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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
VIDEO REMARKS TO THE HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT
MADRID, SPAIN
DECEMBER 13, 1995

I am delighted to join all of you gathered in Madrid for the Humanitarian Summit. I want to thank Queen Sophia for hosting this important meeting. The King and Queen have consistently identified themselves with humanitarian efforts throughout their region, and I am grateful that I was able to see them during the President's visit to Madrid.

I want also to thank Commissioner Bonino [boh-nee-noh] for inviting me to participate in this Conference -- and for the leadership, vision and energy she has given to make this summit possible.

I am sorry I can't be with you to learn from your efforts. I know that the American delegation, headed by Brian Atwood, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, will convey the President's commitment to the cause of humanitarian assistance.

In working together on a blueprint for the next decade of humanitarian programs, you have set an ambitious goal. In this time of declining budgets and increasing humanitarian crises, international resources, both financial and human, must be focused as effectively as possible.

As you know so well, the number of refugees and displaced people around the world has risen to a level unseen since the aftermath of World War II. While the end of the Cold War allows many to rest easier, sadly, it has not brought a universal peace. Conflict, displacement and suffering continue in too many parts of the world and are draining resources that might otherwise be invested in economic and social development.

Last year, for the first time in my nation's history of humanitarian assistance, well over 90% of the United States Government's disaster and refugee assistance went to emergencies that humans caused themselves. These were not acts of God or nature, but acts of violence and war.

Old hatreds, some suppressed during the Cold War, are erupting with new force. The distinctions between combatants and civilians too often become blurred, and the consequences are horrifying. Hate becomes the fuel of violence; rape becomes a strategy of dehumanization; and the intentional maiming of children by snipers and land mines is an accepted tactic of war.

In recent years the international community has been riveted

by the images of displaced men, women and children, whether it is the outpouring of refugees into camps in Goma [goh-mah] last year, or the more recent movements of Serbs, Croats [croh-ats] and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. These scenes remind us of the vulnerability of people who have lost not just property and home, but often loved ones, security and all too frequently, dignity.

It also reminds us how important it is to maintain our financial commitments to humanitarian assistance programs. The Clinton Administration has worked hard to insulate the United States' refugee and humanitarian assistance programs -- now funded at over 1.5 billion dollars per year -- from any significant reductions in 1996. I am happy to report that we have the support of Members of Congress from both political parties.

While we work on ways strengthen our response to disasters, we must also deal with the factors that cause them, as I hope your declaration will underscore.

With over 800 million people in the world seriously undernourished, and 13 million dying each year because of hunger related illnesses, there is clearly a great deal to be done to decrease the tensions that often lead to conflict.

Leaders around the world are now beginning to understand the special toll that disasters take on women and children. Women and children comprise over 70% of those displaced by disaster. I applaud your efforts to highlight the unique and difficult challenges of responding to their needs.

We must all understand that women are not only victims of disasters, but also those who must continue to care for their families in the midst of humanitarian crises. Using women as the distributors of food in refugee camps and giving them control over their family's most precious commodity can improve their situation considerably.

Social investments -- and specifically investments in women -- directly address many of the root causes of humanitarian crises. Throughout my travels, from South Asia to Latin America, I have seen that where women prosper, families prosper, and where families prosper, nations prosper as well.

Over the last decade we have seen new proof that international commitment, collective action, and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations can help us avert crises.

Cooperation among many countries prevented a famine in southern Africa in 1992. Bangladesh has shown the effectiveness

of the systems that can help alert us to disasters ahead of time. There, and throughout the world, the NGO community has played a critical role in lessening the threat and treating the conditions of crisis. In Africa, President Clinton's Greater Horn of Africa Initiative holds another key to our approach to crises. It recognizes that problems such as lack of enough food to survive on are at the heart of many disasters. Under African leadership the initiative tries to integrate U.S. and other donor resources to address the root causes of conflict and food shortages, rather than just treat the symptoms. I think this is the right direction for countries that are suffering recurring disasters as well as the donor community.

Your task is a tremendous one, but it is a task that must be pursued. When we turn our backs on human suffering, then we ourselves become less human, and our common aspirations for the future grow dimmer.

It is my hope that this meeting will shed new light on the ways we can join together to manage crises effectively, and to use diplomatic initiatives and social and economic development to prevent them from happening in the first place. Good luck to you.

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Swanee Hunt Intro of HRC Video

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In just a minute, someone we can't see will press a button, and, thanks to modern technology, Hillary Rodham Clinton will suddenly appear, like an angel, bringing into this gathering her vision for the world.

But what happens so effortlessly today is the result of decades of long, tough hours devoted by this woman, working on behalf of values shared by everyone at this summit: fairness, opportunity, and compassion.

I've known Hillary Clinton for three years. We've worked side by side, in many settings. And I want to say a few words about her -- not as a global leader, but as a human being.

I should begin by telling you I'm hard to impress. You see, for 20 years I've been working with extraordinary people enduring, with courage and dignity, very difficult circumstances: refugees fleeing torture or war, pregnant teenagers, dying old people, homeless families, schizophrenic mothers, illiterate criminals. I've worked in Central Europe and the Balkans and funded over 500 American NGO's, led by magnificent women and men who have

given more than society ever had a right to ask. Women and men, in short, like those of you in this room.

So I'm very hard to impress.

But then along comes someone like Hillary Rodham Clinton, who has devoted her whole life to people struggling against the inequities of this world. Long before she was propelled onto the global stage, unbeknownst to her, she was preparing for this role.

As a girl, she was deeply influenced by her religious training, from which she drew both the values that have guided her action, and the inner faith to keep on, even when every outer sign says give up.

She became politically active as a teenager, as a way to shape her world. In fact, though we don't talk about it often these days, one of the few things Hillary and I have in common is that in 1964 we were both Goldwater Girls, campaigning for the conservative Republican presidential candidate.

But it was at Wellsley College, that Hillary made her mark: the first student ever asked to address her graduating class. Her vision of the world, and her challenge to her classmates to make a difference landed her on the pages of "Life" magazine. So it's no surprise that a few years later, as a young lawyer, she was working on Capitol Hill, passing up much more lucrative opportunities in big name firms.

Later, living in the low-income state of Arkansas by the side of her husband, Hillary took up the cause of public education reform. She became a major advocate for the rights of children nationally, eventually serving as Chair of the Children's Defense Fund, one of America's most important NGO's, where she had once worked as a young staff lawyer.

And now, in her current position of extraordinary prestige and power, how has the First Lady spent her time? In the White House, designing a reform of America's health care system. Across our country, advocating for families struggling economically. In Beijing, insisting that women's rights are human rights. And most recently,

with her book (Praise the Lord, it's now at the printer!) reminding us that it takes a whole village to raise a child.

Secluding herself to write has been a challenge. Because this is a woman on the move, visiting projects in every corner of the globe. In addition to palaces and halls of power, she's explored barrios in Nicaragua, impoverished villages in Bangladesh, windswept plains of Mongolia. She's seen firsthand projects funded by organizations like yours. And she's talked directly to women sitting at their new sewing machines or making jewelry to sell at the market, funded by a micro-enterprise loan;. And from these travels, she's brought home the wisdom of garbage pickers and basket weavers, teaching Americans, through her writing and speaking, the importance of these investments.

I've seen Hillary Rodham Clinton in lots of circumstances: meeting a head of state, listening to a friend, laughing with her staff, leading tours of the White House, sitting drenched in the rain, sleeping on a plane, dancing at a ball, shouting into a microphone....

But the time I'll never forget is a phone call to my office in Vienna one year ago, when the First Lady of the United States of America called, spontaneously, just to say: she'd heard my daughter was hurting, and she wanted me to know she cared.

This is a woman who knows what "care" means.

And so it's my honor to bring you Hillary Rodham Clinton.

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Remarks for Hillary Rodham Clinton: Humanitarian Summit

I want to thank Queen Sophia for hosting this prestigious gathering of humanitarian agencies. The King and Queen of Spain have made a point of identifying themselves with humanitarian efforts throughout their region. And, thank you to Commissioner Bonino for letting me send a message of support to you. Any one who knows Commissioner Bonino is familiar with her vision and energy. This meeting, assembling the most talented humanitarian leaders in the world, to chart a course for the daunting decade which lies ahead, is a testament to these strengths.

I wish that I could be there in person to support you and learn from your collective experience. The American delegation, headed by our AID Administrator Brian Atwood, and including my friend Ambassador Swanee Hunt, will I am sure convey the President's commitment to the cause of humanitarian assistance.

In striving to agree on a declaration outlining a blueprint for the next decade of humanitarian response, you indeed have an ambitious goal. However, in this era of declining budgets and increasing humanitarian crises, international resources, both financial and human, must be focused as effectively and efficiently as possible. Your work is critical.

As you know too well, the number of refugees and displaced persons in the world has risen to a level unseen since the aftermath of World War II. The end of the Cold War allows many to rest easier that an apocalypse between the NATO and Warsaw Pact nations will not destroy our world. But sadly, the end of the Cold

War has not, as many had hoped, brought a universal peace. Conversely, chaos and suffering have increased, and disaster response budgets have soared. The reasons relate to unsustainable rates of population growth, food shortages, environmental damage, growing poverty and an increasing number of enduring civil conflicts.

Last year, for the first time in my nation's history of humanitarian assistance, well over 90% of the United States Government's disaster and refugee response assistance went to emergencies that humans caused for themselves. These were not acts of God or of nature, but acts of violence and war.

Old hatreds, some suppressed during the Cold War, have now erupted. The distinctions between combatants and civilians frequently have become horribly blurred, or have lost all meaning. So now we have a wrenching new kind of disaster: complex emergencies. Here hate is the fuel, rape is an explicit instrument of policy, and the intentional maiming of children by snipers and by land mines made to look like toys are tactics of war.

Importantly, your agenda addresses three difficult new humanitarian challenges related to this phenomenon: the politicization of humanitarian assistance, the necessity of preserving the principles governing the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and dramatically increasing security threats faced by those working to deliver humanitarian assistance.

In recent years the international community has been riveted

by the images of the mass migrations in all corners of the world. Be it the outpouring of refugees into the camps in Goma last year, which Mrs. Gore and Brian Atwood from our government saw first hand, or more recently the movements of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. These scenes remind us vividly of the vulnerability of people who have lost not just property and home, but often, loved ones, security and all too frequently dignity.

I think we are just beginning to understand the critical differences in the way disasters impact women and children. Women and children comprise over 70% of those displaced by disaster and are undeniably the most vulnerable. I applaud your effort to highlight the unique and difficult challenges faced by these defenseless human beings.

Important first steps have already been made, as we begin to understand the experience of women in crisis and try to assist them, not just as victims, but as survivors who need to fend for themselves. For example, using women as the distributors of food in refugee camps, giving them control over their family's most precious commodity can improve their situation considerably.

While we can always improve our response to disasters, the critical challenge to us lies in dealing more effectively and more comprehensively with the complex and inter-related causes of crisis. As I hope your declaration will underscore, in the long run it is far more effective to deal with the root causes of conflict, than to try to deal with the aftermath.

Here again, as I have seen in my trips to South Asia and Latin

America, women can play an crucial role in preventing or ameliorating crisis. Initiatives such as those requiring that women be given full access to rural credit programs significantly decrease family vulnerability. I witnessed this when I had the wonderful opportunity to visit SEWA and the Grameen Bank last spring. Women who possess the dignity that comes with a micro-enterprise are better mothers and better citizens.

We need to better recognize that genuine disaster assistance must be an ongoing process of decreasing vulnerabilities. True disaster prevention is a matter of economic, social, and political development. With over 800 million people in the world seriously undernourished, and 13 million dying each year due to hunger related illnesses, there is clearly a great deal to be done to decrease the true sense of need which often leads to conflict.

The last decade gives me hope that international commitment, collective action, cooperation between non-governmental and governmental organizations can help us avert crisis.

Concerted international response prevented a famine in Southern Africa in 1992. Bangladesh has implemented an effective early warning system. There, and throughout the world, the NGO community has played a critical role in lessening the threat and treating the conditions of crisis. In Africa, President Clinton's Greater Horn of Africa Initiative holds another key to our approach to crises. It recognizes that problems such as food insecurity are at the heart of many disasters. Under African leadership the initiative tries to truly integrate US and other donor resources to

address the root causes of conflict and food insecurity, rather than just treat the symptoms. I think this is the right direction for countries that are suffering recurring disasters and for the donor community.

Your task is an awesome one, but it is a task that humankind must pursue. When we turn our backs on human suffering, then we ourselves become less human. We must understand the admonition "Never ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

It is my hope that your meeting attracts much needed attention to the mounting crises in the world and the need to not only manage these crises effectively, but also to use the tools of preventive diplomacy and sustainable development to ameliorate the conditions that create them. Good luck to you.

DRAFTER: Kate Grant/USAID