

**Remarks of Madeleine K. Albright as Prepared for Delivery
Making All Voices Count: A Grand Challenge for Development
Washington, DC
December 5, 2012**

Thank you, Andrew and greetings to you all.

I am pleased to be here to join with you in launching the Grand Challenge for Development.

And I want to congratulate the Omidyar Network and the development agencies of Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States for coming together in this exciting four-way partnership.

Without question, Making All Voices Count is a concept whose time has come.

Recent events in Burma, the Middle East, and North Africa remind us how powerful the desire for freedom is, and how quickly the world can change.

Technology has opened the door to further democratic gains by enhancing the capacity of people to organize and to do so with lightning speed and from the bottom up.

Our collective task is to support that capability, and to encourage people to express themselves in ways that contribute to social progress.

At the same time, we must press governments across the globe to be more open, transparent and accessible.

Dictators and demagogues learned long ago that having a monopoly on information is the best way to seize and maintain power.

The Making All Voices Count Initiative is based on our understanding that it is more difficult now than it has ever been to control the flow of knowledge – and that is all to the good.

Democracy thrives on diversity and becomes stronger through vigorous debate; its very identity is based on the free expression of popular will.

That's one reason why the new information and social networking technologies have such potential.

They can be used in a host of ways to educate, inform, create links among disparate groups, and help people everywhere to be heard.

They also have the ability – if employed wisely – to level the economic playing field for women and to shine a spotlight on such violations of public trust as corruption, incompetence and the abuse of human rights.

To its credit, the Grand Challenge for Development focuses on both sides of the communication equation; first aiding the public in articulating its concerns, and then helping governments to respond.

This matters because, in a democracy, the people and their representatives should act as partners; a principle that, even in our own nation, we sometimes forget.

In the best case, there will be a balance between what the public demands and what institutions deliver; this requires realistic expectations on one side, effective governance on the other, and first-rate communications between the two.

As chair of the National Democratic Institute, I have been involved in many projects designed to achieve such a balance, including one currently underway with friends from the Omidyar Network and others.

This initiative seeks to engage tech-savvy civil society groups in helping parliaments harness technology to better respond to citizen demands.

This effort has led to the development of a Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, endorsed by over 100 organizations from over 70 countries.

The Declaration serves as a road map for representative institutions seeking to become more open and transparent and encourages partnerships between civic groups and parliaments.

I have long believed in the importance of such partnerships.

When I was secretary of state, I helped to launch a movement called the Community of Democracies, based on the idea that democratic governments, in cooperation with civil society, should help and learn from one another.

The Making All Voices Count Initiative reflects that same approach.

Democratic solidarity is vital because the transition from an authoritarian regime to a freely elected one is so difficult.

As we can see today in the Middle East, the euphoria that accompanies a popular revolution can be hard to sustain.

Empowered citizens are essential to democracy, but they are not sufficient.

Representative institutions must be equipped to govern and governments are often required to do unpopular things – to take on powerful institutions, raise revenue, set priorities, and embrace compromise.

To avoid misunderstanding, tough decisions must be justified and explained; here again, modern communications can help to accomplish that.

But as we go forward, we must also bear in mind that technology – for all its promise -- has no inherent moral value.

In the middle of the last century, Hitler's propagandists used radio to bring millions of people under the spell of a single monstrous ideology; in that same era, my father was head of wartime broadcasting for the Czechoslovak government-in-exile.

Each night, for five years, the air waves became a battleground between vicious lies and endangered truth.

In the 1940's, when Communists seized control in Central Europe, they began by taking over newspapers and radio stations.

Decades later, the distribution of Czechoslovakia's Charter 77 and the Polish Solidarity's underground press helped to destroy the Berlin Wall and liberate half a continent.

In the 1990's, hate radio did much to ignite genocide in Rwanda, but the Internet proved vital in re-uniting refugee families who had fled violence in Kosovo and Sierra Leone.

More recently, Al Qaeda and its allies have relied on the new technologies to organize and publicize their crimes; meanwhile, Arab demonstrators have used online connections to build momentum for democracy.

The latest inventions are amazing because they help people to accomplish what they choose.

But our future depends on what people choose to do.

That's why it matters so much that we make the most of technology's potential to encourage critical thinking, expand knowledge, defend human rights, and strengthen democracy.

It is also why we need to support collaborations such as this to ensure that every voice is heard and that all voices count.

In that regard, I want to reiterate my thanks to the Omidyar Network, to our three participating governments, and to all of you.

It's said that anything worth doing is done in faith.

Let us go forward with faith that freedom of thought -- when combined with the genius to innovate and a healthy dose of conscience -- can lead us to a world more just and humane in the future than it has ever been in the past.

Thank you all very much.