



**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Kenneth Wollack
Madeleine K. Albright Grant Luncheon
March 22, 2012**

Good afternoon. I am Ken Wollack, president of NDI. I want to welcome you to the Madeleine K. Albright Grant luncheon.

We have gathered here to recognize great strides women have made in the political arena and to honor a group that has made an unprecedented effort to advance women's political leadership in a country that has been in the vanguard of democratic change in Central Asia. That is the celebratory side of this gathering. But there is a different side as well: the hard reality that the struggle for broader engagement of women in politics – at all levels, and everywhere – goes on against tremendous odds.

Since 1984, NDI has worked in more than 100 countries to increase the number and effectiveness of women in political life, in the belief that as more women become politically involved, institutions will become more responsive to the needs of all citizens. The annual Madeleine K Albright Grant honors organizations that have created a greater role for women in political life. The \$25,000 grant is part of a larger global campaign, the Win with Women Global Initiative, which was launched in 2003 under the leadership of Madeleine Albright. The Initiative is designed to promote the kind of reform of political parties and institutions that will provide real avenues for women's political leadership. In this effort, NDI has worked with 13,000 civic organizations, 720 political parties, 10,000 legislators and 1,300 women's organizations.

Madeleine Albright was the Institute's founding vice-chair 27 years ago. She left briefly for a couple of obscure government posts, and returned as chairman in 2001. Her leadership has expanded the reach and enhanced the standing of NDI in so many ways.

There are a number of other individuals and groups whom I want to acknowledge today. I want to first recognize our board of directors whose leadership, commitment and generosity are central to the Institute's efforts. In particular, I would like to ask those board members who are here to stand today so that we can show our appreciation: Hattie Babbitt; Elizabeth Bagley; Joan Calambokidis; Shirley Robinson Hall; Rachelle Horowitz; Molly Raiser; Nancy Rubin; Elaine Shocas; and Rusty Conner, NDI's Counsel.

I wanted to single out Bren Simon who is not here but who funds the Albright Grant each year.

I also want to acknowledge the Members of Congress and their staffs who are here. We are particularly honored to have Congresswomen Carolyn Maloney and Sheila Jackson Lee with us. And we are privileged to hear from Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz later in the program.

With us today are also board members and staff of the National Endowment for Democracy and our three affiliated institutes – IRI, the Solidarity Center and CIPE. We are proud members of the Endowment family.

We are pleased that officials from the White House, State Department, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and particularly USAID are with us. They represent our support network and our partners in the field.

I would also like to recognize NDI Vice President Shari Bryan who not only manages the day-to-day operations of the Institute but also organizes events like these.

I know of no other organization that has sustained grass roots programs for women in as many countries as has NDI. However, we recognize that we are not alone in this effort. We are part of a global network of partners -- governments, intergovernmental organizations and other nongovernmental groups that share this mission. I want to thank our friends and partners from the community of organizations that dedicate their time to advance women politically, economically and socially. Among them, are those listed in the program who supported this event: The Institute for Inclusive Security; the Gender Program at the Elliott School of International Affairs; the United Nations Association; Women in International Security; the Women's Foreign Policy Group; the Council of Women World Leaders; and Futures Without Violence.

At its heart, NDI is a public-private partnership. So I especially want to single out those who made this event possible: the corporations, trade unions, foundations and individual donors. Each of them is listed in the program and on the screens, and gratefully acknowledged.

I also want to welcome the diplomatic corps. And I would like to express our gratitude to those in this room and hundreds of others around the globe who volunteer their time to assist NDI's efforts.

Earlier today we heard a panel of experts discuss the different strategies women can employ to successfully gain more ground within political parties, and in parliaments. And I would like to thank those who participated in this important discussion: Secretary Albright; Winnie Byanyima head of the Gender Team at the UNDP, Don Steinberg, the Assistant Administrator of USAID; and Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

I would like to now introduce a woman who is well known to all of us as a tireless champion of women's economic and political rights worldwide. When Ambassador Melanne Verwee is not on the ground, engaging and inspiring women in some of the

most remote places on earth, she is on a plane in route to one of those places or on a return flight preparing once again to advocate for and lead women's global initiatives by the US government. She was a founder of Vital Voices and served as its first chair. And, now, in another first, she became the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State.

It is my honor to present Ambassador Melanne Verveer.