



Wednesday, March 07, 2007

**Statement in Commemoration of International Women's Day (IWD) March 8
by the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice.**

Begin statement:

Today, we pay tribute to women of courage around the world and hold them up as examples of hope, strength, and compassion. This year it is my privilege to inaugurate the Secretary's International Women of Courage Award. Through this annual award the United States will honor the courage of extraordinary women worldwide who have played transformative roles in their societies.

The global observance of International Women's Day reminds all nations that the empowerment of women is irrevocably tied to the safety, security, and prosperity of the world. The enfranchisement of women can no longer be a simple aspiration. Women are essential agents in bringing about change and an often overlooked resource in the preservation of human security, in overcoming transnational dangers, and in managing threats arising from tyranny, trafficking, poverty, and disease. Achieving the United States' mission of advancing democracy, prosperity, and security worldwide is not possible without the empowerment of women. If women cannot participate in the political process, there can be no real democracy. If women are deprived of economic opportunity, development is crippled. If women are not educated, they cannot pass knowledge to their children, and there is no true security for the next generation.

This is why the United States is committed to sustained efforts to improve the political, social, and economic standing of women everywhere. In 2006, we continued to pioneer programs in areas like health care, computer literacy, business training, and political development. We introduced a campaign to raise awareness about breast cancer in the Middle East. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief we have supported prevention, treatment, and care for millions of women living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. We started computer classes and business networking centers for Arab women. We matched female entrepreneurs from fifteen developing countries with mentors from Fortune 500 companies. We helped women to become political candidates and to vote for the first time. We created a global network of women government leaders that works to develop greater economic, political, and educational opportunities for all women.

None of these efforts would be possible were it not for all courageous women, including American servicewomen and civilians, who have given their lives to spread the message of freedom and democracy in foreign lands. Around the world, women overcome threats and intimidation to promote peace, equality, and dignity for all people. International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate acts of courage and determination by the extraordinary women around the world who, in transforming their own societies, create a more peaceful and prosperous world for all of us.

End Statement.