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**MAKING THE MOST OF THE MDG SUMMIT: ADVANCING
PROGRESS THROUGH EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS**

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LISA CARTY: Good morning, everyone. Welcome. My name is Lisa Carty and I'm the deputy director of the global health policy center here at CSIS. I'd like to welcome everybody back from the long holiday weekend. And I'm especially delighted that we have here with us this morning Ambassador Melanne Verveer, ambassador-at-large for global women's issues.

I also bring you regrets from John Hamre, the president and CEO of CSIS, who was hoping to be here with us this morning to do this introduction. John has spent the last few days in Beijing and found out last night that his flight, which was supposed to bring him back here, was canceled. So he's not here this morning. He is en route but I know he is probably with us in spirit.

I think it's a clear testament to the importance of the issues we're going to talk about this morning that on the first day back from a long holiday we've managed to gather such a large and enthusiastic crowd. But I think it's also a testament to the high esteem that Ambassador Verveer is held in and also to the very high expectations of this audience and so many others – that this is really a moment for genuine progress on issues concerning women and girls.

Before I formally introduce Ambassador Verveer, let me do two things. First, I'd like to tell you all about two events we're going to be hosting here at CSIS next week, which we'd love to see you at. The first will be next Tuesday, the 14th, at 2:30. It will be the second in the series of debates that we are hosting here called "Fault Lines in Global Health."

The debate next week will feature Mark Dybul of the O'Neill center at Georgetown University Law School and Julian Schweitzer, formerly of the World Bank and now with Results for Development, who will debate the question of whether or not the global fund should expand to become the global fund for health as opposed to just the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria. So that's here next Tuesday at 2:30.

And then, next Thursday the 16th, we'll be organizing a day of discussions on prospects for achieving greater progress on selected MDGs at the upcoming summit. We're going to have two public discussions: one in the morning focused on water and sanitation issues and the other in the afternoon focused on food security. Please check our website for the exact times of those two discussions.

Secondly, I'd like to say a word about how CSIS came to focus on issues related to gender. Many of you know that this organization's roots are in the foreign policy and security communities. So it may seem like a bit of an odd fit. But, as Ambassador Verveer and Secretary Clinton have often noted, addressing the needs of women and girls and ensuring their full inclusion in political and economic decision-making is a necessary precondition for success – whatever the endeavor – and is a cornerstone of smart power.

CSIS has made an ongoing commitment to use its assets to bring a greater focus on U.S. development and diplomatic agendas and how they can better promote the rights and roles of women and girls around the world.

Most of our work in this area has been focused on the gender-related dynamics of the HIV epidemic. And I would especially like to thank Janet Fleischman, who is here with us this morning, an associate scholar here at CSIS, for her many contributions in this area over the last six years. She has really developed an exceptional body of work and we've all benefited greatly from our collaboration with her.

I think you might have seen out front there is a very brief executive summary of a conference that she organized here in June on the integration of HIV programs and other development programs for women. So please take a look at that.

I'd also like to thank this morning the University of Miami's Knight Center for International Media, particularly Executive Director Sanjeev Chatterjee who is also here with us who is our partner in hosting this series on the great global challenges of our time and also, of course, to mention how appreciative we are of the support of University of Miami President Donna Shalala, who has been a long-time leader on these issues and was one of our commissioners in the CSIS Commission on Smart Global Health Policy.

So turning to our guest of honor, Ambassador Verveer really needs no introduction for this group. Even before her appointment as ambassador-at-large for global women's issues, she had a distinguished record as an advocate and champion of women and girls around the world.

Vital Voices, Global Partnership, the NGO which she founded 10 years ago, pioneered under her leadership a new model for training and mentoring a future generation of women leaders with more than 8,000 beneficiaries to date. And, having been able to see firsthand the impact of that work in Russia and Ukraine and Georgia, I can say that it really touched many, many lives for the good.

Prior to her time at Vital Voices, Ambassador Verveer served in the Clinton White House, first as deputy assistant to the president and then as deputy chief of staff to first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Today she is leading the U.S. government's efforts to make a women- and girl-centered approach a cornerstone of U.S. international engagement. And there will be no more important opportunity to make this commitment clear than at the upcoming MDG summit.

That summit is now less than two weeks away. And I'm sure that even as we sit here this morning debates are ongoing among governments about how to ensure that the summit has the best possible outcomes.

Ambassador Verveer, we hope that the passion and commitment that you've brought to your work in the U.S. government can also help inspire a real energy on the gender issues at the MDG summit. We look forward to hearing your thoughts this morning. Thanks so much for being with us. (Applause.)

MELANNE VERVER: Thank you so much, Lisa, and thank you to all of you for coming here this morning.

I want to thank CSIS and Lisa and Steve for the invitation to discuss the MDGs, particularly the role of women and girls. I want to thank them for the leadership that they have brought to the center and the important work that it does here.

I also want to acknowledge the long years of work that Lisa Carty has done on these and related issues. I know firsthand over many years of her work in the State Department, at the Gates Foundation, with UNAIDS and now here at CSIS, and it has been distinguished work. And it goes on and, I think, to great good for the kind of world we all want to see.

I also want to acknowledge the CSIS Commission on Smart Global Health Policy, whose recommendations are both innovative and persuasive, and we look forward to the ideas in the report taking hold more broadly.

Now, speaking of contributions, I must say I was tremendously impressed, walking in here, to see those MDG T-shirts, because I know if we don't already have the goals of the MDGs chiseled in our minds, they will be once we don the T-shirts or look at them and remember what they represent.

The timing for this discussion could not be more appropriate. In just a few weeks, the leaders of the world will gather at the United Nations to assess the progress that has been made on the Millennium Development Goals and to charge the way forward.

Ten years ago, when the 109 heads of state of government signed on to the Millennium Declaration, they committed themselves to a set of eight time-bound targets that, when achieved, would end poverty and improve the health and well-being of the world's poor.

The United States fully embraces the MDGs. As President Obama has said, the Millennium Development Goals are America's goals. And in the administration, development has been elevated as a central pillar, with diplomacy and defense, of our engagement to the world and with the world. We are firmly committed to working with the many partners in this common cause towards the goals by 2015 and helping to ensure that the gains are sustained long into the future.

At this 10-year juncture, there is much to celebrate and there is much, much that remains to be achieved. We have made progress thanks to the hard work and commitment of so many, the citizens and governments of countries that have prioritized development and invested in their people, the sustained efforts and effective partnerships among donor governments, the United Nations, other multilateral agencies, the private sector and the NGO community.

Today the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day around the globe has fallen by nearly 400 million, putting the MDG poverty target within reach. More boys and girls are attending and completing primary school, almost two-thirds of the developing countries that have met the goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary education.

AIDS-related mortality has decreased, and more than 5.2 million people in low-and middle-income countries are receiving antiretroviral treatment. And also importantly, women and girls have made considerable progress in the last decade. More women are contributing to the economic, social and political life of their countries.

But despite this record of progress and so much more, we all know that much work remains to be done if we are to meet the target set for the achievement of the MDGs. The United States will outline a strategy for meeting our nation's contribution to the MDGs, which will be formally released at the U.N. summit.

The strategy calls for a focus on innovation, basic and applied research, expanding access to effective technologies and practices, and approaching development in new and improved ways. It also calls for an emphasis on sustainability, which will require the promotion of broad-based economic growth. This includes helping countries adopt pro-growth policies, promoting trade and infrastructure investments and entrepreneurship, supporting partner countries' efforts to strengthen governments and democratic institutions, and building long-service – lasting long-service delivery systems.

Central to our efforts is the recognition that investments in women and girls are at the center of our development agenda and that gender equality is the key to progress and sustainable development. This is the topic I would like to focus on this morning.

As we mark 10 years since the adoption of the MDGs, we also mark 15 years since the fourth U.N. Conference on Women.

Beijing and the MDGs are linked. Beijing recognized that women's empowerment and rights are also a requirement for the empowerment and advancement of all of humanity – men and women, boys and girls. Today, there is broad recognition that MDG 3, the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, is the linchpin to the achievement of the other MDGs.

It is a simple fact that no country can get ahead if half its people are left behind. And as Secretary Clinton has often stated, women and girls are one of the world's greatest untapped resources, and investing in them is one of the most powerful forces in international development. Promoting gender equality is not just the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do.

Yet, we are far from overcoming gender inequality. We know women are still the majority of the world's poor. They do 60 percent of the world's work in return for less than 5 percent of its income. This has untold consequences on economic growth and development. Despite progress in education, two-thirds of the unschooled children are girls and 75 percent of illiterate adults are women. Women and girls disproportionately suffer from inadequate health care, and violence against them is a global epidemic.

Women are half the world's population, yet they hold one-fifth of the positions in national government. And far too often, they are excluded from the negotiating table where

conflicts are to be resolved, although it is their experiences and actions that will be critical to sustaining peace.

Efforts to ensure and achieve environmental sustainability all too often exclude women, though they are largely the custodians of natural and household resources.

So if we are to achieve the MDGs, women and girls must be at the core of our development strategy. The question is not whether we can afford to invest in them, it is whether we can afford not to do so.

Today, there is a volume of research that demonstrates that investments in women and girls correlates positively with poverty alleviation outcomes and a country's general prosperity. Women-run small and medium-size businesses are proven drivers of GDP. The World Economic Forum's gender gap report, which measures the gap between men and women in a given country in terms of their economic and political participation, their access to education and health survivability, shows that in those countries where the gap is closest to being closed – and in no country is it closed – those countries are much more economically prosperous. Gender equality, as the World Bank often says, is smart economics.

Women are a reliable investment because the money they borrow is not only likely to be repaid, it has a multiplier effect because they invest their resources to benefit their families and communities. And we know when they take their rightful place and bring their talents and experiences to bear in the political arena, they are more likely to invest in the public good. And at the country level, rates of female participation in government are associated with lower levels of corruption. And of course, we know that the single best development investment that can be made, with huge positive payoff, a range of critical development outcomes, is educating a girl because those outcomes affect everything from her future employability to her family's health.

For this reason, the United States is putting women and girls at the core of its development and foreign policy. This includes consulting with them as we design and implement our policy and the impacts they will have, and it means measuring our progress in part by how much we improve the conditions in their lives.

If we are to deliver and achieve our development outcome, it also means mainstreaming our – mainstreaming gender into our core development effort. It means adopting measurements and evaluation. It means gender mainstreaming in budgeting. It means that it is a core consideration, as it is in our QDDR review process.

This commitment to investing in women and girls characterizes many of the major policy initiatives which the Obama administration is contributing to meeting the MDGs, and I would like to go through a few of them.

First is the Global Health Initiative, a \$63 billion program to improve health and strengthen health systems worldwide. This is an enormous undertaking, so we are employing a strategic focus on those whose health has the biggest impact on families and communities: women and girls.

We are scaling up our work in maternal and child health, in family planning and in nutrition. For much too long, MDGs 4 and 5 have not been on track. Today we have a propitious and a long overdue moment to finally attack the high rates of maternal and child mortality. As the secretary said in her recent keynote address on the Global Health Initiative, saving the lives of women and children requires a range of care, from improving nutrition to training birth attendants who can help women give birth safely. It also requires increased access to family planning, which represents one of the most cost-effective public health interventions today.

With the support of the U.N. secretary-general and his Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health, which we welcome and which will be unveiled at the MDG summit coming up, as well as the commitment of countries like the U.K. and Norway and so many others, Canada's leadership during the G-8, the dedicated efforts of health leaders like the Gates Foundation, the broad NGO community, and the major commitment of the United States through its Global Health Initiative – all of these forces are arrayed to once and for all make progress on MDGs 4 and 5. And the recent Lancet report indicating some progress in reducing the rate of global maternal mortality should give us all confidence that these collective efforts will truly pay off.

Through efforts under GHI, we are also committed to promoting sustainability by focusing on strengthening existing health systems and by building them – building on them to help countries develop their own capacity to improve the health of their people. This will provide women with access to an integrated package of essential health services.

I often think about the HIV-infected mother who fortunately has been able to get antiretroviral drugs and who now has the ability to have her health insured in ways she could never have once imagined and also, as she has her baby, to be able to access the drugs that will ensure that her infection will not be passed to her child.

But when both of them leave this health center, this place that has made such a difference on their lives, it is conceivable that the mother will have no access to family planning or with great difficulty be able to procure because she can't in the same place or nearby, or the baby will not have access to the immunizations and baby care and other health needs that both of them need.

So we are developing innovative strategies to be able to ensure that we can build more strongly on existing health care availability, to provide a more integrated approach.

We are also working to improve health through mobile technology, to deliver health information – for example, to pregnant and new moms, and so many other ways that this technology can enable better outcomes – and linking health programs with successful efforts to remove economic, cultural, social and legal barriers that create the obstacles to obtaining care for women and girls. And these practices, like gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices such as early marriage or FGM, the lack of education, economic opportunity, and so many more, remain major impediments.

The Global Health Initiative also reinforces the United States' commitment to addressing the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS by strengthening our focus on HIV prevention, treatment and care. The funding for PEPFAR will increase as well as its impact, and its prevention strategies will be more comprehensive.

For example, through GHI and PEPFAR, we hope to provide women and girls, particularly adolescent girls, with the tools and knowledge they need to protect themselves to integrate treatment with programs that address gender-based violence, a scourge that contributes to the spread of HIV. And as much progress as we make in making the antiretrovirals available, there is still an alarming incidence of the growing infection. And working with adolescent girls is a key component in prevention strategy. And we are scaling up our treatment of HIV-positive mothers so they are less likely to pass on the virus to their children.

Secondly, investing in women is a key pillar of the president's Feed the Future initiative, which was developed under Secretary Clinton's leadership at the State Department. It is a \$3.5 billion commitment to strengthen the world's food supply so farmers can better support their families and food can be available more broadly. It focuses on sustainably reducing hunger through greater productivity, and recognizes that most of the world's food is grown, harvested, stored and prepared by women who comprise the great majority of the small-hold farmers around the world. It recognizes that they have specific needs for training, for access to financial services, to markets, to decision-making, and so much more, if they are going to become more agriculturally productive.

In some regions, women produce 70 percent of the food, earn 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the land. The reform of land tenure and property rights as well as inheritance laws can help immeasurably to advance their success in farming and better helping to secure the world's food supply.

Third, women are also instrumental to the United States' response to the challenge of climate change. Women in the developing world are the hardest hit, the most severely impacted, whether by the tsunamis or droughts or so much more, because they are the great majority of the small farmers and have primary responsibility within their families for securing water, for food and energy sources. But they also should be looked at not just as the most severely impacted, but as key problem solvers who can play a significant role in safeguarding their families and communities from environmental hazards and in promoting sustainable solutions to climate change.

For example, new small-scale technologies such as cookstoves or solar lanterns can not only make a huge difference through the agency of women who are the primary consumers of these products, but also become sustainable businesses for them and promote greater economic empowerment. They can play a role in assembling, selling and repairing products such as these, and contribute to the development of new small green economies. To this end, Secretary Clinton will soon announce a new major initiative, a public-private partnership that will safeguard health, promote women's economic empowerment and the environment, and thereby further the MDGs.

Fourth, to alleviate poverty, economic growth is essential. Because women-run small- and medium-size businesses are key accelerators of economic growth, we have focused on policy efforts on increasing women's economic opportunities. Studies show that to grow GDP, there is no better nor no more effective investment – as one said, no lower-hanging fruit to pick – than investing in women-run small and medium-size businesses. But women confront an array of barriers, from training and access to financing, to markets, and discriminatory regulations, barriers that they have to overcome if their economic potential is to be released.

In conjunction with the recent AGOA ministerial, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, we created the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program to provide women with the tools and skills they need to more successfully access AGOA and its benefits for building businesses and markets. We are working with APEC, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation countries, to put a first-time focus on women as drivers of economic growth.

Half of the APEC countries have developing economies. It is calculated that in the Asia-Pacific region, that region is shortchanged in excess of \$40 billion a year in GDP because of the untapped potential of women.

And with respect to women's waged employment outside of agriculture, one of the key indicators for MDG 3, progress has been slow. According to UNIFEM, the women's share of non-agricultural employment has increased in the last decade by only 3 percent.

So to empower women in business, whether micro or SMEs, women need access to a full range of financial services: savings accounts; insurance; remittance regimes that would allow them to have financial identities, something very difficult for poor women who lack formal identification documents.

Today there is a growing array of innovative financial arrangements, from mobile banking to the work of self-help organizations like SEWA, that will make it possible for poor women to become more successful economically.

For example, the International Finance Corporation is working with Ugandan banks to offer loans to women so that they can buy land where the land itself can serve as the collateral. Securing land, property rights, have such a direct impact on women's ability to access finance, and financial inclusion is closely tied to their ability to contribute to economic development.

Fifth, another key indicator of MDG 3, gender equality MDG, is women's political participation. We know that when women can bring their experiences and talents to bear in the political arena, they are far more likely to invest in the public good than their male counterparts. The number of women serving on village and city councils in India, on the panchayat, thanks to a quota reform that took place years ago, have stimulated their participation in local government in ways that today there are far more running successfully for these positions, well beyond the quota.

And they have become a well-documented example of the difference that they are making when serving in local government, in furthering safe drinking water or education or other

community needs. Yet women are significantly outnumbered in the parliaments and the provincial councils and peace processes, and democracy without the participation of women is a contradiction in terms.

Conflict exacerbates poverty and undermines development more generally. Women need to be active participants in conflict resolution, peace negotiation, political transitions and post-conflict reconstruction if countries are to stabilize and peace is to be secured and sustained.

The United States has been working – within our own government, bilaterally, multilaterally – to accelerate implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its successor resolutions that link women to peace and security. And where women are oppressed and marginalized, societies are far more dangerous and extremism is much more likely to take hold.

As Secretary Clinton has stressed, the subjugation of women is a threat to our national security and the common security of the world, because the suffering and denial of the rights of women and the instability of nations go hand in hand; and along with that, very low human development.

Lastly, let me touch on the important role of innovation. I am often reminded that more than 30 years ago, my friend Mohammed Yunus, then a young economist, lent \$27 out of his own pocket to a group of poor craftsmen in a small town. It made an enormous difference for those craftspeople. That small loan would inspire a whole new lending system to lift people out of poverty, particularly women.

Innovation is critical to successful development. We have promoted the importance of innovation, technology, public-private partnerships; as the secretary says, a fundamental component of how we conduct development work. One example of innovation, and but one example, is mobile technology, which has proven to be a powerful tool to transform global development.

Gender, however, is rarely factored in to mobile technology solutions for development. The role of mobile technology in banking, in teaching literacy, in providing critical health information and economic empowerment and in protecting women from violence is evidence of the potential of this technology to transform the lives of the poor. It can also be used to develop accountability measures, to report data back that is so essential to measuring outcomes.

Today, for example, there is approximately one phone – one cell phone for every three people in Bangladesh, yet around the world there is a gender gap in mobile usage in low- and middle-income countries. In order to begin to address this gap and better advance this development tool, Secretary Clinton next month will announce a new partnership on mobile technology.

She has also announced an innovation award for the empowerment of women and girls, in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation. The goal of the award is to build on the most pioneering approaches to empowering women politically, economically and socially around the

world; specifically, through a global competition award on innovation that has enormous potential for scaling up and thereby achieving broader development outcomes.

Initiatives like all of these indicate the centrality of investing in women and girls as a fundamental principle of our approach to development and foreign policy. The only way we can hope to meet the fundamental challenges of our time is to incorporate their needs and tap their talents and potential around the world.

It is with this message and in this spirit that we join hands with our partners to accelerate progress towards meeting the MDGs and to create a better world for all.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. CARTY: Thank you for that terrific overview of everything that's on the table and at stake at this really important time, and how the U.S. is really hoping to push the agenda forward in very meaningful kinds of ways.

And there was a lot of optimism in your presentation, but there was also a lot of reality, and there are some difficult realities. So maybe to start us off, I'll ask a couple of questions, maybe starting off by looking at one or two of those more sobering realities, and then we'll open to the floor. And we'll also try to be including some questions from our Web audience, who I neglected to welcome when I opened us up this morning, but we do have folks joining us by webcast and we want them to feel fully a part of the discussion as well.

So coming to some of the more sobering statistics that you've put on the table, you mentioned that, you know, 5 percent of the economic – that women are 60 percent of the workforce but only actually generate and receive 5 percent of the world's income. You talked about the pretty shocking statistics about the numbers of women who are illiterate; I think you said 75 percent of all adult illiterate persons are in fact women.

But we have this enormous moment of opportunity before us. What can we do, what can the U.S. do to ensure that as we go into the MDG summit the commitments that are made there are real, and that there's not the type of backtracking that many folks feel happened with the Gleneagles commitments, which were in fact formally revoked at the last G8 meeting?

So maybe you could tell us a little bit about how the U.S. is going to approach that challenge, as keeping the commitments out there in front, keeping them real, and what we'll be doing differently over this period 2010 to 2015 to really ensure that there's meaningful progress.

MS. VERVEER: Well, as I mentioned, the U.S. will put forward a strategy that builds on what we have been doing to make our contribution to the MDGs, and we'll have a very strong focus on the initiatives as well as the underpinnings of innovation and sustainability and – and ways in which USAID – (inaudible) – wanted to put a real spotlight on MDG 3 and what it represents in terms of women's equality in this larger canvas of how we achieve the goals we need to achieve.

And I think that this is one of the toughest challenges, that redressing gender inequality continues to be a very difficult proposition. And going at it in these major initiatives that the administration has put forward, very significantly so in the Global Health Initiative and certainly the Feed the Future initiative as well as climate change and in other ways, will serve to hopefully put a stronger emphasis on the role that a gender lens application to these areas that the MDGs address needs to be applied.

But we still confront issues of social attitudes and deeply-embedded cultural norms that we need to look for ways to get at, because they have so much to say about the kind of outcomes we want to achieve. This is a cross-cutting issue. It affects all the MDG areas. And if we don't do a better job at going at those, then we will shortchange our opportunity for progress, the kind of progress we all want to see.

So I think a greater focus on the part of leaders and the mustering of the kind of political will that is absolutely essential to recognize that this is in the self-interest of countries; it is also critical to achieving the outcomes that we've set before ourselves.

And we intend to be doing that. A lot of the work that is ongoing in terms of focusing on women and girls in our foreign policy and development work is in that very specific way and for that very specific reason: that until we address these issues in a much more concerted way, recognizing that they're not peripheral, they're not marginal, they're not the nice thing to do if you've got time to do them – oh, yes, we can do one program there and that will show our goodwill. They have got to be fully integrated for us to meet the challenge, and what's what we intend to do at the upcoming summit.

There will be very strong statements from the United States, strong commitments. We will be putting a spotlight on these issues in many, many venues, in hopes that it will help to continue the kind of commitment that has been made over the last many years and will be renewed and made hopefully even in greater ways and certainly that our initiatives reflect already in the months and years to come.

MS. CARTY: And actually, with that answer, you've given me an early opening to go to one of the questions from our Web audience, which is around metrics and accountability. And very much a part of the GHI and Feed the Future and it seems like the administration's entire approach on development is around being able to know that you've been effective and that you've made a difference. And it seems like this is probably a particular challenge in the gender area. So maybe a few words on how you're trying to address –

MS. VERVEER: Somehow I don't think the word "challenge" is strong enough.

MS. CARTY: (Chuckles.)

MS. VERVEER: This is absolutely critical, and it is one that so many of us are engaged in, particularly the people on the front lines, in this – in this technical work. But at the highest level, we need a commitment, which I believe we have, that puts a premium on measurements and evaluation, so that we can do exactly what you've said, Lisa, and that is know that we are

achieving the kinds of outcomes – it's not enough to say X numbers of people were trained or X numbers of people got care, but what were the outcomes of that – of that investment, and what worked, so that we can learn from that process and scale up those things that work.

Sometimes I think we spend so much time reinventing the wheel, and we know all over the world there are solutions to problems that are having great impacts, but in the places where they're taking place and often not extended more broadly in ways that they need to be scaled up.

So this whole effort – and it is one that we aren't at the end of, for sure. As GHI goes forward, as Feed the Future goes forward, et cetera, there is a strong component for this effort. We need to ensure that NGOs and others engaged on the ground have the resources to collect the kind of data also that is critically important to have.

And as we go through this QDDR, the Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review, it is a mouthful, and it is a challenge, but it is one in which these issues are very much front and center as we go through – have been going through months of consideration and are ramping up to the end of that process, that these be very much a part of it.

So absolutely critical. And then I think building on that, ensuring that in our day-to-day policies, in the work that happens at the State Department every day, the work that happens at all of our agencies as they are related to this – to this effort, that we really integrate these issues across the board and not make them one shot, one program, one initiative, a small opportunity, but see them for what they are: a major part of our overall consideration in a fully integrated fashion.

MS. CARTY: Maybe to turn to some of the political issues, you mentioned in your talk the priorities that both you and Secretary Clinton placed on women having appropriate roles in conflict resolution, in peace negotiations, in reconstruction. And both the secretary and yourself, I think, traveled to Goma last year. You've recently come back from Afghanistan. Those are certainly two terribly difficult situations where just in the last few weeks we've seen horrific things happen – mass raping in the Democratic Republic of Congo and, I think, an attack on schoolchildren in Afghanistan.

What are – what are we learning about the complexity of trying to bring forward a more balanced gender agenda and protect the rights and roles of women and girls in these situations? And what more can we do? It seems like (we ?) started with a very full plan in the DRC, but it's been a challenge to actually realize that.

MS. VERVEER: Well, these are not easy situations, and I think, first and foremost, we have to see the role that women can and must play as something that is a critical factor in the overall outcomes we want to achieve.

In the DRC, which has had this horrific conflict go on now for more than a decade, very complicated situation where rape is actually a strategic tool to destroy families and sever communities in ways that produces the kind of results that helps those who are engaged in perpetrating the armed conflict achieve their goals. It is something that has to be addressed on

many, many different levels, and when the secretary went to Goma and since, she and her colleagues at the State Department and beyond have been hard at work on many levels: politically, diplomatically, regionally, looking at the forces and the factors that have to come together, raising as she did with the president of the country the kinds of things that need to be done – from the problem with conflict minerals to the fact that the soldiers weren't being paid.

The soldiers, the Congolese soldiers that often engaged in the kind of horrific behavior and rape and pillaging, because they weren't being paid. And inexcusable as their behavior is, obviously, it's critical that the soldiers be paid do the protective work that they were supposed to be doing instead of joining the horrors that were being perpetrated there.

And also dealing with one of the most serious consequences of the terrible health impacts on the women in these populations, that is almost too nauseating to read when the stories keep occurring. The secretary put tremendous effort into a U.N.-sponsored – U.S.-sponsored resolution, Security Council Resolution 1888 to deal precisely with the sexual violence in terms of creating a special representative for the secretary-general to focus on this issue and to bring a talent bank together so that these kinds of situations can be addressed well in advance and prevented from the kind of things that are happening in the DRC today.

And in fact, after the latest incident, one of the first things that the secretary-general did and there was an emergency Security Council meeting was to make sure that the new representative go and try to bring amelioration in some way of the circumstances there.

Most recently there were charges of the bystanding role of the peacekeepers instead of one in which they were fully engaged in protecting the citizens and that needs to be addressed.

So you're right, these are very, very complicated situations and we can't take one slice, just like in development; you can't silo one piece and expect to have the kind of results that we all want to see. We need to do an array of things, which is what we're doing.

It is a very, very tough situation that has gone on for a long time and really fundamentally needs very much to have a political resolution that happens in a regional basis.

In terms of Afghanistan, it is obviously a place in which the role of women has been oppressed and underplayed and undervalued and threatened in so many different ways. It is a critical time as the peace process goes forward or as the peace effort goes forward, called reintegration and ultimately reconciliation, that women be engaged in that process. Not because – although this is important – because they ought to be at the table and that is a good thing to do, but because, as the secretary herself has said, the prospects for peace are going to be subverted if the women's voices are silenced and if the women are marginalized.

They have much to bring to that process. And when I was there, not on the most recent trip but prior to that, one woman one night in a discussion said to me, "Please do not look at us as the victims as you do, as victims, but look at us as the leaders that we are."

And I think too often we look at women in a place like Afghanistan or in so many other places through that lens of victimhood (ph). Now, there is no doubt: Women are victimized in more ways than we can count. But they also possess enormous talents and abilities and skills and capacities and experiences that have to be brought to the table if their countries are going to embark on a course that is part of ensuring a better future, not just for them, but for the citizens of their country.

So in Afghanistan, we have been working assiduously to ensure that women are part of the process. Interestingly, there was a peace jirga meeting where men and women came together a month or so ago and as a result of that process, even President Karzai wanted to point out that the women were well accepted even by the most conservative elements who participated, male elements who participated in the process with them. And all the working groups of the peace jirga recommended that women be part of the process going forward.

So this new high peace counsel that's going to be put in place, the kind of work that has to go on at the provincial level and down at the local levels, what their role will be is one that is continuing to evolve, but it's got to be one in which the place and role that they have to play is recognized and that they can fully participate.

Beyond that, on the specific questions having to do with their treatments and their condition, we have been engaged there as we have beyond Afghanistan in a full array of development programs, and they are fully integrated into the stabilization, overall stabilization plan for the country. And that is everything from education – and more girls are in school than they ever were, certainly, during the Taliban period where they were routinely kept out.

And working with the vestiges of that situation and overcoming it has been one that has taken a long time and one that continues, and the numbers are much improved, but there's still a way to go. Tremendous violence in the society that needs to be addressed, access to justice and a situation with a very anemic formal justice system; access to economic empowerment in all of the ways that are traditional, particularly in agriculture, ensuring that women have a role where they can (play ?) with their husbands in providing income to their families. So the full development agenda is one taking place in Afghanistan.

So whether DRC, Afghanistan, so many other places, I think fundamentally, we need to really look at women as the positive actors that they can be and should be to bring about the kind of better situations that we all want to see in those places, whether that's through the development process and building their capacity or whether it is at the peace tables, negotiating tables or in the processes that are making decisions about the future of the places where they live.

MS. CARTY: Let's turn to some questions from our audience, and I ask please that you identify yourself, please, when the mike comes to you. And we'll do questions in groups of three.

So why don't we start with the lady in the front row up here, please.

Q: Hi, Jill Gay, consultant, Open Society Institute. And just to let you know that there is “What Worked” on women and HIV. It was released by OSI this summer: whatworksforwomen-dot-org.

But my question is, you talked a lot about mothers and babies and prevention of HIV, and the new guidelines released by WHO this summer call for stopping treatment of women once they complete breastfeeding. And we don’t yet know what the impact is on the mothers themselves. That’s going to be an NIH study that’s going to be completed in five years. And so my question revolves around what will be the U.S. position on this moving forward?

MS. CARTY: Thanks. And the lady in the front row here, please. Do we have another mike there? Great.

Q: Thank you. I’m Nia Mundi (ph) from the Embassy of South Africa. Thank you, Ambassador, for a comprehensive outlaying of the situation as it is now.

It seems – as you bring it across – that the skies are indeed aligned globally for us to deal with the challenge, but what I worry about is, yes, we will go the MDG summit next month, deal – try and deal with the problem for the next five years. In my view, I think that five years is really not going to be enough to turn the situation around.

I did want to know what the ambassador’s views are in terms of beyond 2015, beyond Beijing plus 15 and beyond all of this, where will women be, where we’ll be. Thank you.

MS. CARTY: Let’s take a question from the gentleman in the back of the room, please.

Q: Thank you, Lisa.

Ambassador, I’m Will Davis with the United Nations Office in Washington. As I’m sure you know, the United Nations General Assembly voted this year to merge four existing women’s programs to create a new U.N. agency, U.N. Women, to focus on the gender agenda.

Are you optimistic that this will help try to marshal U.N. resources to address gender goals? And what’s the U.S. doing to make sure they get started on a good foot?

MS. CARTY: Why don’t you start with – (inaudible, off mike).

MS. VERVEER: Okay, let me work backwards from the last question to the first. On U.N. Women, I’m very proud of the role that the United States has played in working towards the establishment of the agency. It consolidates a lot of the work that is done on, continues to go on, on women in the United Nations, but for the first time will create a strong leader who hopefully will be selected to run the agency, someone with a great deal of experience and know-how and standing around the world who will be at the right hand of the secretary-general and ensure that these issues are on the table in the conversations that matter most in the running of the agency, which is not the place – not the case today.

So there is a lot of energy around U.N. Women. Obviously, the selection of the head, the work that will go on to consolidate the various four other entities into this one new entity and those kinds of decisions that are going forward will have a lot to say to its future. But I think from all accounts the kind of response that it's created, the kind of interest that it's created and the goodwill and commitment that so many countries already have stated in terms of their support for the entity bodes well.

So hopefully it will play a major role and more significant role. I mean, the United Nations has as its mission the work that we're discussing this morning. And to have a strong leader there focus significantly on this issue in a cross-cutting way across all the work that the United Nations does, I think, is very, very important. And we all will continue to work to ensure that the – that turns out in the best way possible.

In terms of where will we be in the future on women's issues – well, you know, the Beijing agenda that 189 countries signed onto is one that in many ways is an unfinished agenda. It is a very ambitious blueprint for what we need to see. And I think that so much of the unfinished agenda of Beijing is linked to the issues that we have in accelerating progress on the MDG. Because the equality of women and the prospects for women's well-being and rights protection matter so much in terms of the goals of the MDG, that link is a very strong one.

I would hope that this moment – and I think it is a special moment, the likes of which we haven't seen in a long time, one in which we can come together in a much more concerted way recognizing the importance of these issues – will ensure that women will more fully participate economically and politically in the lives of their societies, will have the kinds of access to health care and education that are absolutely critical, and will be free from violence.

I think one of the biggest problems that fundamentally undergirds the problem we have on women's equality is the lack of value of the girl child. Think of all of the horrors that are perpetrated against women, from child marriage to feeding girl babies last if there's any food left over, to girl infanticide to honor killings to you name it. At the root of so much of that is the lack of value of the girl and, of course, of the woman, that very low status.

So education, employment, economic empowerment are absolutely critical. All of these issues are so integrated, and we have to work at them in an integrated way. But my hope is that given the progress that we have made and the opportunities that lie ahead, that greater recognition today that I see as much more strongly understood with the kind of data and convergence of interest that is taking place will propel us, propel women and girls around the world to a different place, a much better place. And so it can't just be a hope; it must be the work that we all engage in, in a very concerted way.

And on the issue of whether or not the treatment should be stopped, I don't know where that will all come out. Obviously, prevention is an enormous goal of our Global Health Initiative, particularly with respect to HIV/AIDS. We have got to make a much more concerted effort in all of the ways we know to keep the rates of infection from growing. So whatever the outcomes will be of the study, that will be closely looked at, but I don't know if that will come out today.

MS. CARTY: Let's do another round. And we'll start with the gentlemen over here on the far left.

Q: Thank you for your presentation, Ambassador Verveer.

I'm Leon Weintraub, University of Wisconsin, Washington semester in international affairs.

In some of your discussion, you mention two specific areas that were – had a lot of violence against women. You mention the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, it would seem that a lot of the violence that you had mentioned, such as the destruction of schools and the intimidation of girls, acid throwing to keep them from going to school, seems to be perpetrated by people who in the name of a religious ideology or a doctrine – whether in fact that is the case or not, that seems to be the reason they assert for that.

I'm wondering, are you working or are you attempting to work with religious leaders in the country to get some type of assertion that this is in fact not in keeping with the religious doctrine or ideology, it's a perversion of it, to eliminate any possible low level of support or understanding for this by people otherwise illiterate who say, well, if the religion says we must do this, I guess we have to support these kind of attacks.

MS. CARTY: Next, the lady here, please.

Q: Hi, my name is Joanna Kuebler, and I'm the director of the Global Campaign for Education, U.S. Thank you, Ambassador, for your remarks. You mentioned two particularly startling education facts. Two-thirds of out-of-school children are girls.

And then, as the moderator mentioned, about the illiteracy stats, and in the indicators that you talked about today and that seem to follow the roadmap so far for the MDG plan, I don't see education articulated specifically. And so I'm wondering if you could clarify where achieving basic education might fall in those indicators, and the president's plan for achieving MDG number 2, given the increase in all of the other outcomes we need to achieve that particular goal.

MS. CARTY: Let's take one more question. The lady on the far – my right, over here.

Q: Thank you. My name is Leah Freij. I'm the gender adviser for the Extending Service Delivery Project and IntraHealth. My question is about the role that the U.S. government is going to be playing ensuring that the issue of gender could be mainstreamed through its projects. How will that be done? Because, in general, there's a lot of lip service being paid to gender, and when we talk about mainstreaming, it means it falls off the radar screen.

Thank you.

MS. VERVEER: Okay. To the gentleman's question on those who hijack their religion, hijack Islam in this case, to perpetrate violence against women, is a real serious issue because, as I recently had raised with me on the trip to Afghanistan, the ways in which religion is used by some of the radical elements to justify all manner of oppressions and violation against the well-being of women is something of concern.

You know, some of the greatest progress that's taking place in terms of particularly Muslim women moving their own progress forward in their societies is on the basis of their taking their religion back, so to speak, and saying this is not my religion. It doesn't condone oppression of women. It doesn't say girls shouldn't be educated. This is a contradiction of who we are and what we are.

And your recommendation of those voices within the Muslim tradition who should be speaking out, particularly the leadership, and making a difference, I think is right on. In fact, when I was in Afghanistan, I went up to Mazar-e-Sharif one day and visited the Blue Mosque and met with the religion director, and there were women and children every place.

There were programs specifically focused on them and their well-being. It was a safe space for them. And we were talking about this very point, that more should be done to really focus on what you said, sir. And it is a place in which we also recognize the need for this. There have been programs working with imams who have in their Friday services talked about how violence against women is a contradiction of the faith.

There have been others who have worked within their communities to say to the men in the households in cases that are appropriate, allow your wife to go for midwife training. She will have to leave the community, she will go for many weeks, but that training will make all the difference in the kind of help – health benefits that we will see, and you must be a part of allowing her to do this.

So I think those voices are highly influential, are incredibly important. And we need to find ways to ensure that they are heard and not the voices of oppression, who create such a disconnect between people of faith and what they espouse and the kind of violence and horrors that are perpetrated.

In terms of education, in girls' education, in particular, it is obviously something that we care a great deal about and recognize as a very critical, critical place for our development. Just in the last year, USAID has served more than 24 million girls in terms of accessing education and the quality of education. But I think we clearly need to do more. One can't do everything at once. We are looking at that in a very concerted way. The secretary has long been a champion of universal education. President Obama has likewise been very eloquent in his commitment and we will see, I'm confident, greater progress in the months and years to come.

There are a number of areas I think in which we should be more significantly focused. Yes, we've got more girls in school, more girls and boys in school, but what is the quality of that education? What is happening with the dropout rate? What kind of incentives do we have in place, from conditional cash transfer payments to incentives.

I've seen firsthand what a difference a bag of flour can make to encouraging a family to send their daughter to school, or programs that provide an animal that becomes an income to the family and enables the daughter to go to school. There's a whole range of incentives in what's working and what's not working.

Safety. The transportation issue. This is such a big problem. And I think certainly we've got to focus more on secondary education. It is an area in which we have not made the kind of progress we need to make, and for every extra year, the consequences, the positive consequences of that are so great. So this is not an area in which we are sidetracked. There's a lot of good work going on. We want to make that more focused, hopefully bring in new resources. But it is something that is a – is always a very top priority in development. And we're – a lot of work is continuing to go on.

In terms of the role of gender and institutionalizing it, it's a very, very, very important comment. And obviously I think it is one of the most critical ways in which we have to operate. So the role that I have, the position that has been created is one that first and foremost is about integrating these issues into the overall work of the State Department.

That means that it's not just an office or an outpost that now and again does a good program, hopefully, but one in which the regional bureaus, the functional bureaus that have to do with a range of issues from economics to human rights, the development agencies, that we are all focused in the same way in fully integrating these issues. And a lot of support of course has come from the secretary herself and buttressed by the kind of data we have today that is easily accessible.

So I think the goal would be one day not to even have a position like this because it wouldn't be necessary, it would be so fully mainstreamed and integrated. And that's why discussions having to do with measurements and evaluation and budget mainstreaming and all of the kinds of institutional, more technical frameworks have to be put in place to ensure that this isn't just a one-shot deal, it isn't just some nice rhetoric, but it is fully part of the way we do business. And that means across the board in a very cross-cutting way. And that is the effort we're trying to make.

MS. CARTY: I think we have time for a couple more questions. We have a lady in a blue sweater here?

Q: Thank you. Madame Ambassador, my name is Mindy Reiser from Global Peace Services USA. I wanted to combine the wonderful comments you had about the strength of women and their initiative and their power with the issues of conflict and the reprehensible developments in Congo and elsewhere.

In terms of innovation, I wonder what thought the State Department and other agencies have been giving to recruiting the women active in the criminal justice system. We have in our own city a woman chief of police. I had the pleasure of meeting a woman from Chile in the previous administration who was head of the police. Their system is somewhat different here.

And it seems to me that we have some interesting examples. In Liberia, there were women in the peace force. I'd like to see that given some attention. It's a role model for the police themselves and the military. It gives strength to the women who see people are watching them. And it seems to me we should try to encourage this, work with our universities dealing with criminal justice, our international association of police chiefs and so on. I think that would be an interesting way to go.

MS. CARTY: The question is from Janet –

Q: Thank you so much, Ambassador Verveer. I'm Janet Fleischman with CSIS Global Health Policy Center. And I wonder if you could speak a little bit more about the role of your office in the Global Health Initiative. My understanding is that you are in fact the linchpin of implementing and monitoring the women and girls-centered approach that we'd like to see as such a key component of this.

And I wonder if you could speak a little bit more about, going forward, what is the role of your office in ensuring the implementation of a women-and girls-centered approach in the Global Health Initiative?

MS. CARTY: Okay. One last short question. The lady right here, please, in the middle.

Q: Thank you. My name is – (inaudible) – with Voice of America, Chinese branch. Thank you so much. My question is regarding Chinese women's rights and its birth limitation policy. On one hand, such policy and its coercive sterilization are often criticized as a violation of women's rights. On the other hand, the Chinese government insists it's the effective way of population control.

So what are your thoughts on this? And do you support some congressmen's proposals that the United Nations Population Fund should stop funding the Chinese-related projects? Thank you.

MS. VERVEER: Okay. In terms of the role that women can play, should play in justice work, particularly in policing, I couldn't agree with you more. There are a lot of programs, in fact, that we are doing in areas of conflict to train women for police work, particularly in Afghanistan, and to ensure that they are, for example, trained in family resource centers and places of safety to deal with threats to their well-being or in fact violence. But training for women for policing is a major area of commitment in these places.

And you mentioned the Indian women peacekeepers in Liberia. They in fact had become a role model in many ways. The way in which they operated and the role that they played in Liberia became an inspiration and model for more women to become engaged in police work.

So this is an area where women can make a difference, given the vulnerability of women in so many instances, the confidence that they have and the greater security they feel. Having

women in this protective role is one that we have been encouraging and supporting. So thank you for that.

The role that the Office on Global Women's issues has played in the development of the Global Health Initiative has absolutely been one that has been very much a leadership role, particularly the component focused on women and girls. And in front of me are two of the most able leaders of that process, Jen Klein and Rachel Vogelstein, who have personally and with their colleagues invested literally hours and hours and hours into ensuring that as this initiative was developed that we remained on target.

They have been dealing with that glorious world of indicators and measurements, dealing with work with their interagency colleagues at CDC, HHS, PEPFAR et cetera and AID, working as the targeted countries have become focused on to ensure that the process that has become a policy process on paper is one in which the impacts on the ground begin to mesh in ways that the country ownership and the engagements of those who are going to be critical to the reality are very much in place.

So it will continue to be one that has gone from developing the policy and the – surrounding the initiative to one in which there will be close monitoring and ongoing work within the department, but beyond the department with our partners across the government.

And in terms of – what was the last question? I can't read my handwriting –

MS. CARTY: Our colleague from VOA talking about China.

MS. VERVEER: Oh, China. The – obviously, forced sterilization is a violation of women's rights, as Secretary Clinton said as first lady very strongly in her address at the Beijing World Conference all those years ago.

It is a problem, as is the related problem of the value of the girl child in terms of girl infanticide and girl feticide, which is so skewing the demographics in China that they've got a really serious problem on their hands with far more males than females. And some of that obviously stems from the population policies.

With respect to UNFPA, as you know, President Obama has restored the U.S. funding of UNFPA and the work it does certainly on family planning around the world. We do not fund in China – we do not fund UNFPA in China. And the amount of money – the very small program that UNFPA has in China, whatever is spent on that program is reduced in the overall funding that we make to UNFPA.

But beyond that, there have been teams of experts who have gone to China to assess the UNFPA program, and have found no evidence of their complicity in forced sterilizations or related issues. And in fact they have had a significant positive role in moving the country away from those policies. So I know this is an area of disagreement on the part of some, but this is where our position rests.

MS. CARTY: I'm going to take the moderator's prerogative, and ask one last question, if I may. And we've talked about so many interesting issues this morning, and they're all so important. But, as you say, we can't do everything all at once.

So I'm wondering, you know, if you were to look ahead several years, what would you like the legacy of your office to be? If you had to select one subset of everything we've talked about today, what do you think is most in need of really focused attention?

MS. VERVEER: That is an impossible question – (laughter) – because all of these issues are so interrelated. But I do want to go to the question – boring as it may be – about institutionalization, because if we fail to really integrate these issues fully across the work of the department, across our development policies, we won't really have the kinds of successes we want to see on the range of related issues.

So I think that has to be an absolutely fundamental focus in ways that will bring about the kind of dividends that will ensure progress on education and health, and freeing women from – and girls from violence, and ensuring their economic and political participation and beyond. So that is a major underpinning of everything we need to do.

Obviously, it is hard to pick and choose. It's like who's your favorite child. You can't pick and choose among your children. But these are all such significant propositions. I would say if there were some way that we can begin to get at something that I mentioned earlier – and that is the valuing of women and girls in ways that will begin to take away these negative impacts that are so detrimental in women's full equality.

You know, Nick Kristof said in his book "Half the Sky" – that he wrote with his wife, Sheryl WuDunn – that the challenge of the 19th and 20th centuries were slavery and totalitarianism, one in the 19th and one in the 20th, and that the great challenge of the 21st century is that we really address women's equality once and for all. It has – the lack of equality has such significant, terrible consequences both for women, but certainly for all of the things that we have come together to discuss this morning.

And the need to recognize that and the need to recognize that they're not – these are not marginal considerations. These are not tangential to the main agenda, whatever it is. These are not good things, nice things, wonderful things, warm and toasty things.

These are really serious, serious imperatives. And when we really do ensure that women and girls are not just stated as core principles in our foreign policy development, but in fact really energize that principle in ways that are manifested across the board in our work, then hopefully we'll really have an impact. And that would be my dream.

MS. CARTY: I think that was a great answer. (Chuckles.) So with that, thank you very much. (Applause.)

(END)