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Robin Hillary Clinton file

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TEXT: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON SPEECH AT UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND 5/12

(Speaks on peace initiatives at Millennium lecture series) (4890)

GALWAY, Ireland - U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton spoke ofhonoring the past, imagining the future, and embracing obligations toseek and maintain peace in a May 12 speech at the University ofIreland inaugurating a special Millennium lecture series.

"This past century has taught us that hope is the only answer," Mrs.Clinton said. "Economic and social progress is possible, but only whenpeople of different backgrounds, experiences and traditions let go ofthe past, let go of old hatreds, and decide that their common humanobligations and potential common future offer greater promise thaneither indifference or antipathy."

"We all have a role to play in the continuing quest for peace," shesaid. "Peace will more than ever depend on what each of us does andwhether we can overcome our past on behalf of a common future."

The world is looking to Irish people "to teach us what enduring peacelooks like," Mrs. Clinton noted.

"Since I first visited Northern Ireland with the President in Novemberof 1995, I have seen with my own eyes how far people have moved fromhistory to hope," the First Lady said, citing a trip to a conferencein Belfast last fall, where she witnessed women from all over theisland building partnerships for peace.

"What I have seen is the hard work of peace taking place here. I haveseen it. I have heard about it. I have watched it not be derailed, assome continue to resort to violence to try to disrupt and end thequest for peace."

Obtaining and maintaining peace means moving beyond conflict to acommon future of peace and prosperity, said Mrs. Clinton. Shecommended Ireland for its peacekeeping efforts abroad and for itshospitable welcome for Kosovo refugees.

She also announced a new partnership between the Irish government andan American philanthropy foundation to create 10 scholarships forAfrican-American graduate students to study in Ireland.

Following is the text of Clinton's May 12 speech:

(Begin text)

"OUR OBLIGATIONS TO EACH OTHER: CONTINUING THE QUEST FOR PEACE"LECTURE BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

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Galway, IrelandMay 12, 1999

Thank you very much. I am deeply honored to be here, and especially toreceive such a warm welcome and this honorary degree. I love coming tolreland. I love it when people say how welcome I am, and offer me a"hundred thousand welcomes." I believe that my husband and I have beenso fortunate to have received all of those welcomes and the greathospitality of the people of this wonderful country. For me to be backis indeed not only an honor, but a great pleasure -especially in thisbeautiful city of Galway.

It is a particular privilege to be here at this university. I wish tothank the president and the chancellor. I wish to thank all who havebeen part of this ceremony and this conferring of degrees. I alsoextend my appreciation to the mayor, the city manager and all those incity government here in Galway. We are also fortunate to have ourambassadors with us. Celia Larkin is also here, and many distinguishedguests throughout Ireland. And most important of all, the students ofthis university.

I too wish to extend my recognition to Margaret Dirrane, who -- as thepresident has just said -- is, we believe, the oldest person with anhonorary degree and is the oldest graduate at a young 104. Now I don'tknow whether she can still vote in the United States, but I willcertainly invite her to maintain her registration for the 2000election, when the Democrats will need her once again. She is like somany who were born here in Ireland and emigrated to the United States,and is now, like so many, returning to her beloved country. She is apowerful symbol of the rich interplay of lives and contributions andfriendships that have marked the relationships between the people ofthe United States and Ireland.

One must think here in Galway of all those men and women and childrenwho began their journey to what they called the "New World" in shipssailing from this port. Some made America their home permanently andbecame part of those immigrants who enriched, built, and led ournation, and who now number 40 million strong. But it is also a greatjoy as we watch from the United States to see the economic andcultural benefits that Ireland is celebrating today. It is no wonderthat so many Irish Americans and Irish living in America find theirway back here -- not only for a visit or retirement, but forinvestment and education -- so that the bonds between us grow everstronger.

I know that this university opened its doors during the height of thepotato famine. I know that your mission today remains as it has alwaysbeen - to teach and educate generations of young people, not only inthe arts and the sciences, but in a timeless lesson about how we livewith one another: What are the values we live by? How can we use oureducation to make a contribution, not only for our own personalsuccess, but to the larger world as well?

I was very honored indeed to be invited to deliver this inauguralMillennium Lecture. We, too, at the White House have celebrated themillennium with a series of lectures, because we also believe that itis appropriate to mark this passage of time with some reflection. Wechose as our theme, "Honor the past, imagine the future." That themecould be a theme that has a lot of resonance not only in the UnitedStates, but here in Ireland -- and really, throughout the world. As wemove into this new century, and indeed this new millennium, many of usare asking ourselves, "What are the paths we wish to bring with us?What are the values, the verities that we do not want to lose in thispassage to new time? Yet, what do we want to leave behind? What can

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wede-shackle ourselves from; give up? No longer let drag us down as wemove forward?" That requires imagination and courage and,particularly, imagining a future you wish to help create and then thecourage to bring it about.

I wanted to talk today about our obligations to each other andcontinuing the quest for peace. It seems a particularly fitting andtimely topic here on the island of Ireland, because we are in themiddle of implementing the Accords. There is still great hope andoptimism in the hearts and minds of people from one end of this islandto the other. Yet we live in a time at the end of this century when weknow that peace is a challenge to us -- how we obtain it, and how wemaintain it. We know even as we speak today that it is a challenge inthe Balkans, in the Middle East, in parts of Africa and elsewhere. Itseems that all of us, as we honor the past and imagine the future,have an opportunity to think harder about what our obligations are toone another and the obligations we all have for peace.

Last month at the White House, we held the sixth in a series ofinteractive Millennium Lectures. Perhaps students or faculties heremight have logged on, because they are cybercast simultaneously on theInternet -- the first time that was ever done at the White House. Thetopic for this last lecture was the "Perils of Indifference," and thespeaker was the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Elie Wiesel. I had asked himto speak a year ago. I could not have known then what would be goingon in the world today, but I knew at the time I asked him that thelessons of this too-violent century could not be forgotten, except atour peril. And I knew that his eloquence and his writing reminded allof us, year after year, how we cannot forget how we have to moveforward into the uncertainties of hope.

Mr. Wiesel came to that lecture in the midst of the NATO mission, andspoke to us and reminded us of the terrible destruction in humansuffering that has occurred in this century when evil has goneunchecked, and when the sacred bonds that should exist among humanbeings have been broken or ignored. He reminded us that those whostand by are not only bystanders, but are in danger of losing theirown souls. He said that in concentration camps, there are only threekinds of people: killers, victims and bystanders. He said that we needto think hard about how we would avoid the perils of indifference.

At the end of his lecture, we had questions and answers from theaudience. The last questioner there was a Catholic priest who teachesat Georgetown University. He asked Mr. Wiesel how, in light of what hehad personally suffered as a young boy -- whisked from his home inRomania, put into a concentration camp, losing most of his family --how he could look to the future with any hope whatsoever. Well, hestood back for a minute and he said, "But what is our alternative? Weeither give in to the evil and the indifference, or we constantlynurture hope in ourselves and those who come after us."

This past century has taught us that hope is the only answer. Economicand social progress is possible, but only when people of differentbackgrounds, experiences and traditions let go of the past, let go ofold hatreds, and decide that their common human obligations andpotential common future offer greater promise than either indifferenceor antipathy.

It has always been true, but certainly I think -- given the situationin the world today with the spread of weapons of mass destruction, andonce again conflicts among peoples and religions and tribes -- that weall have a role to play in the continuing quest for peace. Peace willmore than ever

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depend on what each of us does and whether we canovercome our past on behalf of a common future.

Another Nobel Peace Prize winner, a friend of many of us in America --and many here, of course, in Ireland -- Seamus Heaney, wrote somethingthat became the guiding hope for my husband and I on our many visitsto Ireland, and much more than that, in our work around the world aswell. Some of you may remember that during the President's 1995 visit,he quoted from a wonderful passage that became the hallmark of why webelieve hope has to be our goal. Let me remind you of those lines:

"History says, don't hope on this side of the grave. But then, once ina lifetime, the longed for tidal wave of justice can rise up, and hopeand history rhyme."

Reading that or listening to Elie Wiesel, we know the great forces ofhistory and the great evil that lurks from the cold regions of thehuman soul are formidable. But there is not just the possibility butthe necessity for all of us to work to ensure that hope and historyrhyme.

Since I first visited Northern Ireland with the President in Novemberof 1995, I have seen with my own eyes how far people have moved fromhistory to hope. I've seen it in the large agreements that have beenreached. I've seen it in the handshakes and conversations of politicalleaders. I've seen it in the economic growth that holds out promisefor posterity. Yes, the guns that have been silenced and the prisonersthat have been released and the election of a truly representativeAssembly -- all are fulfilling a promise of the Good Friday Agreement.

But more than that, I have seen it in small ways. Yes, we have neededand we will always need courageous leaders who are willing to takerisks for peace. But more than even leaders, we will need men andwomen who can change their hearts -- young and old, Protestant andCatholic, and in other parts of the world as well. Here the peopleknew it was time to end the bloodshed, to stop the hatred and theviolence, to do better for our children. So in both the North and theSouth they set about doing the everyday work of peace -- in theirhomes, their schools, their workplaces, and their communities. It iscitizens like these who have raised their voices and used their votes,who are moving this entire island and history to hope, from war topeace, and from the past to the future.

There are some who criticize the United States because we often seemto lack a sense of history. Very often the history we have has beengiven a makeover, so that we find room for everyone at the table. Wehave had some very hard times in our own history, when we have had tofight a civil war, had to come smack up against discrimination andbigotry against all kinds of people -- against the Irish, against theBlacks, against the Hispanics, against the women -- all kinds ofpeople. But slowly and surely we have moved from our history to hope.It is probably one of the hallmarks of the American experience thatsometimes seems naive and even a little bit silly to those looking atus from outside our shores. This sense of possibility, thisunrealistic hope in the face of reality. Yet it has served us verywell. Because America, you know, is really an idea that is rooted inhope, potential, possibility and promise. Because of that, we've beenable to move beyond our history. Therefore, it is difficult sometimesfor an American visiting anywhere else in the world -- where the gripof history seems so strong and people seem to be struggling and dyingunder it -- to understand why that cannot be broken, why the values ofthe past that are good and hopeful and promising cannot be carriedforward, but those which drag us back can't be left

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behind. We knowhow difficult that is.

All over the world I have met people who have seen of the worst ofwhat human beings are capable of, and have summoned up the best oftheir humanity to bring peace and dignity to all. I have sat at tableswith people who were combatants -- one against the other in CentralAmerica, in El Salvador and Guatemala -- who only recently have seenthe ending of decades of bloodshed and conflict. I have listened asone guerilla leader said to a political leader who was then on theother side, "We never thought we could trust you. The hardest thing inthe world for us was signing the peace agreement that includeddisarmament, but we knew finally the time had come; we had to moveforward."

I have seen the commitment in the Middle East where so much blood hadbeen shed and so much distrust still lingers there. I have listened tohow Christians, Jews and Muslims have struggled to find some agreementwith one another, yet have been willing to lay down the burdens of thepast if they can be promised a hopeful future. I visited a smallcommunity in Israel, during the last visit that my husband and I made,where Christians, Jews and Muslims had made a conscious effort to livetogether side by side, to respect each other's traditions, to try toserve as an example for their fellow men and women. I watched threesmall children celebrate their own traditions. One lit a Christmastree, one a menorah, the third a Ramadan lamp. Each was celebratinghis or her own faith and learning how religion can be a source ofstrength and hope, not divisiveness.

Shortly after the Dayton Peace Accords, I was in Bosnia. And I met inTuzla with a group of men and women -- primarily women OrthodoxChristians, Catholic Christians, Muslims and even a Jew -- who hadsurvived the horrific onslaught of ethnic cleansing. I listened tothem tell me what that experience had been like, how each had foughtto survive, how they had tried to keep normal life going - keepingsome remnant of schooling available in a basement; trying to keep ahospital functioning despite the lack of supplies; moving from houseto house, corner to corner, avoiding the bombs and the guns. They gaveme a small statue of a woman, carved of wood. And embedded in her kneeis a piece of shrapnel that had been picked up from the street, asymbol certainly of the war and the pain that had been endured. Buther hand is on her heart. On her other hand, a dove of peace. On herface is a confident smile that seemed to say, "I will dream again; Iwill work for peace for my children." And some might say that smacksof sentimentality; that is the kind of dream that is unrealistic,given what we know about the world. Yet I would argue that we needalways to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. They are notcontradictory. We know what lurks in the human soul. We know what menand women are capable of. But if we don't believe that it can bebetter, then we perpetuate the cycle of violence, disappointments andindifference.

I want to commend all of you here in Ireland for the work that yourcountry has done on behalf of peacekeeping. Whether it be in Bosnia orthe Congo or Lebanon or so many other places around the world, Irishpeace-keepers have been there. I know that you have just received yourfirst Kosovo refugees, and are offering them your hearts and yourhomes, as you always have done. These refugees are stark reminders, ifwe needed any, of how far we have yet to go at the end of thiscentury. Who could have predicted when communism fell in the SovietUnion, and we all celebrated the actual physical destruction of theBerlin Wall, that only 10 years later we would be faced again with thekind of violence, oppression and evil that we see emanating fromYugoslavia?

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created the conditions for peace, or whether it is theGood Friday Accord here -- the hard work of peace is what each of usdoes every day.

And so what I have seen is that hard work of peace taking place here.I have seen it. I have heard about it. I have watched it not bederailed, as some continue to resort to violence to try to disrupt andend the quest for peace. At the Vital Voices conference, I met a youngwoman who had lost friends when the Omagh bomb went off. One of herbest friends was killed. When she was called and invited to come asone of the student representatives to the Vital Voices conference, hermother was not sure how she would feel about it, because it might beconsidered political. She was in no mood for politics. Yet this youngwoman came because she wanted to be part of that quest for peace. Sheknew she had to make a contribution.

This is what you are working to create here at this university, notonly by educating and informing young people about their obligations,but in particular through the work of the Irish Centre for HumanRights. You understand that justice can only rise up when the everydaylessons of peace and freedom and mutual respect are passed down toevery generation.

To assist you in your work, I am pleased to announce a newpartnership. The Irish government has agreed to join the Americanphilanthropy foundation, the Ferris Foundation, to create 10scholarships for outstanding African-American graduate students tostudy at colleges in the North and South of Ireland, including here inGalway. I am pleased that Michael Ferris, a member of the Irishparliament, is representing the Ferris family here today. Youunderstand how important it is for people to live and work and learntogether. I am also told that a group called Cooperation Ireland ishelping to build trust and friendships between Catholic and Protestantchildren by organizing exchanges across the border. Children who livedonly a few miles from each other, but have never met, are now visitingeach other's schools and staying in each other's homes.

At the Vital Voices conference, I was struck by how little realcontact existed between people in the North. Women, with someamazement, learned that they had the same feelings and experiences.They were all worried when their children went out to play, or whentheir husbands went off to work. They all prayed to the same God onSunday to make sure they would come home safely. As they began to makethose recognitions of their common experience, trust began to bebuilt.

I hope that the work -- the hard work -- of peace, based on our senseof obligation and our commitment to the future, will have the supportof all people who understand how important it is that we get on theright side of history so that hope and history rise.

I imagine that at the end of the next century, students and facultiesof this university may be coming together in a setting like this, ormore likely a virtual meeting. The purpose would be the same. Theyalso will want to know what else they need to do to keep moving fromhistory to hope. I trust that when that meeting is held we will havegiven them a century of better news than the one we leave behind. Itrust that we will have taught them that for each generation there isthe work of peace, and it is not an easy task. They cannot simply takea vote or pass a law, but that each of us has to struggle every singleday. Only individuals can decide whether we are going to love or hate,whether we will respect one another or whether we will use oursuperficial differences -- be they skin color or religious faith orgender or any other distinguishing characteristics of the human family-- as reason enough to treat someone as less than human.

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Onlyindividuals can decide whether we will expand the circle of humandignity to all those who are unlike ourselves. Only we can stay trueto our obligations.

My husband received a letter from a family that lost a loved one inthe bombing in Omagh. This man wrote to my husband because he knew hewas a father like Bill is. He wrote about his hopes for his daughterwho had been newly born. This is what he said: "We have a dream ofwhat Ireland might be like when she grows up. Ireland could be a placewhere dreams could come true, where people would achieve things neverimagined before, where people would not be afraid of their neighbors."

I go from here to Belfast to help dedicate a park. It is a park wherewe hope that children of both traditions will play in safety and joytogether. We asked the children themselves to design this playground.And what did they dream of? Well, they dreamed of tree houses andbirdhouses. They want to have a footbridge and a maze constructed frombushes. They want an area to plant things in. They dream what all ofus dream of -- a chance just to be safe, to laugh, to love, to play.I'm hoping that that patch of soil will be a symbol to what ispossible, and all of us will look toward the future together.

I hope that I can come back and see that playground in years to comeand watch children playing without fear or prejudice, learning tosolve their problems without violence. And when they grow up and leavethat playground, knowing that they will become architects of theircommunity, they will be committed also to ensuring that their childrenplay in peace, and justice is always rising up, and hope and historyrise.

Thank you for what you are doing to make peace real, to make the questfor peace the responsibility and obligation of us all. Thank you forthe example that this island is setting. I trust and I pray theexample will stand far, far into the future as the kind of commitmentthat we all will be called to meet.

Thank you and God bless you.

(End text)

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