

**Remarks of Alejandro Toledo, former president of Peru
NDI 25th Anniversary Dinner Celebration
Washington, DC, May 10, 2010**

Allow me first to pay tribute to NDI. Not only for this 25 years of age, but I hope for 120 more.

The grant, which I have the privilege to present tonight, is appropriately named for a remarkable woman.

Now I'm going to take this opportunity to reveal a secret that Ken did not want me to do. I have met Secretary of State Albright in a different circumstance of our lives. When I was a consumer for observers of democracy in the year 2000, when I was a president, when I was a fighter in the street, when I was elected president and when I was a former president.

I was asking her advice a few minutes ago, as to not make the same mistake I made about eight years ago. Let me just say that it is a great privilege to have the honor to present the Madeleine Albright Grant to Nimia Vargas: a woman that represents many women of different skin color in Colombia, in Latin America and in the world.

Nimia Vargas, who represents a network of women who are claiming their right to have access to a window of opportunity, not waiting for anyone to give her or them fish. But asking loudly, peacefully and democratically, the right to learn how to fish.

One window of opportunity was opened to me 58 years ago when I was a shoe shine boy or selling newspaper and lotteries at the *Sun Times*, at the age of five years old to supplement my family income. Well this woman of Colombia, Nimia Vargas, who represents the area of Chocó, is a tremendous reward and right for democracy.

A democracy of which I am a soldier, and I hope I will die using the uniform of a fighter of democracy, and a democracy that delivers. That delivers concrete results that are measurable, just as Nimia Vargas is doing in Chocó, Colombia.

The prize that I have the privilege to present tonight should be a reward for you Madeleine Albright, for promoting equality, independently of their religion, perspective, their political option, their genders, or the color of their skin.

The fight for access to education, to healthcare equality, and access to have a dignified life. Access to a democracy that respects the freedom of the press, human rights – that is encapsulated in this prize that I have been asked the privilege to present tonight.

So Nimia Vargas in the name of men and women of Colombia, men and women of Latin America, men and women of different colors of skin and of religion perception. As a Latin American, Nimia, thank you very much for what you're doing for the women of

Latin America, thank you very much to NDI for having created this prize that stimulates the promotion of a democracy that delivers.

Thank you very much.