

Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
National Parliamentary Library

Tbilisi, Georgia

July 5, 2010

SECRETARY CLINTON: (In progress) time to join me today. And I particularly want to recognize Georgia's First Lady, Sandra Roelofs. I am delighted to have this opportunity to acknowledge the work that you have been doing. I have been a first lady, and I know that there are many opportunities to work on a whole range of issues. And I thank you especially for your work improving health care, which is an issue very near and dear to my heart.

I also wanted to acknowledge the president's mother. I didn't meet her on the way in, but it is so good to see you, Professor. Thank you so much for being here, as well.

And I wanted to introduce you to someone who has worked with me for many years on behalf of issues around the world affecting women and girls, and that is United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verveer.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: She has been a vital voice on behalf of women's issues inside and outside of our government.

This weekend, as I am sure many of you know, is the time when Americans celebrate our independence. And I am so pleased that I could end my trip here in Georgia, a country that has had an extraordinary history going back hundreds of years and, more particularly, during the last 20 years. I believe that the potential of this country to serve as a beacon and model for democracy and progress is extraordinary. And, for me, it is in large measure rooted in the day-to-day changes that have occurred here in Georgia.

Before the Rose Revolution, Georgia was on the brink of being a failed state. Since then, Georgians, and particularly Georgian women, answered the call of history. You seized your moment. You worked to strengthen democratic institutions and civil society to combat corruption and re-establish the rule of law, and to lay the foundation for a better future. But we both know that Georgia faces some dramatic challenges. You live with the realities of an invasion, and an ongoing occupation. You are trying to promote a recovery in Georgia's economy, working to improve vital services like health care and education, working to raise your families and look after your relatives.

In the millions of decisions that are made every day, the future of your country is being determined. And I have seen, over the course of more than two decades now, how countries wrestle with similar difficulties, from war and displacement in the Balkans, to conflict and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, to health care and housing in Africa and across the world. And what I see here in Georgia is very heartening, and the prospects for change very real.

Now, I know that it happens with the concerted effort of those who are citizens and those who are leaders, men and women. And I know, too, that Georgia's talent, creativity, and energy bodes well if the course that you're on can be persisted on until your destination is arrived at.

Ambassador Bass wrote me before I arrived and said that women are the engines of change in Georgia. Now, that is not a new development in your history. I have long been fascinated by King Tamar. And some of my press from America may not know that King Tamar was a woman who led the -- what is referred to as the Golden Age in Georgia. Well, there is no reason why the 21st century cannot be another golden age for Georgia. And as we push for positive change, for a closer relationship with Europe, membership in NATO, a new landmark criminal procedure code, transforming Georgia's police force, leading organizations like Georgia's young lawyers, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, improving the rule of law and responsiveness in governance, I see women mentioned and taking leading roles time and time again.

Civil society is the glue that holds a country together. I gave a speech in Krakow a few days ago at the Community of Democracies, where Georgia was well represented, about the critical role of civil society. And it is a tried and true experience that you have to have accountable, responsible government. You have to have free, well-functioning markets. But where life is worth living, that space between government and the economy is called civil society. That is where we raise our families. That is where we pay homage to our faith. That is where we work in private associations. And it is where the habits of the heart to sustain democracy are created.

I know many of you are particularly concerned about your own family, because when people are uprooted from their communities and displaced by war, families face severe hardships. Holding families together amid adversity is as important to Georgia's future as any foreign policy issue. And rebuilding what was lost in Georgia is the product of a lifetime. It will not be easy. It will take everyone from your president to the children in the classroom to set a new standard of rising to the occasion here in Georgia.

I think often about new democracies, because we celebrated our 234th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence yesterday. In democracies, we live by the rules in our constitutions, and we take turns running for office. Once the voting is over, whoever is elected must work to unify the country and overcome political divisions. I saw two women wearing tee shirts from my presidential campaign, which reminded me, if I needed reminding, that I ran a very hard race against President Obama. I tried with everything I had to beat him. But I was not successful. And when I went from running against him to supporting him in the election, that was part of what I thought was best for my country.

But when he won, much to my surprise, he asked me to serve as his Secretary of State. And many people around the world have said, "Well, how could you be a political opponent and now be working with your former adversary?" But there is a very simple answer: we both love our country. And in a democracy, there comes a time when politics stops, and governance must start. And I believe that, in Georgia, as you inculcate these

habits, these changes -- I have seen it across the world, where it is love of country and faith in the future that provides the motivation.

So, women of Georgia, it is an honor to be here, to recognize your many contributions, to challenge you to be part of building a second golden age for this country. And it now is a golden age not of monarchy, not of the Middle Ages, but of the 21st century, a time of democracy and prosperity and progress. I have great faith in what Georgia has already accomplished.

Sometimes, when you're in the midst of it, when you are running the race, it is hard not to be frustrated, and hard not to see all that has not been accomplished. But when you look at Georgia's economy, when you look at the consolidation of democracy, it is very impressive. And I am here, as the Secretary of State of a country that admires you, of a people that identifies with your struggles, and to tell you that both our government and our people will stand with Georgia as partners and friends to help you finish the race. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Now, I would love to hear from you. And I really came more to listen than to talk. So, how are we going to do this? People are going to raise their hands, or -- just take the microphone, two people, and we will get as many of you in to the discussion as possible. Who wants to start?

MODERATOR: Start over here?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Okay, sure.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, thank you very much (inaudible).

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you.

QUESTION: My name is Tina Burjaliani. I am a deputy justice minister. I have to admit that you have been very inspiring for me and many young women around the world. Thank you for that.

In Georgia, woman play a very important role in different areas, in very difficult areas, I would say, including law enforcement, national security area. And we are doing our best to push the reforms as far as possible.

I am a lawyer, and I have been following your career. I am very impressed with the achievements you have made in juvenile justice, child welfare area. (Inaudible) for a better juvenile justice system (inaudible) crime suppression and execution. It has been challenging. (Inaudible.) We understand that very well.

I would like to hear from you your experience in (inaudible) a very prominent lawyer and activist in this area in the United States.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, thank you. And I am delighted to have learned how many women are involved in the justice sector. And I commend you for your work and your question, because I agree that looking at how to reform the criminal justice system, particularly juvenile justice, looking at ways of preventing crime and preventing child abuse -- which is often a precursor to a life of crime -- is a very critical social need.

You are right. As a young lawyer I was involved in the American Bar Association's efforts to rewrite the laws pertaining to juvenile justice across our country. In the United States, most of our laws concerning criminal activities are at the state and local level. So

we had to come up with model laws that would make some significant changes in how juveniles were treated, because too often what we found was that three things were problems.

One, children who were committing petty or small crimes were often put into jails with adults, which meant that they learned how to be better criminals, and we had to create a different approach and system to try to both try them in juvenile courts, and then to keep them separate from the adult criminal population.

Secondly, we used to have a lot of problems with what were called status offenses of juveniles. If you were a truant from school, if you were a neglected or abused child, if you were having trouble in your home, regardless of what the reason was -- you know, you might have a child who was being abused by a family member, and the child would run away, but then the child would be put into jail. So we had to change a lot of our abuse laws so that we would recognize that adults who abused children were the perpetrators, not the children who were abused. And we had to also change our child welfare system, particularly orphanages and places where children with mental disabilities were kept.

One of the other things I worked on was to provide education for children who had mental retardation or other mental problems, because they would often be warehoused.

And the ones who could, who were just turned out into society, often were caught up in crime without even the necessary mental ability to make decisions for themselves.

So, there is a lot that needs to be done. And changing the criminal code is very important.

I know that you have a lot of help, but both the American Bar Association and experts within our own government would be more than happy to consult with you, to share our knowledge, not only from our own experience in the United States, but our work in many settings around the world. So if you will let the ambassador know if that's something that would be useful, I will make sure that you get that. And I appreciate your commitment to it.

QUESTION: Thank you very much for being (inaudible). Thank you very much for all the support (inaudible) United States all these years. I always say if it was not for the United States, a lot of people would have died from hunger in this country. (Inaudible.) And I am very happy, again, to be here and to listen to your very (inaudible) speech. (Inaudible) probably that's my role, to say (inaudible) not to be that enthusiastic about (inaudible).

SECRETARY CLINTON: That is the role of the opposition.

QUESTION: A couple of (inaudible) five years ago, President Bush claimed Georgia has become a democracy. And it took (inaudible) government took (inaudible). And then we have seen tens of thousands of people (inaudible) in the street, we've seen people killed in the street. We've seen (inaudible) killings, (inaudible). We have seen (inaudible) elections, we have seen (inaudible), many, many different things that are not suitable to (inaudible).

And my question here is very simple. Is there any democracy (inaudible) within the United States Government for Georgia (inaudible)? Not the one that we've seen during the Bush times, that (inaudible) independence of judiciary, which is about (inaudible) media, which is about free and fair elections, where people are able to express their will

freely without any interference. Is there any real (inaudible) democratic changes in any country, and especially (inaudible) country where its policies (inaudible), where (inaudible) American is (inaudible)?

And the last thing I want to say -- what is happening (inaudible) last couple of years, which is most (inaudible) to me, personally, is that this very (inaudible) is turning a little bit skeptical, U.S. skeptical, Western skeptical. And that's what scares me. That's probably (inaudible) the most disastrous (inaudible). (Inaudible) and I think that we all (inaudible), not (inaudible), but more from democratic institutions. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, the United States always has a democracy agenda, because the United States believes that a functioning, strong democracy is the best form of government ever invented. It may not be perfect, it always falls short of what you hope for, even in our own country -- we have had that experience over 234 years -- but that continuing to try to perfect your democracy is one of the key challenges for any country, both its government and its citizens.

Our view is that Georgia has made extraordinary progress, and has demonstrated resilience in the face of very difficult circumstances. But of course we raise issues, whether it's a criminal code or an independent judiciary or a free media. We raise these issues as a friend, as a supporter, as a believer in the significance of Georgian democracy. I will be meeting later today with leaders of the opposition, as I do in many countries across the world. But I think an opposition also has responsibility. And that's why I talked about the importance that we place in our country of trying to look toward a future that is jointly the responsibility of both the government and those in opposition, whether it's my own story in having run against President Obama, or our own political parties in the United States.

I think one of the biggest dangers for democracy in the world today is that democracy quits being able to deliver results for the people of democratic countries because leaders, both in government and in opposition, spend all their time jockeying for power. And whether that is in the United States or anywhere else, there has to be a closing of ranks in the face of the severe economic crisis that has afflicted the world over the last several years, problems that people face in their everyday lives in getting jobs or access to credit or health care or education, or in the political realm, whether free access to information, puts responsibilities on governments, journalists, citizens alike.

So, we take seriously the threats to democracy, wherever they occur, and we speak out about them. We provide assistance through our aid programs on rule of law, on good governance, on democracy development, and we will continue to do so. But I do think that everyone in government, in opposition, or citizens, has to begin setting priorities for countries and achieving them, to demonstrate that democracy can deliver.

You know, at the Krakow meeting recently at Community of Democracies, there was a vigorous debate about whether democracy is the way of the future or not, or whether authoritarian regimes that are producing economic results for citizens, but depriving them of political and civil rights, provide an alternative model. Well, what a sad debate to be

having in the year 2010, after having spent the 20th century overthrowing totalitarianism. For us now to be in the 21st century and doubting democracy, shame on us.

So, my view is that everybody needs to be held to a high standard. No leader, no party, no government is immune from criticism, because none of us is perfect. There has not yet been created the perfect human being, in my experience, whether that person is in or out of government. So, we are going to continue to support democracy here in Georgia. And when people say, "Well, we're becoming skeptical of the United States," or skeptical of Europe, or skeptical of the West -- and so the alternative is what? Work to overcome that skepticism, work to fix the problems. Work to stand up and be heard. And I have great confidence that the people of Georgia can do that.

MODERATOR: Come over to this side, maybe, for another question.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, I am (inaudible) but a very big supporter (inaudible). I would like to welcome my (inaudible) friend, which I met in Washington (inaudible). I would like to thank the American people on your behalf for the help and for the survival of Georgian independence. And just as a (inaudible), on the 12th of August I was waiting (inaudible) Internet site for a television show, and waiting for some (inaudible). And I haven't even proper words to explain how grateful (inaudible) for American people for that very decisive action at that time. And I would (inaudible) and articulating the recognition (inaudible) United States of America, which is essential for the (inaudible). I would like to ask you two questions, one more general. What do you see in your agenda in long and short-term to facilitate the (inaudible) process of the IDPs and their homelands? And secondly, as a member of (inaudible) gender equality council -- and the chairperson of the council is also here -- (inaudible) great job in this direction. We would like to seek some advice (inaudible) how involved (inaudible) progress in developing relations with the women in occupied parts of Georgia? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: That's a really good set of questions. You're right. We, the United States, was appalled, and totally rejected the invasion and occupation of Georgian territory. I was in the Senate at the time, and, along with my colleagues and the prior Administration, made that view very clear. We continue to speak out, as I have on this trip, against the continuing occupation. And we support the use of the Geneva mechanism, but it needs to be revived, and it needs to be intensified. And we intend to try to do that.

I am not going to stand here and tell you that this is an easy problem, because it's not. And, therefore, I think there are really a couple of answers. One, the more vibrant, effective a democracy and economy Georgia becomes, the greater contrast there will be between South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia. So, in a way, while we work on the international political front, while we work to try to protect the IDPs, as well as the people in the occupied territories, the more Georgia can deal with its own problems, the stronger the case becomes for the people inside those two areas. But your point about people-to-people support and contact is very important. I don't know if there are Internet social network ways of talking with and giving support to people inside South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but I would hope that there were, and that

there would be as much contact as possible, there would be as much reaching out -- and we will, from our end, certainly do our part to support those efforts.

With the IDPs, those that have had to flee their homeland, the United States, I think, has continued to provide humanitarian assistance, which we will also do in the future, because it's a terrible situation, where people have been dislodged and displaced from their homes and their businesses and their familiar lives. So we are very conscious of the humanitarian cost there.

In the parliament, I think raising issues in a public way all the time about the IDPs, about others who have been directly affected by the war, is important. But I would go back to where I started. From my perspective, the more Georgia deals with the issues we were talking about before -- you know, Georgia's democracy is more vibrant, Georgia's system of social justice is more effective, Georgia's economy is producing more jobs and incomes rising -- that is the greatest answer. That is the rebuke that no one can dispute. And I think focusing on what needs to be done inside Georgia while continuing to try to work on the problems of the people who have been displaced and are occupied -- and, of course, I would strongly urge that Georgia not be baited or provoked into any action that would give any excuse to the Russians to take any further aggressive movements.

QUESTION: I would like to welcome you (inaudible).

SECRETARY CLINTON: You will have to talk louder. I cannot hear you. I'm sorry.

QUESTION: My name is Ketvi Kardava, and I represent here Association of (Inaudible) for Democracy. Association is newly created, and members of the association are women and they are all trained by special programs launched by the (inaudible) Institute.

We are at the beginning of our future. So today we have a chance to ask you to share your experience and with hope to hear from you the recommendations. You were the first female chair of the (inaudible) and now you are (inaudible). Please be so kind to give us (inaudible) one incident when you took decision, when you acted in the (inaudible). What has brought you and your (inaudible) success, recognition, and authority in the society. Please. Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, thank you. You know, it is always difficult to look back on, now, more than 40 years of political and NGO activity, but I think early on, when I was about your age, I decided that I wanted to do everything I could to provide a voice for the voiceless. And in my personal work, working on behalf of children, especially neglected, abused, marginalized, poor children was my closest feeling. It was what I was very motivated to do.

So, I worked for an organization called the Children's Defense Fund. I helped to start an organization in the State of Arkansas, where my husband was governor, called The Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. And we took on the government. We even took on the government of my husband, because we didn't think that children in need were getting the services that they deserved to have. So we would publish statistics about how children were not being well taken care of, and we would work on behalf of legislation.

And, as you also point out, I was the chair of our National Legal Services Corporation. And in that capacity we provided lawyers for poor people who often sued the

government. So we were getting money from the government that we used to hire lawyers to sue the government because the government was not protecting the rights of people. Now, that is the kind of way America works. Now, if you think that government was happy that we were suing them, you are wrong. If you think powerful interests like big farming cooperatives who were misusing migrant labor that we sued, or big landlords who were denying people decent living standards were happy that we sued, you would be wrong.

So, when you take on the government, or you take on big interests, no matter whether you're in Georgia or the United States, you are going to produce a reaction. But I believe it is in the best interest of our government and our economy to hold them accountable. And that, to me, is really at the core of the whole democratic enterprise.

So, I would often make decisions, as a legal aid lawyer, as the chair of the Legal Services Corporation, I taught law school, and I organized young people who represented poor people -- also represented prisoners, to go back to your point, because no matter how terrible a crime they committed, it's a reflection on your society if they are not treated with some level of decency and dignity. So, much of what I did was aimed at helping people get access to the rights that they were supposed to have in our society and our democracy.

And then, when I was on the other side of the line, during my husband's presidency, I worked hard on several issues -- obviously, health care, to change the rules, to help people get access to health care, and we finally got that done after 17 years this past year, under President Obama. And we -- I also worked to change the welfare system and the adoption system and the foster care system.

And in every instance, you do cause controversy when you take on change. That's kind of natural. But if you believe in what you're doing, and if you do it in a way that respects your system, and use the tools of your system, I think it can work over the long run.

I was just in Armenia, and I was talking to some of the civil activists there, who are trying to shine a spotlight on government corruption. And, by the way, Georgia gets very good marks for what your government has done to try to prevent corruption. Now, it doesn't mean there is no corruption. There is corruption in my government, and we have laws and we have regulators. But you've got to get it to as low a level as possible. And in Armenia, they are fighting that battle. And some of the activists said to me that they are using their courts to sue government officials who they know are corrupt. And I said, "Oh, you mean you have independent judges?" They go, "No, but even those judges can't ignore the evidence, and we get good lawyers who are willing to do it."

So, I think that many people in young democracies think, "Well, at some point we should not have to work this hard." But if you go back and look at my country, we had to work very hard. When our Constitution was established, only white men who owned property were allowed to vote. So that meant if you were a poor white man, or if you were a slave, or if you were a woman, you were a non-citizen. So we had to fight a civil war to free the slaves, we had to pass a constitutional amendment to give women the right to vote, we had to have a civil rights movement to overcome the legacy of prejudice and discrimination, and so much else.

So, just make up your mind. Focus on what you really care about. And then equip yourself and educate yourself to be as effective as you can, and get allies where you can find them.

(Applause.)

QUESTION: Hello. My name is Shorena Shaverdashvili. I am the editor of the political weekly magazine here, The Liberal. My question is -- I will try to make it brief -- there is a lot of talk about the -- Georgia being compromised on the U.S.-Russia context (inaudible) any more. At the same time, we have -- we just finished with a local election, and it seems like we're going to have a relatively peaceful time until 2012 and 2013 to really do some of our homework that all of us need to do, especially in relation to democracy. And I also stress the importance of the civil society on this front.

But there is also sort of another factor, a disappointment with the government among some people, and also the (inaudible) of the political opposition, especially pro-Western political opposition groups. So there seems to be a bit of a (inaudible) here, and -- which raises concerns.

So, what would be your message? Is Georgia really compromised? And is there actually going to be a real support for the real change of power in 2013, whatever that means?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, first of all, thank you for running a newspaper called The Liberal, which happens to be a very good word, despite efforts over many years in my own country to somehow render it unacceptable, when truly it talks in its very meaning, its core meaning, about the importance of freedom and responsible choices, et cetera, self sufficiency, and the like.

Look, I think that the United States can walk and chew gum at the same time. That's an old expression. You understand it? We decided we wanted to improve relations with Russia, because when President Obama and I began to exercise the responsibility for our foreign policy, it was at a very low point. Lots of mistrust, which can breed all kinds of misunderstandings, and other problems.

And so, we have worked to try to forge a better relationship with Russia, and we have seen some results. We have a New START treaty to reduce the nuclear weapons on both sides -- which I think is important, since between us we have more than 90 percent of the nuclear weapons in the world -- we have worked to contain North Korea and Iran and their nuclear programs -- and when we started it wasn't at all clear Russia would agree with us on Iran -- Russia is supporting our efforts in Afghanistan. And in many other areas we have seen positive movement.

However, at the very same time, we continue to object to and criticize actions by Russia which we believe are wrong. And at the top of the list is the invasion and occupation of Georgia. We say it, we mean it, we support actions to try to give you the backing that you need in order to stand up to the threat that you believe comes from Russia.

Now, I am troubled by what you said, and by what the young woman from the opposition said, that there is a kind of a void, a growing discouragement, or turning away from the West. I just can't imagine. I don't know -- I can't -- I mean, it's just beyond my imagination that a country that has fought so hard to be independent, despite the difficulties, would be seeking another potential route.

So, obviously, it's up to Georgians to decide the future. But I think Georgia can walk and chew gum at the same time. I think Georgia can be very strongly in favor of your territorial integrity and your independence and your sovereignty and your democracy and be willing to stand up against the Russians or anyone else who would undermine that without provoking an incident, without leading to another confrontation. And, while standing up for your rights, develop your democracy and develop your economy, and provide greater opportunities to the Georgian people. There is no reason why both of those cannot happen at the same time.

I think it is a mistake to focus on the past. Too many countries in this part of Europe are looking backwards instead of forwards. And you cannot go forward if you are looking in a rearview mirror. That doesn't mean you forget the past. It doesn't mean you don't take prudent measures to protect yourself. But staying focused on what you can do today and tomorrow to improve your lives and the lives of your family and the lives of your fellow citizens by building your democracy and opening your economy and providing more justice and social inclusion, that, to me, is the great mission of Georgia.

I mean, at the end of the day, what you want is for Georgia to exemplify a strong democracy and a strong economy in this part of Europe. And there certainly is a lot of threats that we see coming from the extremists and those who would take away not only human rights, but in particular, women's rights, would turn the clock back on women. And one of the things I admire about your First Lady is she is a very staunch, vocal advocate of women's reproductive rights and family planning, which is an important right for women to have access to.

So, let's focus on what the real future is, and recognize that, yes, you live in a tough neighborhood. But that should be an even greater spur to demonstrate what Georgia can mean, not only for itself, but for the world.

(Applause.)

QUESTION: (Via translator) Welcome you here to Georgia, dear Secretary of State. We welcome you in Georgia. We welcome you on behalf of the trade unions of teachers of Georgia. Manana Gurchumelia is my name. I am the president of trade unions of the teachers. I am also the vice president of the European trade unions of the teachers. We speak -- about 100 (inaudible) teachers employed in the education sector (inaudible) speak to you. I thank you for all your support for us.

And I want to spend this opportunity to extend my thanks to the Embassy of the United States in Georgia, because they have provided a lot of support for our organization. And I am also thanking everybody who picked us up in this most difficult time.

Perhaps you remember two years ago. We met in America. And (inaudible) helped us meet in Chicago at that time. I also need to tell you that (inaudible) United States again and (inaudible) congress of the USA, because (inaudible). This is (inaudible) our organization. This is an activity which is also controlled by the government and government-controlled media (inaudible) activity. Our members, our teachers, school principals already lost realistic opportunities for (inaudible) for expressing freely their will (inaudible). This is a repeated (inaudible).

(Inaudible) you said that a civil society is a cornerstone of a free democracy. Regrettably, our government does not think so. So, we hoped that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union there would be no feeling of fear in the country. But, unfortunately, this is not the reality.

Usually trade union representatives like to talk much, but I apologize for that.

I want to ask you, together with (inaudible) to do everything to defend the trade union's movement in Georgia, which (inaudible) 105 years. And we (inaudible) the problems we have in education (inaudible) Georgia's future (inaudible) democracy to our children.

Thank you very much for being here.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. And I hope you will have some very productive meetings in Washington.

QUESTION: Thank you so much for your very interesting talk. I met with (inaudible) earlier, so I guess she briefed you on the safe motherhood issues that we are dealing with in Georgia. I am also practicing as a nurse in the delivery room from time to time. And it really gives you like a mirror of society if you work in a primary health care and in such a facility as the state hospital.

So, I wanted to say that I very much share your fight for safe abortion. And I want to say that Georgia is doing quite well on (inaudible) development goals concerning health indicators. So that means we have a growing birth rate, we have lower maternal mortality, infant mortality, infectious diseases. We are working very hard on tuberculosis and AIDS issues. And it is going, more or less, well.

But, of course, as you know, we have regions which are not under our control but are within our territory: South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We now want to make, like, an engagement plan to engage these people to reach together with us the Millennium development goals before 2015. That means, first, no politics (inaudible). We just want to offer them oncologist training. We want to offer them better care. We want to offer them prevention for HIV and hepatitis.

There is a huge problem in drug abuse in (inaudible) territory, which has affected our whole territory. So we really try to include them, excluding politics, and to include them and to engage them in our fight to raise (inaudible) development goals. And I think there is only one answer to that very, very positive initiative, and that can only be "Yes." And I think if we get support, like of your country, like of European Union countries, I think we can get very far, including those territories, and reaching the goals by 2015.

SECRETARY CLINTON: I think that's an excellent idea. And we would be happy to work with you, and to also enlist the support of the UN and the EU, because Georgia has made great progress toward meeting the Millennium development goals. And this kind of outreach is exactly what we were talking about before, to try to build some bridges.

Thank you.

QUESTION: (Via translator) Welcome you, Madam State Secretary. Welcome you in Georgia. We congratulate you on this day of independence. My name is Eka Beselia. I am a lawyer by background. For 11 years I have been working as a criminal defense attorney. I was defending human rights in Georgia for those years. During the last three years I have been the (inaudible) of the opposition political party movement (inaudible).

And today I represent the civil society. I represent an organization fighting for the protection of the right of political prisoners.

I thank you very much for reminding us of a very important example, which is talk about the race together with Obama, and that Obama offered you this position. This is really a very important message, a very good example of what the democracy means, what the democratic way means.

I want to tell you directly (inaudible) concerns. I want to tell you what is my concern. And there are many good people standing behind me, and I am speaking on behalf of them and me, as a woman working in the politics; me, as a mother; me, as a woman who defends human rights. And I express my concern to you now.

I want to tell you that there are more than 61 political prisoners in the country. And I want to ask you, when you had a meeting with President Saakashvili, ask him why does it happen that he has so many political prisoners in Georgia today, why the judiciary is not independent in Georgia, why the Georgian people are deprived of a free choice during the last elections in the country, why media is not free in Georgia, why don't we have free electoral environment.

And I also want to tell you (inaudible) to be a woman leader, to be a mother working in the politics (inaudible) tell you that in 2007, when I started to work as a politician, there was no problem for my family. But after I became one of these opponents to Saakashvili, then it happened so that many of my family members are in prison. My brother is in prison, just because I am an opponent and (inaudible) Saakashvili. My child has also been a victim when he is at school (inaudible). There was a (inaudible) to imprison him (inaudible). And these (inaudible) opposition, and because I fight for supremacy of law, rule of law, and freedom and democracy.

I want to ask President Saakashvili did he forget all those values when he (inaudible) upon signing the framework agreement with the United States? These are the obligations (inaudible) developing democracy (inaudible). Where are these hopes? Where have these hopes gone? This is a real (inaudible) for us.

This is a concern I express as a mother, as a woman politician. I am telling you about these problems. You are a mother also, and you will understand these concerns better than anyone else.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. And as I said, we raised all of these concerns in meetings with officials. I will raise these and other concerns when I meet with the president. This is what I do. And I don't always know everything that is going on in any society. But our ambassadors around the world keep us informed.

And I want to be clear that the United States supports the Georgian people. We support Georgian democracy. And we are going to do everything we can to further those values. And many of the issues you mentioned are ones that we will raise. But the people of Georgia are raising them. So, indeed, that's the best forum of all.

MODERATOR: Madam Secretary, if it's okay, we will say two more questions before everybody melts in here.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Okay. Just talk into it.

QUESTION: Well, I am pleased and honored to welcome you here, Madam Secretary. I work for the government on Euro-Atlantic integration for Georgia. And my job is and has been for six years work every single day, together with my colleagues and friends in the government, to develop -- ensuring that Georgia meets (inaudible) requirements. And (inaudible) dedication, it's my strong belief rooted in my ancestors, in my family that has suffered a lot under Soviet regime. So I strongly believe that Georgia's future lies in NATO. So I would like to see your perspective, whether you see Georgia in golden age in the 21st century in Euro-Atlantic democratic nations. Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, the United States supports Georgia's aspirations for NATO leadership and for NATO membership, and we appreciate your and your government's efforts to meet the requirements of NATO membership. And we are grateful, too, for what Georgia is doing in providing troops for Afghanistan, which is an opportunity for the Georgian military to work with the United States and other NATO member militaries to develop some of the assets that are needed to be able to apply successfully for NATO membership.

But the United States very much supports -- as long as Georgia wants to be a NATO member, the United States supports Georgia's aspirations.

MODERATOR: We will take our last question.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) Returning to the issue (inaudible), I would like to mention (inaudible). Unfortunately, today there is no possibility for us to (inaudible). The reason for that is (inaudible) territories are occupied by Russian (inaudible) troops. And taking all this into account, I would like to ask you -- and I (inaudible) -- statement made by United States President Mr. Obama, as well as (inaudible) relative to the issue of occupation of Georgian territories.

Let me ask you (inaudible) in order to ensure that United States Congress will consider the issue of occupation of Georgian territories, I (inaudible) that it will give us hope (inaudible).

And, concluding on that, I would like to thank you for your strong and unwavering position, related to the territorial integrity of the region.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. And I am very sorry that you are a victim of this occupation, and that you and your family are unable to return home. I hope that in the future that will change. And our entire government is committed to doing everything we can to bring that about.

But let me conclude by thanking you for this very vigorous exchange of views. I could tell by heads nodding this way and heads nodding that way that people were agreeing and disagreeing. And I loved it, because that is democracy in action. And I would just urge you, do not grow weary. This is hard work. And there is no guarantee of success, other than the fact that success will breed success for the people of Georgia.

And whatever the political differences, whatever the disappointments and the grievances, you at least have the opportunity to come here and express those, and you have the opportunity, through organizations, to pursue remedies and changes.

The United States stands with you. We will be continuing to support democracy and the rule of law and economic transformation, because the early results are very good, despite

the setbacks and the difficulties that I think are part of human nature. I mean, democracy did not repeal human nature. We still deal with all of the problems that come from people in all sorts of settings and positions. That is life.

But I think our mutual commitment to improving lives for our fellow citizens, and particularly for the next generation, for the children and grandchildren who should have the right to grow up in a free, sovereign, peaceful Georgia whose territorial integrity is restored and respected, whose institutions are operating under constitutional and democratic principles, and whose economy is taking advantage of the skills and talents of Georgians.

So, I wish you, from the bottom of my heart, great success as you continue the journey toward that goal. Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)