

**Statement of Ambassador-at-Large-Designate for Global Women's Issues  
Melanne S. Verveer  
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
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Madame Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. Madame Chairman, I want to thank you and the Members of the Committee for your commitment to raising the status of women around the globe. It is particularly significant, Madame Chairman, that the Subcommittee that you chair has had its focus expanded to include global women's issues.

The President's decision to nominate an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues is also unprecedented and reflects the elevated importance of international women's issues to the President and his administration. I am humbled by the trust that the President and Secretary of State have placed in me, and if confirmed, I look forward to coordinating our country's foreign policy programs on behalf of women and girls.

I want to express my appreciation to Senators Hutchison and Casey for their generous introductions. Senator Hutchison has been a guiding light to me and Vital Voices for many years and I am grateful for her effective leadership on international women's issues. Senator Casey is not only my home state Senator but he and I come from the Coal Region in Pennsylvania. His commitment to public service both at the state and federal levels and his work on this committee have been exemplary.

I also want to thank my family who are here with me for their enduring love and support.

The position to which I have been nominated focuses on women, but the issues it addresses should not be considered solely or uniquely women's issues. For if women's potential is developed and women participate fully in their societies, our world as a whole will prosper. The major economic, security, governance and environmental challenges of our times cannot be solved without the participation of women at all levels of society. Investing in women is one of the most powerful and positive forces for reshaping the globe.

During my previous years in government, I was privileged to work with then First Lady Hillary Clinton on her tireless efforts on behalf of our country to help raise the status of women around the world. She frequently reminded those in positions of influence that global progress depends on the progress of women and girls; democratic institutions cannot thrive nor survive without the participation of women; market economies cannot grow and prosper without the inclusion of women; and societies are not truly free and just without legal protections and rights for women. It remains a simple fact that no country can get ahead if half of its citizens are left behind.

During our travels to over 80 countries --- to micro-enterprise projects in the villages of Bangladesh, schools for girls in Pakistan, AIDS prevention programs throughout Africa, domestic violence shelters in Russia, and peace and reconciliation discussions in Guatemala, El Salvador, Bosnia and Northern Ireland -- we saw firsthand the effect on America's global standing when we promote our interests and exemplify our values by not only speaking out about women's rights but also investing in the promotion of economic, political and social development.

Women are still the great majority of the poor around the globe; girls make up 2/3 of the unschooled; violence against women is a global scourge; the AIDS pandemic has a woman's face; too many women still die in pregnancy and childbirth and countless others are victims of rape used as a tool of war. There are still too few women on the village councils, in the halls of parliaments and at decision making levels addressing conflict resolution and peace processes where the decisions that affect them, their families and societies are being made without their participation. As Secretary Clinton noted in her testimony before this committee, our hope for advancing democracy and prosperity is in serious jeopardy if half the world's populations remains marginalized. Raising the status of women would go a long way toward keeping states from failing and terrorists from winning.

Yet, despite the challenges, there has been progress; although certainly not enough. Our collective efforts must be accelerated. Today more women are advancing social, economic and political progress in their countries. One of the programs that Secretary Clinton led as First Lady was the State Department's Vital Voices Democracy Initiative, a US commitment coming out of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women that took place in Beijing in 1995. It was a very cost effective program designed to help emerging women leaders whose countries were going through historic transformations to construct democratic institutions and market economies. Participating women were provided leadership training, as well as mentors and networks they could never access on their own. American leaders in business, NGOs and government shared their expertise and in the process built a new wave of global leaders working to create a better future in their nascent democracies. Today the initiative continues as a bi-partisan, non-governmental organization, one that I have been honored to lead during the last eight years. In that role, I have witnessed every day the power of women who, when provided with the tools of opportunity, safeguard human rights, fight corruption, grow economic progress, build more democratic societies and contribute to peacemaking and reconstruction in zones of conflict.

Today there is growing research from the World Bank and United Nations to the World Economic Forum and major companies --- like Goldman Sachs, McKinsey and Ernst and Young -- that correlates investments in women with favorable outcomes for economic growth, good governance and democratic progress. The Millennium Development Goals established to attack global poverty are unlikely to be achieved without women's equality. Clearly, investing in women is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing.

The President and Secretary of State recognize the imperative of integrating women's issues into US foreign policy, and, as the Secretary said when she appeared before this committee, "The US must be an unequivocal and unwavering voice in support of women's rights in every country on every continent." To that end, if I am confirmed, I commit to bringing all of my energy to the task ahead. It will require greater coordination and collaboration on priorities and activities with the regional and functional bureaus and USAID to insure that resources are maximized to benefit women and their families around the world.

During my previous time in government and since, I have been privileged to work with our dedicated and hard working foreign service and civil service staffs, both at the State Department and our embassies around the world. They have recognized and actively promoted investments in women to achieve America's foreign policy goals. Our challenge will be to develop more strategic and effective ways to do so. Greater coordination and cooperation among all the stakeholders, instead of a fragmented approach, will enable us to meet our challenges around the world and better realize the high yields that investments in women represent.

In these times of scarce resources and mounting challenges, it will be important to redouble our efforts in working with our bilateral, multilateral, private sector and civil society partners to advance women's empowerment as a priority on the US foreign policy agenda. If confirmed, I look forward to pursuing collaborations with the private sector, academic institutions, foundations and NGOs. Government alone cannot address the pressing global challenges before us, but by tapping the competencies of business and civil society, we together can make greater strides towards improving the status of women for the betterment of all of society.

I further pledge, if confirmed, to invigorate our efforts not just within the State Department, but across the government through the President's new White House Council on Women and Girls to better coordinate programs that can further women's development and progress globally. During the Clinton Administration, the interagency council on women proved highly effective and was instrumental in utilizing expertise from across the US government. For example, several bilateral and multilateral projects, ranging from contributions to the peace process in Northern Ireland to combating human trafficking, were coordinated and implemented drawing on the competency and resources of various federal departments.

Investing in women is a prudent decision and should be at the core of any foreign policy strategy to strengthen democracy, grow economies, attack disease and achieve peace and security. With the Senate's assent, I will work energetically to coordinate our country's foreign policy efforts to advance women's progress and, in so doing, America's global leadership.

Thank you.

