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INTERVIEW

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Town Hall on Empowering Civil Society for Central Asia's Future**

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Eurasian University
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AMBASSADOR ZHARBUSSYNOVA: Ladies and gentlemen, today I am truly honored to welcome the Secretary of State Madam Hillary Clinton. Madam, all of us present here today are grateful that despite the challenging schedule and the long flight, you were willing to have this meeting with representative of the civil society and other organizations and students of the university.

Now that Astana air is filled with the Helsinki spirit, it is especially important for the civil society to realize that they are an integral part of the OSCE process. And just the last week alone, Astana hosted a number of key events which have effectively demonstrated the importance and the possibility of a constructive dialogue between the officials and nongovernmental organizations. Among them, the OSCE and the NGO forum initiated by the chairmanship and the Office for the Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and also, of course, the review – the last segment of the Review Conference which was attended by a large number of NGO representatives from OSCE countries. And the participation of the civil society at these events was highly remarkable and not just because of the large number of the participants, but primarily due to the recommendation they introduce to the documents.

Many participants of these events are here among the participants of this meeting, and men and women – they are men and women with strong intentions to make our world a safer place for everyone. And I am more than sure that our meeting – this interactive dialogue – will incorporate both crucial and important issues. Clearly, your persona is well known all over the world, however I would like to share with the audience some facts characterizing you as a human being and a woman.

Growing up, Mrs. Clinton had a dream. She dreamt of being an astronaut. Thus, she approached NASA, yet at that time she was turned down because NASA did not allow at that time women into its space programs. To my mind, this to some extent influenced your later becoming a champion of human rights, democracy, and civil society. Your famous speech in Beijing in 1995 when you declared that human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights, inspired women all over the world and helped to galvanize a global movement for women's rights.

As the First Lady, you worked on many issues related to children and families. You launched the U.S. Government's Vital Voices Democracy Initiative. Today, Vital Voice is a nongovernmental organization that continues to train and organize women leaders across the world. And given this occasion, Madam, I would like to express the help of women of Kazakhstan that the Vital Voices chapter will be open here in the nearest future. We are looking forward to the cooperation with this organization.

In 2000, Hillary Clinton made history as the first lady elected to the United States Senate and the first woman – the first woman elected statewide in New York. In the Senate, she served on the Armed Services Committee, the House Education, Labor, and Pensions Committees, the Environment and Public Works Committee, the Budget Committee, and the Select Committee on Aging. She was also a commissioner on the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Hence, it is of no surprise that President Barack Obama invited Mrs. Clinton for the position of the Secretary of State underlining that Mrs. Clinton is capable of successfully leading the U.S. State Department and working on the realization of an ambitious foreign policy agenda jointly with the President. It is a great importance for our nation and our people that in this foreign policy agenda, Kazakhstan is positioned as a strategic partner.

We have had the pleasure of welcoming you in Kazakhstan in 1997 and we are very honored to welcome you here today just on the eve of the historic OSCE summit. (Applause.)

And now let me introduce the moderator of today's evening, Mrs. Iva Dubichina, whom you well know as she worked here for several years as the head of the Freedom House mission in Kazakhstan. She made many friends in Kazakhstan and she looks forward to continuing this cooperation.

Iva, the floor is yours. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: Good evening. Indeed I have made many friends in Kazakhstan, but this role of moderator will make me probably the most hated person at the end of the day in Kazakhstan.

So, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, my dear colleagues and friend, it is a great honor and a privilege to give the floor to the U.S. Secretary of State, Her Excellency Hillary Rodham Clinton. (Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you, Iva. Well, good evening. And it is an absolute delight for me to be here in Astana on the eve of the OSCE Summit and to have this opportunity to meet with you. I very much enjoyed my visit, as the ambassador reminded us, in 1997, and I have looked forward to returning. And I am grateful for this warm welcome, Ambassador. Thank you, Rector, for your invitation. And as you saw the young musicians who were playing as you may have walked in this evening, the youngest one was one of the Rectors' daughters. And so education is a family commitment.

And I also want to recognize the other officials and dignitaries who are here this evening, and I'm very grateful that I have a chance to address so many strong activists for democracy, for human rights, for freedom, and for a better future, not only in Kazakhstan, but across Central Asia, Europe, and indeed the world.

When Kazakhstan hosts the first summit of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe ever held in Central Asia tomorrow, that will send a very strong message that the work of the OSCE and the Helsinki principles are not confined to one group of people or to one group of nations. They indeed are applicable around the world. I will be meeting with many government leaders to talk about a range of issues that affect all of us, from our mutual interests in the security of Afghanistan, to nuclear nonproliferation, of which Kazakhstan is a leader, to the diversity of energy supplies and so much else.

But first, my very first stop was to come and meet with you, because strong democracies, thriving economies, and stable societies cannot be built by governments alone. There must be a partnership between governments and vibrant institutions and free societies that work together to solve the problems that we face in the 21st century.

Thirty-five years ago, when the leaders of North America, Europe, and the Soviet Union came together to sign the Helsinki Final Act, they committed themselves to a core set of human values, including the fundamental freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, thought, and religion. These values are as fresh and relevant today as they were 35 years ago, and they are absolutely critical to the building of sustainable societies and nations that are committed to creating a better set of opportunities for all of their citizens.

I know in this auditorium tonight there are many activists who represent many organizations that are making a difference in your societies and countries. I'd like to just mention a few of these groups because they are standing up for the core Helsinki principles. As the ambassador said, I served on the Helsinki Commission when I was a senator in the United States Senate, and I have followed the work of so many individuals and organizations that have consistently stood for the principles that all of us agreed to 35 years ago. I developed a special respect for the work of nongovernmental organizations, the work that many of you do to bolster civil society, women's rights, expand opportunity, promote tolerance, and so much more.

Tonight, I would particularly like to honor the Almay Helsinki Committee. You have worked for decades to advance peaceful, democratic change based on the noble principles of the Helsinki Act, principles that we continue to hold dear.

I also would like to commend the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law for its work toward developing the National Human Rights Action Plan and recognize the role that that Evgenyi Zhovtis, a leading human rights activist, played in drafting this important document.

And I would like to salute Galina Morozova, who has devoted herself in the past 12 years to fight against human trafficking. She has sheltered hundreds of women. She has made herself vulnerable, because in the face of death threats she has fought for tougher sentences for

traffickers. And she has worked with the government and with law enforcement agencies to change their attitudes and to help them understand that human trafficking is the modern form of human slavery.

There are so many people who have worked hand in hand to advance democracy and human rights. And I particularly was pleased to see some of the women who are on the front lines of change in Kazakhstan, some of whom I met in 1997, some of whom I have seen in other settings, but all of whom I greatly respect.

But I also want to commend the Government of Kazakhstan, because this government has made more progress than any other in the region and has committed itself to continuing that progress. Civil society groups help hold governments accountable, but governments have to be responsive. So I'd like to thank Adil Soz, the International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech, for its vital role as a media watchdog, because the OSCE commitments include the right of all citizens to know and act upon their rights. And it takes both brave journalists and independent local monitors to fight violations of press freedom.

I could go on and on, because really so many of you could be acknowledged and thanked. But I want to hear from you. I want to hear about what you see as continuing challenges, what you see as the changes that you are seeking, and how we can better all work together. Many of you took part in the OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference that ended yesterday, and you noted the systematic and persistent human rights problems in many post-Soviet states. We will certainly work with you and with the governments involved to try to address these problems.

But I do think it's important to just take a step back for perspective. We have come a very long way in just 35 years. When you get to be my age, 35 years seems like a very short time. In 1975, the international community embraced a revolutionary idea, that security among states was directly connected to the way that their citizens were treated within states. And in the decades since, we have seen time and again that countries need more than military and economic security if they are to achieve stability, prosperity, and progress. They need vibrant civil society.

President Obama and I understand this. I started my career at a nongovernmental organization called the Children's Defense Fund. He began his as a community organizer in Chicago. We live in a country where civil society movements have been the engine of major social advance. Change is not easy anywhere. It wasn't easy in the history of the United States and it is not easy anywhere else in the world. It takes persistence and it takes a commitment by people, sometimes generation after generation. We found that in the struggle to abolish slavery, to establish civil rights, to empower women, to protect our environment. And we have watched civil society write history, from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the end of apartheid in South Africa, to the spread of democracy. Thirty-five years ago when the Helsinki commitments were made, very few people predicted the end of the Soviet Union. And yet 15 years later, it was no longer.

So think about the work you are doing in the urgency of the moment, but also with the perspective of what it takes to create change. We now have so many organizations ready, willing, and able to help you – foundations, universities, other nongovernmental

organizations. We now can communicate to understand what is happening in countries and societies far from our own. We can become global problem solvers. And that is what I hope we will determine to do going forward, and that we will bring governments into partnerships.

One of your neighboring countries, Kyrgyzstan, has just undergone a dramatic change, culminating in a free parliamentary election. Now, the road ahead is hard, and I will be going there on Thursday to meet with the president and the people that are working with her, but that is a courageous moment that now must be built upon.

No country can be fully free unless human rights defenders are given their rights. That means right to counsel and trials. It means journalists who can bring their attackers to justice and prevent impunity. It means pollsters who can ask questions about public attitudes. It means that civil society groups are not harassed by the tax police, or that the rule of law is protected and respected even when everyone disagrees with a position that is taken by an activist.

I really believe that we are at a particularly important moment in history. The 20th century ended totalitarianism, two bloody world wars, a cold war, and now in the 21st century we have to make good on the sacrifice of all those who came before us. And this is not just for activists, but for government leaders as well. Because if you want your country to grow, if you want your people to prosper, if you want all of your citizens to fulfill their own God-given potential, then governments must respect human rights.

My country will continue to advocate for democratic government, civil society, free markets, and we will continue to do so in part by supporting education and exchange programs that empower civil society groups. And I hope at tomorrow's summit we will reconfirm our commitment to a community of freedom, security, and prosperity, stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Each government will finally be judged by how it lives up to the promises that it makes. Constitutions can be written with all kinds of promises, but they're not more than paper if those promises are not implemented. Laws can be passed promising all kinds of protections, but they really are not worth much unless they are enforced.

So governments hold so much of the future in their hands, but they are not the most powerful determinant. That is the people themselves, and particularly the organizations that bring people together in civil society.

So it is an honor for me to be here. I look forward to hearing your questions and your comments, your ideas that you think would make our partnerships here in the OSCE and between my country and yours even more effective. Thank you for the work that you do every single day. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: Ladies and gentlemen, before I open the floor for questions, and I will use the right to first question that I have as a moderator. I would like to tell you that we have around 45 minutes for questions, so I would like to ask you to keep your interventions as short as possible so that we have more time for people to ask questions or to make short interventions.

I will be calling those of you who I know by name, and those who I don't I will describe their appearance, so sorry if I miss a thing or two about your outfit because it's really not visible from here. But let me use my right – or abuse my right, I don't – know as moderator to ask the first question, and it will be about the OSCE because we are here in Astana because of this organization.

So in the '90s, OSCE was high on the list of U.S. foreign policy priorities, and it was then when the OSCE adopted a number of key documents stressing the importance of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law as requisites for security. However, in the last few years this model is somewhat challenged by a number of member states of the OSCE and other countries, and that the OSCE as an organization is experiencing some difficulties and tough negotiations are held, some observers are even questioning the value-added of the organization. So how high is the OSCE on the list of your priorities?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, Iva, first, it's very high on the list of my priorities and this Administration's priorities. It won't surprise you to hear that I agree with you that in the 1990s, when my husband was president, the OSCE was considered a very important part of our foreign policy. And the Obama Administration agrees with that, and I have taken steps to reaffirm our commitment to the OSCE, including coming here to Astana, to be sure that the good work that was started 35 years ago continues.

Now, the times change and there are new challenges, but I think the core values of the OSCE remain as important today as they were in the past. And it is, in my view, part of the foreign policy of the United States to be more involved in supporting multilateral organizations like the OSCE. And one of the difficult issues that we are grappling with in the OSCE is whether or not countries that once signed up to the core documents and principles underlying the OSCE will continue to support them.

And so we are very committed to making the OSCE more active, more vital, more relevant, and frankly, challenging any members who are not willing to abide by the very principles that they agreed to support when they joined the OSCE. Nobody is made to join the OSCE. It is a voluntary organization. But if you join it and then you say, "But I don't really believe in the human dimension pillar of the OSCE, I don't really support the Helsinki Act," then why did you join?

And so what I want to do is keep the emphasis on the importance that the OSCE plays and the very significant connections between successful countries and following Helsinki principles. Because if you want to be a successful country in the 21st century, eventually you're going to have to accept that you must do more on behalf of human rights. So I think that from my perspective, we are reinvigorating our commitment to the OSCE.

MS. DUBICHINA: That's really encouraging to hear. So now I am opening the floor for questions. And because we are in an academic institution, I will give the first question to a student, so let me try to locate a student. Yes, that young lady there with a white shirt.

QUESTION: (inaudible.) My microphone is not working? Good evening, Madam Secretary. I am a student of Eurasian National University. My name is Camila and my question is if you have chance to meet a politician of any period of time of human history, who would you like to meet with, and why?

SECRETARY CLINTON: That's a wonderful question. I have been very privileged in my life to meet many extraordinary people, many brave and courageous people, many people that risk their lives for freedom and for human rights and for women's rights. I think that the person who I have been most impressed by in my meeting has been Nelson Mandela. I think what Nelson Mandela demonstrated through all those years in prison, which could make you a very bitter person – you could come out of prison hating – but he came out of prison determined to create a society in South Africa that didn't look backwards but looked forwards.

And I'll tell you a quick story about why I am so impressed with him. I've had the privilege of spending a lot of time with him over the last 18 years, and I went to his inauguration as president in 1994 in South Africa. And after the big ceremony where he gave the speech and the bands played, he invited a large group of visitors from around the world to a lunch at the presidential house. In the morning it had been inhabited by the last white Afrikaner president, in the afternoon it was inhabited by the first African president.

And at this lunch, then-President Mandela stood up and he said, "I am very honored to have all of these distinguished visitors from around the world, but the three most important people to me who are here that I personally invited are three of my former jailers from Robbens Island." And he asked these three white men to stand up, and he said, "I had many jailers over 27 years," I think it was. "These three men treated me with dignity and respect. They may have been my jailers, but they related to me as a fellow human being." And I will never forget that.

And I thought in politics and civil society, we often draw lines against people, the good people and the bad people. And sometimes things are done to you that are very hard to forgive. But here was a man who was telling the world, "I can see through the prejudice, the stereotypes, and I can see the human beings because they saw me as a human being. And I will never forget that." So he is someone who I highly admire and deeply believe is one of the great leaders of the world and of all time. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: (Inaudible) but you will have to go out of the row and find the microphone. Yeah, you will have to move forward to the microphone (inaudible). I'm sorry. It's so complicated, but –

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

MODERATOR: I will translate it for you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes. Please translate.

MODERATOR: The microphone was not working. So what do you think will happen (inaudible) the government (inaudible) the situation in Kyrgyzstan, the events in Kyrgyzstan.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Madam Secretary, what do you think about the future of Kyrgyzstan, and what do you think – and what kind of role the civil society of Kyrgyzstan can play in the future?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I will be going to Kyrgyzstan the day after tomorrow because I want to meet with not only the president, but other leaders there, talk to civil society, and get my own firsthand impression. But I will say three things. First, I think that the people of Kyrgyzstan have spoken very forcefully in favor of representative government and democracy, and all of us need to help them. Secondly, as with any society, there are tensions. There are tensions between ethnic and nationality groups, and all of us need to try to help ease those tensions and to support efforts by civil society and by the government to punish the wrongdoers who were behind a lot of the rioting, but to do so in accordance with the rule of law, but to also look for ways that people can work together and create more a inclusive society.

And finally, the elections which were held, nobody knew who was going to win. That was a remarkable election. It was an election where people really had to go out and think for themselves and cast their votes. And now they have to try to put a government together, which means they have to what I call “practice politics.” They have to actually listen to each other and try to figure out what they can give and what they can ask as they put together a government. It is a very difficult path they have chosen for themselves, but the United States will do everything we can to support them. I very much appreciate the role of the government of Kazakhstan, which has been extremely helpful in supporting Kyrgyzstan, and we have to keep working together. We have to do everything possible to help them succeed at their important effort to bring democracy to Kyrgyzstan. So let’s work together on that. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Trying to get some gender balance, so (inaudible) please.

QUESTION: Thank you, your Excellency. By giving the (inaudible) the world’s (inaudible), which was (inaudible) in the United States recently and includes one very landmark provision requiring transparency from energy in many companies, do you think that assuring energy security should play a more important role at the OSCE agenda? And more specifically, do you think that OSCE, as an organization, should endorse (inaudible) EITI? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think the EITI is a very important development. And that is, for those of you who may not know, the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. And it is an effort for civil society, the private sector, and governments to work together. Really any country consists of – it’s like a three-legged stool. You have a government, you have an economy, and you have a civil society. And sometimes if it gets out of balance, if the government is too strong, the stool is not stable. If the economy is unregulated, as we have seen in the world in the last two years, the stool is unstable. So the EITI is a good example of government, the private sector marketplace, and civil society working together.

And I appreciate the commitment that Kazakhstan has made to the EITI. I think it’s the kind of initiative that the OSCE should be looking to replicate. What else can we do to enhance that kind of cooperation, that commitment to an outcome that will actually benefit everyone, even

though in the short term it might take away the privileges of some? So I'm looking forward to reviewing the recommendations that have come from the NGO meetings, the civil society gatherings that have taken place here in Astana, because I know that you all have made some very specific recommendations. But I certainly believe – to go back to Iva's point – that the human dimension part of the OSCE has to be supported strongly, and we intend to do so. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Okay. The wheelchair (inaudible) – I'm sorry. The lady in the wheelchair. Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madam Clinton. My name is (inaudible). I represent here the network of organizations of women with disabilities in Kazakhstan. And my question is, we know that U.S. embassy and the national (inaudible) in Kazakhstan on women's affairs has signed a memorandum on cooperation in gender equality issues. So my question is: How do you see the role of the interests of women with disabilities in this cooperation and the role of our organizations and our network in this process?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you for asking the question. I don't know if you could hear her, but she was asking about the memorandum of understanding that our embassy has with organizations on gender equality, but what about women with disabilities. Well, let me broaden your question. What about people with disabilities? I think in many societies in the world today, people with disabilities are seriously discriminated against. They are not given opportunities for schooling, for jobs, to live independently, even if they are able to. So I think that the struggle for the rights of people with disabilities is one of the big question marks that hangs over human rights work.

The United States in the last 30 years has made progress in how we treat people with disabilities. We change laws and we've enforced them. In fact, the very first job I did right out of law school when I went to work for this group, the Children's Defense Fund, was going door to door as part of a big national survey – and this was back in 1974 – as part of a big national effort to find out how many children were not in school. Because if you looked at the data, you would see, according to the census figures, the number of births in a year, and you would then go up in a couple of years and then you would look at school enrollment figures, and you would see that they were not the same. So I went to a couple of communities, and I knocked on doors, and I asked people, "Do you have any children who aren't in school?" Now, some had children who were working already. They had gone to work to help support their families. But the majority of children who were not in school were children with disabilities. They were children who were deaf, or blind, or in a wheelchair. And the schools were not equipped to educate them. They were not what we call "handicap accessible." The children couldn't even get into some of the schools if they were in a wheelchair or other – suffering from another disability.

So we began to pass laws to open up our schools to children with disabilities, and then to open up our places of employment, and then to require accessibility so that if you went to a public facility there would be a way in, if you were in a wheelchair for example. So we've made progress, but we still are working on it. And I think that worldwide this is an area that doesn't yet have enough attention. I've appointed a special representative for people with disabilities in the State Department to work with activists and governments around the world. So really, the

short answer to your question is we want to make sure that people with disabilities are on the agenda of their countries and that the countries can share information about how to help.

And then let me say the final thing is some disabilities are preventable – polio, which we still have problems with in many parts of the world and there was a slight epidemic of polio here in Central Asia which Kazakhstan helped us address; spinal bifida, which can be prevented with folic acid and other supplements. So we need to do more in – during of a woman’s pregnancy and labor and delivery to make sure we prevent disabilities that are preventable. And then we have to work to make sure that people with disabilities, either because of a genetic issue, or an accident, or a disease get a chance to live up their own potential. We have blind judges; we have deaf doctors; we have people in our country who have overcome their disabilities, but we need to make sure every person with a disability gets a chance to do that. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Person in back.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, my name is (inaudible). I represent two NGOs. One of them observes election in this country, and another on women leadership fund. First of all, of course, I would love to emphasize my exciting with your brilliant, I would say, career . (Inaudible) politics, political. And here’s my question related to this. What would be your key suggestions, recommendations to women in this country, Kazakhstan women, who wants to get in this (inaudible). Thank you very much.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, first, let me go back to something the ambassador said when she was here talking. I helped to start an organization called Vital Voices, and I know some of you know it because some of you have attended some of its programs. And we’re going to bring a women’s conference -- and Vital Voices will be part of it -- to Central Asia next year because we want to reach out and renew our relationship with so many of you who are doing such good work. And I think that – I received the book of women in Astana who are doing astonishing things, and I am very impressed by that.

But I think that organizations like Vital Voices or like Women in Business and others that are represented here have to be constantly reaching out to young women. Young women need to be brought in and given the opportunity to participate when they’re in a university, like here, and creating more avenues for women to develop their own interests, to start their own businesses, to become an academic, to become an advocate, a lawyer, go into government, go into the Foreign Service. And that takes a lot of encouragement, because it is still hard. And it’s not only hard in Kazakhstan; it’s hard everywhere. It is still challenging, and it is something that I see all the time.

And as I traveled around the world and I do events like this, I’m very often asked a question like yours – well, how does a woman become active in politics or become whatever she chooses in her own interests? There is no substitute for preparation and for the best education you can get. But there’s also no substitute for the encouragement and support of other people. And that’s why I think a lot of these organizations that are represented in the book you gave me can take an even bigger role in helping to encourage and support and prepare women to take leadership positions.

And I would offer the continuing support of the United States – not just our government, because we do try to support women’s activities –and I made it a core priority in American foreign policy because I know from so much that I both have seen and so much research that had been done, countries that utilize the skills and talents of half their population will actually become stronger and more prosperous and secure. But also because I think that this is – this century really is the century for women’s full empowerment and for women to make the choices that are right for them.

And I say this everywhere. Not every woman wants to be a secretary of state, or an ambassador, or an activist on behalf of freedom and human rights. But every woman should have the same choices as her brothers, her husband, her father, her son, and then make that choice as to what is best for you consistent with your own responsibilities and how you see your life. And that’s what we’re trying to achieve. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Because you mentioned the (inaudible) conference and because the event is on empowerment of (inaudible) in Central Asia, I see an organization that works in many countries in Central Asia, the (inaudible).

You have to step -- you have to step out. Yeah.

QUESTION: Is it working? Yeah. Madam Secretary, thank you for coming here, (inaudible).

SECRETARY CLINTON: Can you move it up? Yeah, it’s hard to hear. Yeah, there it goes.

QUESTION: I’m from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, one of several organizations which have been part of organizing the Parallel Civil Society Conference these last two days. And as we finished yesterday, some of our colleagues are struggling in prison, and many of them could not be present at our conference. The U.S. Administration is now two years into reengagement on Uzbekistan, and during this time, the human rights situation continues to deteriorate, and it’s now actually 14 human rights defenders in prison. The Parallel Conference discusses their fates and the fate of political prisoners in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan is, in fact, such a repressive country that no organization is able to find out how many political prisoners there are.

When you go to Uzbekistan next week, would you be able to raise this question with the Uzbek Government, that there is great international concern for our colleagues in prison? And what could you be able to do for our colleagues in Turkmenistan? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, thank you for the work that you’re doing. And of course, I will raise that. I will raise it at the very highest levels of the Government of Uzbekistan. And I think that this is an issue that we face everywhere around the world. It is deeply distressing to us because there should be the rule of law. There should be an inclusive society where different voices can be heard. And I raise it in every corner of the world with leaders where we believe it continues to be a problem. And I will certainly raise it in Uzbekistan. And although I will not be going to Turkmenistan on this trip, I will see the leaders. And as I have in the past, I will continue to raise that issue with them. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: There is a desperate student right there.

QUESTION: Good evening, Mrs. Clinton. My name is Damilla. I am a student of Eurasian National University. And I know you were a student, and as we know, you wear the hat of student government of Wellesley College. Can you recall some mostly interest in events, projects, and things which you did? It's really interesting for me because I'm a member of student government.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Good, I'm glad you are. And I appreciate your question. I met three other – where are the two young men and the young woman that I met earlier who are members of the student government? And I'm a very big believer that if you care about government, politics, if you want to be active, starting by being involved in the student government teaches you some good lessons. When I was president of the Wellesley College Student Government many years ago, it was during the height of the Vietnam War, and there was a lot of protests in college campuses in my country. And as the president of the college government, I had to deal with a lot of issues that I never would have dealt with if I had not been in that position.

And I think that it's not for everyone; some people have other interests, they're not concerned about it. But no matter what you decide to do in the future, if you want to go into government, if you want to run for office, if you want to head an organization, if you want to be active in your society, it teaches you good skills, and it teaches you the basics of what it's like to be in a democratic political system. You have to get along with people. You have to listen to them even if you disagree with them. You have to try to find compromise. In some circles, even in my own country now, compromise is considered a bad thing. But in fact, compromise is often the only way to resolve any issue peacefully – you give a little bit, the other person gives a little bit, and then you try to move forward, and you make incremental progress.

So I learned a lot being in student government, and I'm glad to hear you are in student government, and I hope that it proves to be an interesting experience with a lot of useful lessons for you. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Yes, you, sir, in the middle. Yes. Just you have to – yes, you are.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Why don't you come around the front?

MODERATOR: The gentleman, if you --

SECRETARY CLINTON: It's too hard. Just come around the front and let – yeah, that's fine.

MODERATOR: That's probably --

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yeah.

QUESTION: Thank you. Your Excellencies, I am representing (inaudible) Association of Kazakhstan. So we have discussed a lot, what kind of questions that I can to -- ask from you, from favorite music tools or to your favorite internet websites. So – but however, we agreed that for us – what you can suggest for us for internet owners? Where is balance between freedom of expression and responsibility for information, what we are providing in internet? Because it's our business and we have to understand, is it legal or it's illegal information? So what is the balance?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, that's a really good question. Obviously, I'm thinking about that a lot these days. (Laughter.) I'm a big believer in internet freedom. I gave a speech about it at the beginning of this year. Because if you think about freedom of expression, in my own country, in our Constitution, we protect freedom of expression. But freedom of expression used to be person-to-person, newspapers that were distributed maybe to 10- or 20,000 people, and that was a lot.

And today, you have the vehicle of the internet, where you can say anything about anyone, and it can be all around the world, and people don't have a chance to respond, they don't say, "You're taking that out of context, that's inaccurate, that's not true." You just are at the mercy of whoever puts the information in and whoever takes it out. So we know that this is a difficult line to draw. And I respect the seriousness of your question. And I think it is always better to err on more – err on the side of more expression, more information, and then try to counter it with other information and make it clear what the context is.

But it's also true that some information is very hurtful. We have cases in my country where teenagers went on the internet and said terrible things about other teenagers, totally lies, made up. And it's so distressing to – it was usually girls or boys. Sometimes it was about their behavior or their character. Sometimes it was true, like to say that a young boy was gay. But that was a private matter, but they put it on the internet. And these young people have killed themselves. I mean, we've had a number of young people killing themselves because they felt so embarrassed, so humiliated because anything can be put on the internet.

So it's a question we're all going to have to deal with going forward, because it's a wonderful means of communication. I mean, we can sit here in Astana and have a conversation with somebody in New York, and we can punch a button or move your mouse and get information about anything that you're interested in. So it's a great gift to human knowledge and communications. But just as we found in the past, where what you said could be harmful, we have to come up with the right kind of framework.

But we also have to be very careful that governments don't overreact. Governments could say, "Well, now it's even worse if you say something bad about us because it's not just talking to a small group in an auditorium. You can tell everybody in the country, so we're going to have to throw you in jail." A lot of governments are throwing bloggers in jail because they get on the internet and they say, "Our leaders are corrupt, or our leaders are dishonest, or our leaders did this, that or the other thing," and for expressing that opinion they go to jail. So that's an overreaction, and we cannot permit that.

So somewhere, we've got to support that freedom of expression, whether it's from an individual or from a journalist, but there also have to be some rules of – or some sense of responsibility that has to be inculcated. So that's what we're all struggling with, because this is a new phenomenon. This is something that, 10 years ago, we didn't deal with even. So I think your question is a very important one, and human rights activists, as well as governments, are going to have to come together to understand how best to deal with this. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: Another guest from (inaudible).

QUESTION: My name is (inaudible) and I represent the NGO division of Georgia, which works for minorities in need of protection in Georgia. First of all, Madam Secretary, let me – is it a possibility to send a person to U.S. Department of State and its employees and policies which provide very strong protection to human rights (inaudible) of Georgia, in particular as it was the case of (inaudible) organization with other (inaudible) authorities. There's a great problem in protection (inaudible) by ambassador of United States in Georgia.

But my question is that in your intervention, you mentioned (inaudible) and you mentioned how important this deal is to keep human rights and human (inaudible) agenda, even with some of the policy problems. But, unfortunately, in our countries, these issues are often put aside by our governments. And that is why external support and support of U.S. is very important for us always.

Now, unfortunately, some representatives of civil society feel that new foreign policies of Obama Administration may be (inaudible) less support. But returning to your statement today, it's still very much hope that you, U.S., will still advocate for us and will support the ideas of human rights priority in our developing countries. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much, and let me reassure you that we are absolutely committed to supporting human rights. We continue to look for ways that have most likelihood of success, because we know that in some countries, we can try one approach and it doesn't work, so let's try another approach and see if it does work. So what I have directed our teams, our embassies, our diplomats to do is try many different approaches.

And look, I think in some countries, if an American ambassador or other diplomat creates a relationship with a leader or a set of leaders, and behind the scenes pushes, that's more effective than going public. In other countries, going public is more effective. So we're trying to expand what we call the toolbox so that we have many different tools to work on and support human rights.

MS. DUBICHINA: Thank you. And (inaudible).

QUESTION: (inaudible) (Applause.) My name is (inaudible). I'm a graduate of (inaudible) of Technology, and I'm a councilmember of (inaudible) Association. And I have a question. For example, I am a native Kazak, I speak Kazak language. And here in this community, when the discussion started, everybody started speaking Russian and English, even though it's Kazakhstan

and here we have a role of taking our native language – and I was just informed that I can ask a question only in Russian or English.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, no, ask it in Kazak, so then translate --

QUESTION: So – but --

SECRETARY CLINTON: Ask it in Kazak and then translate it. So that --

QUESTION: The point is that here in Kazakhstan, if I don't speak Russian and English, I wouldn't be able to ask a question, okay? My first question is: How many politicians, successful politicians, do you have in U.S. who don't speak English?

SECRETARY CLINTON: None, none. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: But let me just say a word. I think that's a very legitimate question. I mean, the issue of language is still a very complicated and controversial one in many places. And it is – in my country, for example, we have many, many different languages. I think – when I was senator from New York, I think in the New York City schools, there were something like 170 different languages and dialects. Now, the school system was able to provide support for large groups of children. So children whose first language was Spanish got support; children whose first language was Chinese got support. But if you had a language that were – that there were not many people who understood it or spoke it, it was very difficult.

So our emphasis has always been, in the United States, to respect your native language but to encourage and educate everyone to learn English so that we have a common language. And we tried to accommodate people like – again, obviously, the example from New York. We might have ballots written in both English and Spanish, where we have a lot of older people who came to the United States from Latin America – they have not yet been able to learn English – or in what we call Chinatown or Koreatown, where we have large groups of people who speak Chinese or Korean.

But my point is that there should be respect for native languages. And I wish I spoke another language. I only speak one language, and I feel very disadvantaged in the modern world because I only speak one language. So I think that you're lucky you speak and understand three languages.

QUESTION: Oh, yeah.

SECRETARY CLINTON: And I think it's important to respect other languages but also to have a common language. So I understand the personal feeling behind your question, and I hope that maybe you can become a professor of the Kazak language and keep it alive and vital for the future and look for ways that people can communicate with each other. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: Ma'am?

QUESTION: Mrs. Secretary, I'm (inaudible) government association, where I work in Kazakhstan with civil society organizations. Well, right now, participation in civil society (inaudible) for institutional support of international society, but also increasing of support from the social (inaudible). But for us as well as for human rights NGOs or for social NGOs, it's still a question for institutional support or technical assistance for institutional support. Is there any interest from State Department to provide such kind of support to (inaudible) technology? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: I would like to know more about what you mean by institutional support. Because I think it is important to look for ways to help build stronger civil society institutions. And perhaps I can ask our Ambassador or Embassy to meet with you to get a better idea of what you mean by that. We provide a lot of support for individuals. We provide opportunities, one you told me that you missed in Los Angeles, working on human trafficking issues and learning what we have been doing. So there's a lot we can do with individuals, and there's a lot that we can do giving support to organizations. So please let us know more about what you mean by institutional support.

MS. DUBICHINA: And I just said that we (inaudible) person in this room because they are – all 600 people want to (inaudible).

SECRETARY CLINTON: We'll take questions. We'll take maybe five more.

MS. DUBICHINA: Okay.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Five more.

MS. DUBICHINA: Okay. Five more questions. So, you.

QUESTION: Good morning, Madam Secretary. My name is (inaudible) and I represent the future* leader exchange. My situation – I spent a year in America the previous year, and as you already mentioned in your conference, American Government is going to support exchange (inaudible) countries. But I have experienced, both at your country and my country, they have low level of cultural understanding. And what is your perspective on that issue? Thank you very much.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think that's it's often the experience when a student comes to the United States to find that many Americans don't know much about Kazakhstan, for example. They don't know much about Central Asia. And part of the importance of your coming is that now many more people know about Kazakhstan than did before you came, because you were able to educate people. And I think that the United States has such a diverse population, and we kind of take it for granted that people basically live the way we live, because most Americans don't have that experience outside of a pretty small number comparatively who have travelled to places like Kazakhstan.

So one of the things that I did as First Lady and when I came here in 1997, I would go on a trip and we would, of course, bring United States journalists with us so that there would be some coverage. So maybe people would say, “Oh, she’s in Kazakhstan. Where’s that? Let me find out more about that country.” And then when I would get back, I would kind of do a presentation and invite people to the White House or some other setting to talk about the places that I had been. Because I’m well aware of the fact that – even when I was growing up, I never went to foreign countries until I was an adult because I had never had that experience.

So for many Americans, it’s a real opportunity. You may be coming to my country to experience the United States, but the people you come into contact with, you’re like an ambassador for Kazakhstan, and we think that’s a good, cooperative relationship. And that’s why we want to do more of that, and try to enhance awareness on both sides, learn more about America and have more Americans learn about other countries.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: Nobody there is raising their hand. Over here.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) national office of Central Asia. I would like to ask you about what do you think about the future of (inaudible) and what do you think about including (inaudible) issues in priority issues of office for (inaudible) institutions of human rights?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Future of what?

QUESTION: The future of office for (inaudible) insufficient in human rights, OSCE (inaudible).

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes. I think it’s a very important part of the OSCE and I think we need to do more to expand support for democracy and institutions in civil society working on behalf of democracy, and create more opportunities so that government leaders will meet with and hear the views of civil society members, including those working on behalf of democracy within the OSCE framework. Really, when the Helsinki principles were adopted 35 years ago, it was democratic countries and nondemocratic countries who adopted them together. And I think it was one of the most important human rights documents ever adopted. And it gave a lot of hope to people inside the former Soviet Union that change could happen and that people outside cared about what was going on in their situation.

And I think now we need to send a similar message, that yes, we – the Soviet Union no longer exists, we have many new countries at different levels of democratic development, and we need to keep working to support the democratic institutions in those countries and to support the democratic defenders and activists as well. And that should be part of what OSCE stands for.

MS. DUBICHINA: (Inaudible) right there.

QUESTION: Yes, (inaudible). Let me welcome you once more to Astana, Kazakhstan. My name is (inaudible). I’m president of program, the company that administered (inaudible)

program. In most mainstream newspapers today, an article was published quoting the address of Ambassador Hoagland to our state secretary. And I quote: "The real international story of Kazakhstan will not be the official conclusions of the public meetings. The real story of Kazakhstan will be that Kazakhstan is a more confident state which respects the freedom of assembly and freedom of speech."

So does that reflect your official position? Can we confirm, as of today (inaudible), that Kazakhstan is a modern, confident state which is open and democratic? Thank you. (Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think Kazakhstan has made remarkable progress. And I think certainly, in the economic sphere, it has grown and developed at a very fast and steady pace, even through the economic slowdown that the world has experienced. I think that Kazakhstan has set goals for itself and has been meeting those goals. And I think that being willing to be the chairman in office for the OSCE and to hold this summit was a very important commitment by the Government of Kazakhstan. But I know that there is still much more work to be done. I know that there are many issues that are not yet satisfying the people about what should be done in the human rights regime, in the democracy development.

So I think it has to be a balanced picture. There is a positive story to tell in the fact that all of you are here. I go to many countries where this would not have been permitted, to be honest. The fact that you all are here, that you've been here for a couple of days, that you've had the meetings that you've had, that the government is committed to the OSCE, I think that's all a very positive story. Yet every country can do better. Kazakhstan may be further along than the countries in this region, but if you compare where I know Kazakhstan wants to be in 10 or 20 years, there's a long road ahead. But let's be proud of the positive success, let's be fair about the criticisms, and let's encourage the changes that will benefit the people of Kazakhstan in terms of democracy and human rights.

So I think it's important not to be either too optimistic or too pessimistic. I think you have to strike the right balance, and I'm certainly supportive of the steps that have been taken, and I'm also more than willing to raise issues like the human rights defenders and others who work in this society to make sure that they can play a productive role in the new Kazakhstan. So let's look at it from a balanced perspective and try to be positive where we can be positive and be constructive about what changes are needed where they are needed. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Okay. There are a couple of hands way back there.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Madam Secretary, we're very proud to see that – we all over the world are very proud to see that your husband, Bill Clinton, went himself to North Korea to free journalists for imprisonment. That is the way that he showed his respect not only to the citizens of his own country, but also to the members of the press, to the journalists.

Unfortunately, my husband, who is a journalist, is here in this country, the country who is now the chairman of OSCE. The chairman of the country who is hosting the OSCE summit is still

holding my husband in jail. And I know that he is jail termed, (inaudible), but there is no way to see that he will be free in the time that he is supposed to go free. (Applause).

Unfortunately, my husband did not have a chance to use his own attorney at his trial. He has no way to seek support from the outside. And no matter how I was trying to help him, there's no success. So I was trying to seek support from my own government, from some organizations that fight for human rights, and there is no success. So my question to you, first of all, what is your opinion about something like this, and will I be able to ask you for your support when you meet with the members of my government?

SECRETARY CLINTON: First, I am sorry about your husband. I cannot comment. I don't know anything about his case. But let me make three points.

Number one, we believe strongly in the rule of law, and that includes the right to counsel, to have your own attorney, to have someone who will advocate for you and will, if necessary, go all the way through the court system to try to get justice for you. And that is, to me, a fundamental human right, that you have a rule of law and a system of justice. And since most people are not lawyers, they cannot defend themselves and they need competent counsel to be able to do so.

Secondly, journalists are particularly vulnerable in the world today. Journalists are being killed, attacked, imprisoned all over the world, and particularly in the OSCE countries, where it's contrary to the Helsinki principles, where journalists are supposed to be protected. I have spoken out about the abuse of journalists in Russia, where you know a number of leading journalists have been brutally attacked and even killed. And that, to me, is – runs counter to the claims that the Russian Government is making on behalf of a new and different and democratic future.

So whether it's Russia or Kazakhstan or anywhere else, journalists are particularly vulnerable and deserve protection. Even though many people don't focus on what happens to journalists, it is an indicator of the rights and freedoms of everyone else to speak out and to not be imprisoned or persecuted by their government.

Thirdly, when I meet with governments, I raise the issue of political prisoners, of journalists who have been imprisoned. And if you would talk with our Embassy, then we will have information about your situation and we will certainly follow up on it.

MS. DUBICHINA: Thank you, (inaudible). (Applause.) Out there, the lady in pink or red.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much. For now, a journalist has an opportunity to ask a question. Just recently, we knew of the proclamation by WikiLeaks of some correspondence of U.S. embassies, including the representatives with their governments. Will you raise this question to your meetings here in Astana with other government leaders and with members of other countries? I know that some of the questions that probably you will be discussing in your meetings in Astana were already covered by the WikiLeaks correspondence.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I, of course, have been reaching out to governments and leaders around the world over the last week. I will continue to do so. As I said before I left

Washington yesterday, we consider it regrettable that the information that was meant to be confidential has been made public.

And I am particularly worried about the human rights activists, the religious leaders, the critics of governments who speak to members of our Embassy about abuses in their own country, whose names may either be in a reported cable or who may be identifiable because of the description of the person. So I believe that this was a very irresponsible, thoughtless act that put at risk the lives of innocent people all over the world without much regard for those who are most vulnerable, including journalists.

I also think that it's important always to maintain a level of candor in discussions. That's not only true for governments; it's true for journalists, it's true for academics, it's true for doctors, lawyers, and businesspeople. Everyone has a right to depend, to some extent, on confidential communication. And that, of course, has been breached in this incident.

But I think that the foreign policy of the United States is very clear. We have moved vigorously in the last 22 months in the Obama Administration to repair the damage that we inherited to reinvigorate organizations like the OSCE to become much more internationally oriented, to work with friends, partners, and allies around the world on threats that we face, like Iran becoming a nuclear power by nonproliferation. And so we will continue to pursue the policies that we are, despite the efforts by some to disrupt that.

And let me say one other word about Kazakhstan. I think Kazakhstan deserves the warmest credit for removing the nuclear material that you inherited on your territory. And the United States has been your partner in doing this. I think nonproliferation is a human rights issue. I think the effort to go after the nuclear material that can fall in the wrong hands, that can be used to terrorize, maim, kill people, contaminate large areas is a fundamental human rights issue. And in this area, Kazakhstan has been a world leader, and I want to publicly express my appreciation for that. (Applause.)

MS. DUBICHINA: Thank you very much for showing (inaudible), but that you would actually stay for half an hour longer than planned. That shows your (inaudible). (Applause.)

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