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Remarks of United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

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Remarks of United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice November 9, 2005

Thank you. And thank you, Dave, for that kind introduction. I know that I like Dave and I've always liked him, despite the fact that he went to Berkeley, and now I understand his son went to Stanford—that makes perfectly good sense. But thank you very much for that great introduction.

I would like to thank the leaders of the American Bar Association for inviting me to speak. I know I'm a bit the warm-up act for Andrew Natsios, who's going to talk to you later about the very important work that the USAID is doing around the world in helping countries to promote the rule of law and to develop institutions of the rule of law. But all of you today at this Symposium are helping to lead an important movement to support the rule of law worldwide. The topics you are covering are very important topics and the very same issues that we wrestle with daily at the State Department.

President Bush and I share your commitment to the rule of law. And let me just say that I personally have always viewed issues of law as fundamental because I remember in my own life in my own time that as a black girl growing up in the segregated South, the rule of law did not always serve me. And so I think I have a particular appreciation for how important it is that the state respect the rule of law.

Ladies and gentlemen, the advance of freedom and the success of democracy and the flourishing of human potential all depend on governments that honor and enforce the rule of law. Today, America's belief in the universal nature of human liberty, a belief we expressed in our Declaration and enshrined in our Constitution, now leads us into a world to help others win their freedom and secure it in law.

Today, the greatest challenges that we face emerges more from within states than between them—from states that are either unable or unwilling to apply the rule of law within their borders. In a world where threats pass even through the most fortified boundaries, weak and poorly governed states enable disease to spread undetected and corruption to multiply unchecked and hateful ideologies to grow more violent and more vengeful.

As the fate of nations grows ever more connected, our challenges are unprecedented, but our purposes are clear: where weaker governments possess

the will but the lack of means to enforce the rule of law, we must empower them with the strength of our partnership. And where autocrats still rule by coercion of the state rather than by the consent of the governed, we must support the rights of their oppressed citizens, wherever they raise their voice for equal justice and lawful government.

Where the rule of law is undermined by government corruption, we are offering incentives for honest and transparent behavior. Anti-corruption is one of the key standards of our Millennium Challenge Account initiative, an initiative that rewards good governance and the fight against corruption. And in just the past year, the Millennium Challenge Corporation has signed new development compacts with five countries that are worth hundreds of billions of dollars to those countries, each of which involves significant political and legal reforms.

Where the rule of law is flouted by immoral rulers and war criminals, we are helping citizens to operate international tribunals and special courts of justice. The United States helped to launch such efforts in Rwanda and Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslavia. And we continue to support all people who seek justice for their nations by lawfully trying the criminals who ravaged them.

Finally, where the rule of law is emerging from decades of tyranny, the United States is helping newly democratic peoples to liberate themselves.

In Afghanistan, we have dedicated more than \$62 million since the fall of the Taliban to build new courthouses, to train new judges and to reform the nation's regulatory system. To help the Afghan people enforce the rule of law themselves, we have also trained 32,000 new police officers who are now patrolling the streets of that country as well as its highways and its borders.

And in Iraq, we have committed approximately \$1 billion to train and equip the men and women of Iraq's new national police force to better protect and serve their fellow citizens. We have spent nearly \$400 million to strengthen the rule of law across all of Iraq, helping the Iraqi people to reform their system of legal education, to secure their country's many courtrooms and to frame their new democratic constitution. These judicial reforms are enabling the Iraqi High Tribunal to begin holding fair trials for the leaders of the Baathist regime, including Saddam Hussein himself.

Well, as we empower our partners in weak and poorly governed states to uphold the rule of law, we also expect them to meet their international obligations. For the United States, an essential element of the rule of law has always been, and still remains, law among nations. We've always respected our international legal obligations and we have led the world in developing new international law.

Indeed, this has made America somewhat unique in the world and in world history because we try and use our great power not to win glory or imperial gain for ourselves but to establish international rules and norms that we encourage

others to follow. After World War II, we negotiated new treaties and built new international institutions for the peaceful resolution of disputes. And today, one of my highest priorities is to transform our great institutions, like the United Nations, to reflect the world as it is in 2005, not as it was in 1945.

Ladies and gentlemen, we Americans have never viewed liberty and law as detracting from one another. Indeed, our Founding Fathers believed, as John Locke did, that the purpose of law is not “to abolish or restrain [freedom], but to preserve and enlarge freedom.” And from the earliest days of our Republic, America has proclaimed the principle that without law, liberty becomes licentiousness and without liberty, law becomes oppression.

America strives to realize our calling as a nation of laws, not of men, a nation that holds all governments and citizens, especially our own, to principles that transcend mere brute force or will to power. When Americans violate the law, whether in our country or in foreign lands, we do and we should hold them accountable for their crimes as we saw in the aftermath - after the horrific events that sickened us all at Abu Ghraib.

The virtue of the rule of law is not that it erases all human imperfection but that it upholds a standard of justice that enables democratic societies to improve themselves over time.

America is a country of laws. We will always be a country of laws. And we will remain an international leader because we will be committed, not simply to our strength but to our love of liberty, our support for democracy and most of all, our devotion to the rule of law. Here in this setting, for those of you who hold deep a commitment to the rule of law, I want to thank you for that commitment. I want to thank you for helping to be the conscience of America in that commitment. And for all that you do every day to educate, to train and to spread that commitment to the rule of law.

Thank you very much and I hope you enjoy the rest of today’s events.

[Applause]