S. Agency for International Development

Room 3881

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20523

Geraldine Ferraro

pho

fax

P6(b)(6)

-3-

Felice Gaer

phone: (212) 751-4000, ext 314

fax: (212) 751-4017

Jacob Blaustein, Institute for Human Rights
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 165th St
New York, NY 10022

Adrienne Germain

phone: (212) 979-8500

fax: (212) 979-9009

International Women's Health Coalition
24 E. 21st St.
New York, NY 10010

Kathleen Hendrix

phone: (202) 647-3129

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State
Room 1318
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Judith Heumann

phone: (202) 205-5465

fax: (202) 205-9252

U.S. Department of Education
330 C St., SW
Room 3006, Switzer Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Arthenia L. Joyner

pho

fax

P6/(b)(6)

Tom Kean

phone: (201) 408-3069

fax: (201) 408-3080

President's Office
Drew University
36 Madison Ave
Madison, NJ 07940

Sister Dorothy Ann Kelly

phone: (914) 654-5428

fax: (914) 654-5980

College of New Rochelle
29 Castle Place
New Rochelle, NY 10805

-4-

Melinda Kimble

phone: (202) 647-9604

fax: (202) 736-4116

U.S. Department of State

Room 6323

2201 C St. NW

Washington, D.C. 20521

Sharon Kotok

phone: (202) 647-3129

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State

Room 1318

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Sarah Kovner

phone: (202) 690-6347

fax: (202) 690-7098

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

2001 Independence Ave., SW Rm 605-F

Washington, D.C. 20201

Madeleine Kunin

phone: (202) 401-1000

fax: (202) 401-3093

Dept. of Education

600 Independence Ave., SW

Suite 6236

Washington, D.C. 20202

Dorothy V. Lamm

phone:

fax:

P6(b)(6)

SUMMER ADDRESS

phone:

P6(b)(6)

Ginger Lew

phone: (202) 482-4772

fax: (202) 482-0042

U.S. Department of Commerce

Office of the General Counsel

Room 5870

14th & Constitution Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20230

Victor Marrero

phone: (212) 415-4278

fax: (212) 415-4299

US Mission to the UN

799 United Nations Plaza

New York, NY 10017

-5-

Ellen Marshall

phone: (202) 647-9699

fax: (202) 647-8162

U.S. Department of State

Room 5824

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Marjorie Mergolies Mezvinsky

phone: (202) 647-3129

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State

Room 1318

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Marilyn Monahan

phone: (202) 822-7017

fax: (202) 822-7974

National Education Association

1201 16th St., NW

Washington, DC

Janie Munoz

pho

fax

P6(b)(6)

Jean Nelson

phone: (202) 260-7960

fax: (202) 260-3684

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

401 M St SW

Washington, D.C. 20460

Karen Nussbaum

phone: (202) 219-6611

fax: (202) 219-5529

U.S. Department of Labor

260 Constitution Ave, NW Suite 3002

Washington, D.C. 20210

Jan Piercy

phone: (202) 458-0110

fax: (202) 477-2967

World Bank

U.S. Executive Director's Office

1818 H St. NW

Room D 13-004

Washington, D.C.

-6-

Sally Shelton

phone: (202) 647-1827

fax: (202) 647-3038

U.S. Agency for International Development

Room 4942

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20523

Donna Shalala

phone: (202) 690-7000

fax: (202) 690-7595

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Ave SW

Washington, D.C. 20201

Dave Stewart

phone: (202) 647-9328

fax: (202) 736-7116

U.S. Department of State

Room 5425

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Julia Taft

phone: (202) 667-8227, ext 110

fax: (202) 667-8236

Interaction

1717 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 801

Washington, D.C. 20036

Linda Tarr-Whelan

phone: (202) 387-6030

fax: (202) 986-2539

Center for Policy Alternatives

1875 Connecticut Ave., NW Suite 710

Washington, D.C. 20009-5728

Virginia Trotter-Bells

phone: (202) 651-7017

fax: (202) 651-7006

American Nurses Association

600 Maryland Ave., SW Suite 100 West

Washington, D.C. 20024

Susan Weld

phone: (617) 495-3283

fax: (617) 727-9731

422 Pound Hall

Harvard Law School

Cambridge, MA 02138

Bisa Williams-Manigault

phone: (212) 415-4296

fax: (212) 415-4299

US Mission to the UN

799 United Nations Plaza

New York, NY 10017

-7-

Marie Wilson

phone: (212) 742-2300

fax: (212) 742-1653

Ms. Foundation

141 5th Avenue

New York, NY 10010

Timothy Wirth

phone: (202) 647-6241

fax: (202) 647-0753

U.S. Department of State

Room 7520

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

STAFF:**Robin Bordie**

phone: (202) 647-6774

fax: (202) 647-6820

U.S. Department of State

Room 4813

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Martha Brown

phone: (202) 401-5788

fax: (202) 401-5618

United States Information Agency

Office of Special Projects

Suite 544

301 4th St., SW

Washington, D.C. 20547

Nanda Chitre

phone: (202) 647-6088

fax: (202) 647-5939

U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Public Affairs

Room 6800

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Marsha Coleman-Adebayo

phone: (202) 260-3826

fax: (202) 260-4470

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Office of International Activities (Mail Code 2621)

401 M St., SW

Washington, DC 20460

-8-

Peter Richer

phone: (202) 647-3588

fax: (202) 647-9519

U.S. Department of State
Room 7802
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Ann Ganzer

phone: (202) 647-1434

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State
G/Conference Secretariat
Room 1318
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Suzanne George

phone: (202) 736-7555

fax: (202) 736-7551

U.S. Department of State
Room 6333
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Kate Grant

phone: (202) 647-9096

fax: (202) 647-0148

U.S. Agency for International Development
320 21st St., NW
Washington, DC 20523

Gracia Hillman

phone: (202) 647-9154

fax: (202) 647-0753

U.S. Department of State
Office of Global Affairs
Room 7526
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

David Hohman

phone: (202) 690-6174

fax: (202) 690-7127

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Room 627H
Washington, D.C. 20201

Joyce Kravitz

phone: (202) 619-3375

fax: (202) 619-0085

United States Information Agency
Bureau of Broadcasting
330 Independence Ave., SW
Room 3300
Washington, D.C. 20547

-9-

Theresa Ioar

phone: (202) 647-3129

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State
G/Conference Secretariat
Room 1318
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Ashley Maddox

Has already departed the U.S.

Jeff Meer

phone: (202) 647-4739

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State
G/Conference Secretariat
Room 1318
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Alexandra Milonas

phone: (202) 690-6347

fax: (202) 690-7098

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
2001 Independence Ave., SW Rm 605-F
Washington, D.C. 20201

Margaret Pollack

phone: (202) 647-1155

fax: (202) 647-4628

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of International Organizations/Economic and Social
Affairs
Room 5327
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Regina Rhea

phone: (202) 647-3128

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State
G/Conference Secretariat
Room 1318
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Elaine Shocas

phone: (202) 736-7555

fax: (202) 736-7551

U.S. Department of State
Room 6333
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

-10-

Lycia Sibilla

phone: (202) 647-3129

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State
G/Conference Secretariat
Room 1318
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Amy Sobel

phone: (202) 647-3129

fax: (202) 647-4787

U.S. Department of State
G/Conference Secretariat
Room 1318
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Bob Ward

phone: (202) 260-2785

fax: (202) 260-3828

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of General Council (Mail Code 2399)
401 M St., SW
Washington, DC 20460

OTHERS:**Joyce Brown-Moore**

phone: (202) 205-5465

fax: (202) 205-9252

U.S. Department of Education
330 C St., SW
Room 3006, Switzer Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Judith Rivera

phone: (202) 785-1670, ext. 729

fax: (202) 205-9252

National Council of La Raza
1111 19th St., NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1995

*REMARKS BY

DONNA E. SHALALA
CO-CHAIR OF THE U.S. DELEGATION
SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

AT

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S
WOMEN'S HEALTH DAY
PANEL ON "WOMEN AND AIDS"
FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

BEIJING, CHINA

*THIS TEXT IS THE BASIS OF SECRETARY SHALALA'S ORAL REMARKS.
IT SHOULD BE USED WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT SOME MATERIAL MAY
BE ADDED OR OMITTED DURING PRESENTATION.

GOOD EVENING:

I am honored to join all of you tonight, to be in Beijing, and to represent the United States as a co-chair of the U.S. delegation at this important conference on women.

I come here tonight to discuss our mutual interest in women's health. We do not share common languages or cultures or religions. But, together we are reaching across continents to join hands to improve the health of women from Peru to Paris, from Lebanon to Los Angeles, from Senegal to Singapore.

In just fourteen years -- the time it takes to raise a child from birth to adolescence -- a wave of human destruction has swept over our planet. In that time, HIV has claimed the lives of more than six million men, women, and children. And today, more than 18 million citizens of the world are living with this insidious virus.

We know that women constitute more than 40 percent of adult HIV infections around the globe -- and, tragically, that number is growing. By the end of the century, experts predict that most new HIV infections will be among women and children.

We know that biologically and socially women are more vulnerable to HIV infection.

We know that HIV expresses itself differently in women than it does in men.

And, as we approach the dawn of the 21st century, we know that the real faces of AIDS include our mothers and our daughters, our sisters and our aunts, our neighbors and our friends.

The face of AIDS is the 30 year-old woman in Zimbabwe who is struggling to survive with her partner, who is also infected with HIV.

The face of AIDS is the 24 year-old woman in the United States who exchanges sex for food and shelter and is now living with AIDS.

The face of AIDS is the 42 year-old woman in London who, having unknowingly infected her children, must watch her family disintegrate before her eyes.

And, the face of AIDS is the 11 year-old girl in the Philippines forced to raise herself because both of her parents were stolen away by this cruel pandemic.

But, these women are not alone.

Because, in the face of this tragedy, there are also glimmers of hope.

Women, from around the world, using their minds and bodies and souls: researching vaccines and cures; raising money and raising awareness; holding families together; and fighting for policies that will help stop this disease and heal those it strikes.

That's exactly why we are here.

We meet today to demonstrate our solidarity against HIV and AIDS, our determination to conquer it, and our commitment -- now and always -- to compassionately support those members of our global family who have been affected by it.

Let me be clear: Any breach in international solidarity is a victory for the virus. Because AIDS does not discriminate. It knows no boundaries of geography or gender; ethnicity or employment. It makes no distinctions based on age, nationality, or sexual orientation. So, our efforts must be just as universal in scope.

In the United States, we have significantly increased the resources devoted to combatting HIV and AIDS at home and around the world.

We have re-focused and re-energized our research agenda and developed frank and honest public education campaigns.

We have -- as a matter of national policy -- directly involved non-governmental organizations in the planning and implementation of our AIDS strategy.

We're forging partnerships with our pharmaceutical industry, experts from academia, and members of the AIDS community to remove bureaucratic roadblocks and speed the development of AIDS-related drugs.

And, through it all, we are working tirelessly to empower women to protect themselves against HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases.

I'm talking about supporting private efforts to develop the female condom.

I'm talking about doubling our commitment to develop a microbicide that women can use privately to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

I'm talking about capitalizing on the landmark results of AIDS Clinical Trials Group 076. The evidence that we can block perinatal transmission of HIV with a drug has created a bright ray of hope for countless women and their children.

And I'm talking about providing appropriate and compassionate care to all those who are living with HIV and AIDS.

We can make their lives better, if not longer, but it will require greater will and greater resources. But it is clearly not enough.

To meet this challenge, all of us must encircle the globe, creating an international front to stop the spread of this disease and the pain and suffering it causes.

As members of the global family, the people of the United States remain committed to the international partnership against HIV and AIDS.

The President's budget includes a strong commitment for direct assistance to international AIDS activities -- demonstrating the United States continuing dedication to these efforts as the lead bilateral contributor.

We are also firmly supporting the new United Nations AIDS Program and its visionary director, Dr. Peter Piot. In just a few short months, Dr. Piot and his colleagues have made tremendous gains.

But the success of UNAIDS, and the success of every other international effort, will depend upon all nations committing their hearts, their minds, and their resources to get the job done.

So, before we leave here tonight, let us challenge ourselves to improve and expand education programs that teach women about their own bodies so that they can protect their own lives.

Let us educate our men -- especially our young men -- to respect women and to protect their families by taking personal responsibility for preventing the spread of disease.

Let us continue to support biomedical research, uncovering great scientific discoveries that empower women to protect themselves against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Let us make treatment for sexually transmitted diseases available to men and women so that we can reduce this critical co-factor to HIV infection.

And, above all, let us never forget the underlying socioeconomic factors that prevent women from protecting themselves and their families.

Because, our battle against HIV and AIDS is also a battle against racism, sexism, poverty, and homophobia. And, we must continue to confront these battles -- individually and collectively -- if we are to win the war against AIDS.

As citizens of the world, it is our responsibility to stand up for the rights of people with HIV and AIDS. It is our responsibility to wipe out discrimination as we work to wipe out this deadly disease.

Because, if we are to conquer HIV -- and I firmly believe that we will -- it will take an unprecedented level of international cooperation and collective action.

It will take courage and creativity. It will take passion and perseverance. It will take loud voices and bold visions. But, it must be done and it will be done.

In the names of those who have been affected by HIV and AIDS throughout the globe; citizens we have lost and those we may lose; all of us must join hands, now and forever, to fight to reach our common goal.

Thank you.

09/04/95

21:32

Address by

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto

Prime Minister

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

at

the Fourth World Conference on Women

1002

Beijing

September 4, 1995

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Madam Chairperson,

Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Delegates,

Sisters!

Pakistan is grateful to the Government and the people of China for hosting this Conference. We have been deeply touched by the warm welcome and gracious hospitality.

I pay a special tribute to the Secretary General of the United Nations and Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, the Secretary General of the Conference for their tireless efforts in organizing this meeting.

My dear sisters, ladies and gentlemen!

There is a moral crisis engulfing the world as we speak, a crisis of injustice and inaction, a crisis of silence and acquiescence.

The crisis is caused by centuries and generations of oppression and repression.

This conference, therefore, transcends politics and economics. We are dealing with a fundamental moral issue.

This is a truly historic occasion. Some 40,000 women have assembled here to demand their rights; to secure a better future for their daughters; to put an end to the prejudices which still deny so many of us our rightful place in society.

On this solemn occasion I stand before you not only as a Prime Minister but as a woman and a mother—A woman proud of her cultural and religious heritage, a woman sensitive to the obstacles to justice and full participation that still stand before women in almost every society on earth.

As the first woman ever elected to head an Islamic nation, I feel a special responsibility towards women's issues and towards all women.

And as a Muslim woman, I feel a special responsibility to counter the propaganda of a handful that Islam gives women a second class status.

This is not true. Today the Muslim world boasts three women Prime Ministers, elected by male and female voters on our abilities as people, as persons, not as women.

Our election has destroyed the myth built by social taboo that a woman's place is in the house, that it is shameful or dishonourable or socially unacceptable for a Muslim woman to work.

Our election has given women all over the Muslim world moral strength to declare that it is socially correct for a woman to work and to follow in our footsteps as working women and working mothers.

Muslim women have a special responsibility to help distinguish between Islamic teachings and social taboos spun by the traditions of a patriarchal society.

This is a distinction that obscurantists would not like to see. For obscurantists believe in discrimination. Discrimination is the first step to dictatorship and the usurpation of power.

A month ago, Pakistan hosted the first ever conference of Women Parliamentarians of Muslim world.

Never in the history of Islam had so many working women and elected representatives gathered together at one place to speak in one voice.

As over a 100 delegates from 35 Muslim countries gathered together, I felt an enormous sense of pride that we women had each other for strength and support, across the globe and across the continents to face and oppose those who would not allow the empowerment of women.

And, today, I feel that same sense of pride, that we women have gathered together at Beijing, at this ancient capital of an ancient civilization to declare: we are not alone in our search for empowerment, that women across continents are together in the search for self-esteem, self-worth, self-respect and respect in society itself. In distinguishing between Islamic teachings and social taboos, we must remember that Islam forbids injustice;

Injustice against people, against nations, against women.

It shuns race, colour, and gender as a basis of distinction amongst fellowmen.

It enshrines piety as the sole criteria for judging humankind.

It treats women as human beings in their own right, not as chattels. A woman can inherit, divorce, receive alimony and child custody. Women were intellectuals, poets, jurists and even took part in war.

The Holy Book of the Muslims refers to the rule of a woman, the Queen of Sabah. The Holy Book alludes to her wisdom and to her country being a land of plenty.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) himself married a working woman. And the first convert to Islam was a woman, Bibi Khadija.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphatically condemned and put an end to the practice of female infanticide in pre-Islamic Arabia. The Holy Quran reads:

When news is brought to one of them, of the birth of a female (child),

his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief what shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had.

Shall he retain it on sufferance and contempt, or bury it in the dust.

Ah! what an evil choice they decide on (Surah Al-Nahl, Ayat-57, 58, 59)

Ladies and gentlemen!

How true these words ring even today.

How many women are still "retained" in their families "on sufferance and contempt" growing up with emotional scars and burdens.

How tragic it is that the pre-Islamic practice of female infanticide still haunts a world we regard as modern and civilized.

Girl children are often abandoned or aborted.

Statistics show that men now increasingly outnumber women in more than 15 Asian nations.

Boys are wanted. Boys are wanted because their worth is considered more than that of the girl.

Boys are wanted to satisfy the ego: they carry on the father's name in this world.

Yet too often we forget that for Muslims on the Day of Judgement, each person will be called not by their father's name but by the mother's name.

To please her husband, a woman wants a son. To keep her husband from abandoning her, a woman wants a son.

And, too often, when a woman expects a girl, she abets her husband in abandoning or aborting that innocent, perfectly formed child.

As we gather here today, the cries of the girl child reach out to us.

This conference need to chart a course that can create a climate where the girl child is as welcomed and valued as a boy child, that the girl child is considered as worthy as a boy child.

When I was chairperson of the South Asian Association of Regional Countries, SAARC declared 1989 as the Year of the Girl Child.

Six years later, the girl child's vulnerability continues.

And it continues, not because of religion in the case of Pakistan, but because of social prejudice.

The rights Islam gave Muslim women have too often been denied.

And women are denied rights all over the world, whether developed or developing.

All over the world women are subjected to domestic violence.

Often a woman does not walk out for she has nowhere to go. Or she stays and puts up with the domestic violence for the sake of her children.

We in Pakistan have started a public awareness campaign against domestic violence through the mass media to inform women that domestic violence is a crime and to alert men that they can be punished for it.

Often women, in many a society are tortured, not only by men, but by women in-laws too, for financial benefits from the woman's family.

Sometime a wife is killed by her husband or in-laws so that they can gain another wife and more dowry.

Dowry system is a social ill against which we must raise our voices and create greater awareness.

Women are not only victims of physical abuse, women are victims of verbal abuse.

Often men, in anger and frustration, indulge in the uncivilized behaviour of rude and vulgar language against women.

Unfortunately, women at times also use vulgar language to denigrate another woman.

So we have to work together to change not only the attitudes of men but the attitudes of men and women.

Women have become the victims of a culture of exclusion and male dominance. Today more women than men suffer from poverty, deprivation, and discrimination. Half a billion women are illiterate. Seventy per cent of the children who are denied elementary education are girls.

In Pakistan we are concentrating on primary education for girls to rectify this imbalance.

We are concentrating on training women teachers and opening up employment avenues for women.

It is my firm conviction that a woman cannot ultimately control her own life and make her own choices unless she has financial independence.

A woman cannot have financial independence if she cannot work.

The discrimination against women can only begin to erode when women are educated and women are employed.

If my Father had not educated me or left me with independent financial means, I would not have been able to sustain myself or to struggle against tyranny or to stand here before you today as a special guest speaker.

If the girl child is to be valued, if the wife is to say "No" to domestic violence then we owe a special obligation to creating jobs for women.

That is why we in Pakistan, set up in 1989 the Women's Bank.

A Bank run by women for women to aid and assist women in setting up their own enterprises to gain financial independence and with it the freedom to make one's own choices.

Today 23 branches of the Women's Bank in Pakistan help working women.

Our major cities are marked by enterprises set up by women: bakeries, restaurants, boutiques, interior decoration.

We have lifted the ban on Pakistani women taking part in international sporting events.

In 1997 we host the Second Muslim Women's Olympics. Special sporting facilities are being set up to encourage participation by Pakistani women in sports.

And Pakistani women are playing a significant role in defusing the population bomb in Pakistan.

One hundred thousand women are to be trained to reduce Pakistan's population growth levels and its infant mortality levels.

When I visit poverty stricken villages with no access to clean drinking water, it gladdens my heart to see a lady health visitor, to see a working woman amidst the unfortunate surroundings.

For it is my conviction that we can only conquer poverty, squalor, illiteracy and superstition when we invest in our women and when our women begin working. Begin working in our far flung villages where time seems to have stood still and where the Bullock not the tractor is still used for cultivation;

Where women are too weak from bearing too many children.

Where the daughters are more malnourished than the sons for the daughters get to eat the left overs.

Where villagers work night and day with their women and children, to eke out an existence;

Where floods and rain wash out crops and destroy homes;

Where poverty stalks the land with an appetite that cannot be controlled until we wake up to the twin reality of population control and women's empowerment.

And it is here that the United Nations and its Secretary General have played a critical role.

Distinguished Delegates!

Some cynics argue about the utility of holding this conference.

Let me disagree with them.

The holding of this conference demonstrates that women are not forgotten, that the world cares.

The holding of this conference demonstrates solidarity with women.

The holding of this conference makes us determined to contribute each in our own way, in any manner we can, to lessen the oppression, repression and discrimination against women.

And while much needs to be done, each decade has brought with it its own small improvement.

When I was growing up, women in my extended family remained behind closed walls in village homes. Now we all travel to cities or abroad.

When I was growing up, women in my extended family all covered ourselves with the *Burqa*, or veil from head to foot when we visited each others for weddings or funerals—the only two items for which we were allowed out. Now most women restrict themselves to the *Duppatta* or *Chadar* and are free to leave the house.

When I was growing up, no girl in my extended family was allowed to marry if a boy cousin was not available for fear of the property leaving the family. Now girls do marry outside the family.

When I was growing up, the boy cousin inevitably took a second wife. Now girls do not expect their husbands to marry again. From the norm, it has become the exception to the norm.

When I was growing up, women were not educated. I was the first girl in my family to go to university and to go abroad for my studies. Now it has become the norm for girls to be educated at university and abroad when the families can afford it.

I have seen a lot of changes in my lifetime.

But I hope to see many more changes.

And some of these changes I hope will flow from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calling for the elimination of discrimination against women.

I hope some of these changes will flow from the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination which Pakistan signed last month.

Of course there was resistance from many quarters.

But we are determined to move forward in fulfilling our dream of a Pakistan where women contribute their full potential.

Distinguished Delegates!

As women, we draw satisfaction from Beijing Platform of Action which encompasses a comprehensive approach towards the empowerment of women.

But women cannot be expected to struggle alone against the forces of discrimination and exploitation. I recall the words of Dante who reminded us that:

"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of moral crisis."

Today in this world, in the fight for the liberation of women, there can be no neutrality.

But my dear sisters, we have learned that democracy alone is not enough.

Freedom of choice alone does not guarantee justice.

Equal rights are not defined only by political values.

Social justice is a triad of freedom, of equality, of liberty:

Justice is political liberty.

Justice is economic independence.

Justice is social equality.

Delegates, Sisters!

Empowerment is not only a right to have political freedom. Empowerment is the right to be independent; to be educated; to have choices in life.

Empowerment is the right to have the opportunity to select a productive career; to own property; to participate in business; to flourish in the market place.

Pakistan is satisfied that the draft Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women negotiated so far focuses on the critical areas of concern for women and outlines an action-oriented strategy for the solution of their problems.

However, we believe that the Platform needs to address the questions of new and additional resources, external debt, structural adjustment programmes, human rights of women, protection of women entrapped in armed conflicts and the realization of the right to self-determination of the territories still under foreign occupation and alien domination.

It must also seek to strengthen the role of the traditional family as the bedrock of the society. Disintegration of the family generates moral decay. This must be arrested.

The Platform is disturbingly weak on the role of the traditional family. This weakness can lead to misinterpretation, and even distortion by opponents of the women's agenda.

We have seen much progress. The very fact that we convene in Beijing today is a giant step forward.

But new clouds darken the horizon.

The end of the cold war should have ushered in peace and an era of progress of women. Regrettably, the proliferation of regional tensions and conflicts have belied our aspirations. As in the past, women and girls have again been the most direct victims of these conflicts—the most helpless, and thus the most abused.

The use of rape as a weapon of war and an instrument of "ethnic cleansing" is as depraved as it is reprehensible. The unfolding of this saga in different parts of the world, including Jammu and Kashmir and Bosnia Herzegovina has shaken the conscience of the entire international community.

The enormity of the tragedy dwarfs our other issues—urgent though they are. This conference must, therefore, express its complete solidarity with our sisters and daughters who are victims of armed conflict, oppression, and brutality. Their misfortunes must be our first priority.

Madam Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I come before you to speak of the forces that must shape the new decade, the new century, the new millennium.

We must shape a world free from exploitation and maltreatment of women.

A world in which women have opportunities to rise to the highest level in politics, business, diplomacy, and other spheres of life.

Where there are no battered women. Where honour and dignity is protected in war and conflict.

Where we have economic freedom and independence.

Where we are equal partners in peace and development.

A world equally committed to economic development and political development.

A world as committed to free markets as to women's emancipation.

And even as we catalogue, organize, and reach our goals, step by step by step, let us be ever vigilant. Repressive forces always will stand ready to exploit the moment and push us back into the past.

Let us remember the words of the German writer Goethe:

"Freedom has to be re-made and re-earned in every generation."

We must do much more than decry the past. We must change the future.

Remembering the words of a sister parliamentarian Senator, Barbara Mikulski, that "demography is destiny", I believe time, justice and the forces of history are on our side. We are here in Beijing to proclaim a new vision of equality and partnership.

Let us translate this vision into reality in the shortest possible time.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.