

**Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright**

Introduction of President Clinton at the National Democratic  
Institute, Welcoming Luncheon Gala  
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*[Text as Prepared for Delivery]*

**SECRETARY ALBRIGHT:** Thank you, Mr. Winnick, for that introduction, and thanks to Global Crossing for the wonderful support it is providing to important causes worldwide.

Mr. President, Paul Kirk, Ken Wollack, Jean Dunn and friends of the NDI, Mr. and Mrs. Biehl--who have done so much for so many people; Secretary Glickman, Acting Secretary Goyer, Senators and members of Congress, excellencies from the diplomatic corps, distinguished international visitors and special guests, I am very pleased to participate in this Annual Luncheon. It is one of my favorite events of the year, when this organization that champions democracy comes together with champions of freedom from across the globe.

It is especially appropriate to hold this event at the outset of one of the great celebrations of democracy, the Democratic National Convention. Of course, as Secretary of State I am barred by tradition from playing a partisan role. And I want the record to reflect that I am completely neutral. In fact when I began this job, I had all my partisan instincts surgically removed. I would never publicly identify myself as a Democrat with a capital "D."

Fortunately, the promotion of democracy happens to be a centerpiece of American foreign policy. So when I say "hurrah for the democrats", it's perfectly legitimate--you just have to listen for the small "d." So immediately after this event I will be leaving Los Angeles to visit some democracies -- Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador.

Today I would like to begin by saying that two of the moments in my life that I most cherish were the day I first arrived in America seeking refuge from totalitarianism and the day I was asked to become Secretary of State.

For the first, the opportunity to live in freedom, I am eternally grateful to America. For the second, the opportunity to give something back to my country, I will always be grateful to President Clinton.

So, my assignment today is very welcome to me, although it may seem unnecessary to you, and that is to introduce the most famous person in the world. You might think there is nothing new to say about President Clinton, but I believe there is at least one thing that has not been said enough. This President is one of the strongest international leaders the United States has ever had.

When the Clinton-Gore Administration took office, America was being blamed for

holding back global economic growth, because our budget deficits were huge and our economy sluggish. Today, our deficits are gone; our people are prosperous; our economy is the world's most competitive; and our leadership has been fully restored.

In 1993, there was no greater risk to world security than the possibility that control would be lost over nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union.

On President Clinton's watch, the missile fields have been replaced by sunflower fields in Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. We have helped deactivate thousands of nuclear warheads, strengthened security at hundreds of weapons sites, and purchased more than more than 60 tons of highly-enriched uranium that could have been used by terrorists.

Eight years ago, a dangerous nuclear weapons program was underway in North Korea and the possibility of conflict was on the rise. Today, in the wake of an historic Summit between the South and North, and progress on nuclear and missile-related issues, it is the possibility of reconciliation and stability that is on the rise.

When the Clinton-Gore team took over, they inherited a mess in the Balkans, where a U.S.-backed peace operation was failing, and atrocities were being committed on a daily basis. Today, there is democracy in Croatia, peace in Bosnia, rebuilding in Kosovo, and a trans-Atlantic Pact to transform this entire region from a source of instability into a full partner and participant in the new Europe.

I could go on and on with this list of accomplishments, from expanding NATO to promoting economic opportunity in Africa, to the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland and the tireless search for a Middle East peace.

But time is short, so let me just add that when this President took office, he confronted a world in which the signposts that had guided us for generations had disappeared. The lessons learned from the past had to be applied in new ways. America could quite easily have retreated, refused to take risks, and embraced a rigid checklist about using force that would have left us on the sidelines in any real world situation.

Instead, for almost eight years, President Clinton has had the strength to hold 20th Century alliances together, and the vision to respond to 21st Century threats. He has engaged China and Russia with firmness and wisdom, helped the democratic tide remain a rising tide around the world, and made bold progress with our allies towards a Europe without walls, wholly at peace and fully free.

President Clinton has brought America into the new century strong and prosperous, and helped make the world more peaceful and democratic. That is a remarkable record. And it is a remarkable honor for me to introduce to you now, the President of the United States, Bill Clinton.

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