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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
EXPOSURE VISIT
STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN
SOUTH ASIA
SOUTH ASIA WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP SYMPOSIUM**

**Opening Ceremony
Westin Hotel, Dhaka
April 1, 2014**

Honorable State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroz Chumki

President of the Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Rokia Rahman

Asia Foundation Bangladesh Country Representative Hasan Mazumdar

Good friend and fellow passionate lover of flowers Luna Shamsuddoha

... and most especially you, the wonderful women entrepreneurs from across South Asia ...

Asalamu 'laikum, Namaskar, Good morning ...

Over two years ago I helped to launch this exciting experiment in unleashing woman power throughout the region. It was a wondrous occasion; it was a magical moment; all of us thought then that we were a part of a great moment in history, but I was a little sad ... I was a little sad ... I regretted that Mrs. Malick had not been invited to the symposium.

Perhaps, some of you may recall my speaking of Mrs. Malick, a woman who lives in Jessore District of southwestern Bangladesh ... a woman who wants to be more ... a woman who wants to do more ... a woman who wants to build a better life for her family and for herself. I told how Mrs. Malick became an entrepreneur ... how she took out a loan and bought a machine to make fertilizer briquettes, called guti fertilizer ... I told how Mrs. Malick became a successful businesswoman ... how she paid off her loan ... and how she became a pillar of her community ... a woman of confidence, a woman who commands respect, a woman treasured and valued by the men and women of her village ... a woman treasured and valued by the men and women of her village ... a pillar of her community ... Mrs. Malick.

When I gave those remarks in December 2012, I was sad ... Mrs. Malick was not there ... Mrs. Malick could not participate in that grand event.

But the organizers of this week's event did not repeat that oversight. This time they remembered to invite Mrs. Malick ... in fact, they invited dozens of Mrs. Malicks ... dozens of Mrs. Malicks from throughout the region ... you ... each of you is Mrs. Malick ... each of you is a woman determined to forge a new life for your family, your community, yourself. I am so happy to look out and see that this time Mrs. Malick is here ... Mrs. Malick is here in great force.

All of you have faced great obstacles ... we know them well: deep ingrained discrimination that a woman cannot succeed in business, insufficient networks, limited access to credit, gender-based violence.

These are serious hurdles, but you overcame them and now you are building your businesses against all these odds ... you are realizing your dream of ensuring a better future for your countries, a better tomorrow for your children ... a tomorrow when your children, too, regardless of gender, can use their talents to improve their own lives, to build regional, even global, networks, to strengthen the policies and institutions so the playing field is level.

I am 64 years old. I have done development work in some manner since 1970, when I first left America to live and work in the villages of Nepal. Since then, my wife and I served as Peace Corps Volunteers living two and a half years with farmers in remote Congo ... subsequently, we worked in Pakistan, India, Zaire, Zambia, Angola and now for a second time in wonderful Bangladesh. Here in Bangladesh, I have undertaken a campaign to visit each of the country's sixty-four districts so I can see firsthand the magic, the vitality, the wonder of the amazing people of this country, most especially the women.

You see ... throughout my over four decades of service in development, I have learned something ... something simple ... something critically important ... everywhere I go ... whether crisscrossing Bangladesh from one end to the other, exploring the far corners of the countries of South Asia, or discovering the people of beautiful Central and Southern Africa ... everywhere I go ... everywhere I go ... I see the power of women ... women ... women who are the backbone of their families ... women who are the backbone of their communities ... women who are indeed backbone of their nations. I have learned over these many years that if you are serious about development, then you must be serious about working with women ... that's the bottom line: development and progress are driven by women.

Women are the critical agents of change ...

As my boss Secretary of State Kerry put it, "No country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind."

Indeed, women cannot be left behind ... in fact, women are the ones who lead the way ... Mrs. Malick led the way in bringing greater prosperity to her village, bringing a better quality of life to the entire village as the farmers who used her improved fertilizer prosper.

You, seek to do the same thing – building enterprises, generating investment, creating opportunities, and empowering and inspiring other women along the way. You have unleashed your talents ... you have unleashed your entrepreneurial skills ... you have unleashed your determination to build new lives. And you have learned that you can achieve so much more reaching out to fellow women entrepreneurs, by working together, by forging networks and linkages across the region, by helping each other, by learning from each other's experiences ... indeed, you now know that when all the Mrs. Malicks of South Asia work together, when they stand together, when they struggle together, then change is possible, then unleashing the power of woman is possible.

I am so pleased and proud that America in partnership with our good Bangladeshi friends is sponsoring this symposium so that you can support each other, learn from each other as you undertake your continuing journey to lead your respective families, your respective communities, your respective nations to new and ever greater heights as you ... each of you pave the way for a better future for your children and all the future women of your countries and beyond.

I can think of no better legacy for you to leave. You must be so proud of yourselves.

Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery*