

For Immediate Release and Posting

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson**

**For Immediate Release
2011/1660**

October 3, 2011

REMARKS

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Honoring Participants of
African Women's Entrepreneurship Program**

**October 3, 2011
Benjamin Franklin Room
Washington, D.C.**

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. I'm proud to have another beautiful daughter. (Applause.) Thank you so very much. And I told Sylvia I am very proud to have another daughter known as AWEP. (Laughter.) And I am thrilled to see all of you here. It is for me a great honor to host you. I am especially delighted that Sylvia could introduce me. She has really embodied the spirit of AWEP and gone so far in reaching out to others to help them.

I want to thank and welcome all our private and public sector partners, the members of the African diplomatic corps who are here, and especially the 40 very special women who are participating in our second AWEP International Visitor Leadership Program. And as they say in southern Africa, all protocol observed.

You are here because this Administration is committed to creating opportunities for you, because we understand something that the rest of the world is only beginning to understand. And that is that women hold the key to economic growth in Africa – (applause) – just as they hold the key to economic growth around the world. I feel very personally connected to this because I have seen what it can mean in the lives of women and families and communities.

Last year, I met with the first AWEP class during their two-week program here when they met with American policy makers and business leaders, the very same program that you are participating in now. And then I was very pleased to be able to follow their stories. I remember one woman from Liberia with her own seed money set up a business incubator that now works with more than 300 Liberian women successfully enlisting the government's support to help her fellow countrywomen start their own businesses.

Another woman from Senegal brought agribusiness leaders to Washington, where they learned about how to create public-private partnerships and identified funding sources here in the United States from the Department of Commerce. And another, a woman from Tanzania, built a network of 1,000 business women and set up a trade deal to have her own textile designs and

fabrics hanging from the racks of one of our largest department stores, Macy's, around the United States.

Now, there are many stories like that. These are just three of the success stories that we know of. But I especially was delighted when I did attend the African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum in Zambia, and I saw what Sylvia had done. Not only did she recruit women from every province and sector in Zambia to form the very first AWEP chapter in Africa; she raised private funds for a three-day business conference and hosted it herself. You know that old saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy woman to do it."

And so when I walked into the conference hall, I had the chance to see some of the work that members of the AWEP chapter were doing. I saw display tables that had handicrafts and minerals and agricultural items on every surface. From the tables to the walls, you could see the bright yellow kitenge that was hanging everywhere that women had made and had the AWEP logo on it. And they were wearing it as well and gave me one to wear. And they sang, which I loved, because I can't sing but I love to hear other people who are singing.

And the room, this large room, was filled with their voices, and it was a very happy occasion to celebrate what these women were doing for themselves and for their families, but also for their communities, and indeed, their country. The AWEP women were very prominent at the AGOA Forum, and suddenly, you had senior officials from all over Africa – all of whom were men, by the way – talking about the role that women entrepreneurs could play. And the Government of Zambia committed to create a business incubator for women entrepreneurs. And I'm delighted that that was followed up with in other chapters, as Sylvia just told us.

And so today, I am here to really not only thank you, but to encourage you – to encourage you to keep making the contacts, building the networks, making the changes that will really revolutionize what women are doing around the world. And I know that there are many here who are very determined and very committed but still face obstacles. So I wanted also to tell you, do not despair. You have many friends and supporters back here in the United States. And we will try to help you break down the barriers and the hurdles that you encounter. You heard Sylvia say that there needed to be support for women to travel those great long distances across Africa, to meet with one another, to share ideas, to start businesses. And we will do our best to help you make the difference in your own lives.

And we also will keep telling leaders around the world, as I did at a conference just a few weeks ago about Asia, that the rise of women in economies over the past 10 years has increased globally the GDP to the equivalent of China's. Now what that means is if women are empowered to work, to build businesses, to have access to credit, to have an ownership interest in the land that they farm and the crops that they harvest, to be given a chance to compete, as Sylvia said, we know that women will make a huge contribution. So we have to break down the barriers that still exist. We have to change the laws that still hold women back. We have to not only encourage you, but encourage the governments and businesses of Africa to recognize a good thing, which is your empowerment and entrepreneurial skills.

There are still some people I encounter who say, “Well, women don’t contribute much to the economy,” because of course, they don’t count the backbreaking work that women do every single day. And I’m always a little disappointed and quite surprised when I hear that, and I say to these male economists and government leaders, “Look out the window of your car, of your house, of your office. Who is doing a lot of the work in Africa? And who is doing work that is not fairly compensated? And what can you do to unleash that potential so that your GDP grows, your economy gets bigger, you will benefit from this kind of investment?”

So we have faith in you, and we have faith in Africa, but we think Africa will grow more sustainably if women are full partners in that growth. So we intend to do everything we can to work with you. This is something I care deeply about, personally, and certainly on behalf of President Obama and our Administration and the State Department and all of our government agencies, we are committed to. So you have to be engaged in helping us know how best to help you, because, at the end of the day, we want you to succeed and we know your success will breed many more successes, and there will be young men and women who will have a better future because of what you do – because of the jobs you create, the businesses you start, the growth you inspire, and the results that will benefit the entire world.

So thank you, and let me keep hearing your stories and your songs. And let me again welcome you and wish you the very best, this year and for all the years to come. Thank you. (Applause.)

###