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REMARKS BY

**U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
THE ASIA REGIONAL MEETING
INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPACT IN ESSENTIAL
OBSTETRIC AND NEWBORN CARE
OPENING CEREMONY**

**RUPOSHI BANGLA HOTEL, DHAKA
MAY 3, 2012**

His Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia, Yin Chhay Ly

The Honorable Minister of Health, Dr. A.F.M. Ruhul Haque

The Honorable State Minister of Health, Dr. Captain (retired) Mujibur Rahman Fakir

The Honorable Health Advisor to the Prime Minister, Professor Syed Modasser Ali

The Senior Secretary for Health, Md. Humayun Kabir

Distinguished guests, friends and colleagues

Mother ...

Child ...

Mother and child, the very foundation of life, of society, of civilization ...

We gather this week both to celebrate the great progress made in protecting mother and child, and to commit ourselves, to dedicate ourselves to doing more, much more to better preserve the lives of mothers and children.

The twenty nations represented here this evening have made notable progress in reducing maternal and newborn deaths. We salute these achievements. Both Bangladesh and Nepal, for example, are on track for meeting the Millennium Development Goals of reducing child under-five mortality by two-thirds and reducing maternal mortality by three-fourths by

2015. Afghanistan, too, has made solid progress in reducing maternal deaths, and the list of success goes on and on.

But more must be done ...

The unnecessary loss of even one mother or one child is not acceptable.

I know Bangladesh best, so I will briefly comment on the current situation here.

Today and everyday twenty Bangladeshi mothers will die in childbirth, half from the two major causes -- postpartum hemorrhage (excessive bleeding) and eclampsia (high blood pressure with convulsions).

Today and everyday 75 Bangladeshi newborns will die because they cannot take the first breath of air.

The statistics I cite are cold and stark. But each number masks great tragedy ... tragedy at the human level as a life is unnecessarily extinguished; tragedy at the family level as the family, the bedrock of society, is rend asunder; tragedy at the community and societal levels as the nation is deprived of its greatest asset, its people.

These terrible losses are even more tragic because most of them are preventable ... these human losses are unnecessary ... and we ... all of us gathered here this evening ... we must stop them.

That is your task over the coming days. Share and exchange ideas ... assess what works, what doesn't work ... develop best practices on how to save our mothers and children ... network ... energize, motivate, inspire ... that is your challenge ... come away from this conference determined, dedicated, committed to making a difference, a real difference to protect mothers and children.

America is your partner in this life or death struggle.

America is your partner ... last year President Obama's Global Health Initiative provided over half a billion dollars to help improve maternal and child health and another half billion dollars to help parents have the family size that they want.

And America remains committed to support your efforts to save the lives of your mothers and children.

Bangladesh, too, is committed to this cause, as evidenced by its great progress in cutting deaths of mothers and children. I applaud the Ministry of Health under the most able

leadership of Minister Haque for saving the lives of so many mothers and children. I trust they are most proud of this achievement. I wish, too, to express my appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh, especially the Ministry of Health, for co-hosting this conference with the United States Government.

The theme of this conference says it all: “Make every mother and child count.”

Make every mother and child count ... simple words, but a huge mission. I wish you the best over the next three days and, most especially, after your return home, where you will rejoin the struggle to save our mothers and children.

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Prepared for delivery

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