

## Roots for Peace Luncheon

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Remarks Honoring Public-Private Partnerships in Mine Action and the UN Global Compact Initiative

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Thank you, Mrs. Sorenson, Mrs. Annan, Mrs. Heidi Kuhn, distinguished guests, friends, and partners, good afternoon. I am very pleased to be able to honor one of the Department of State's public-private partners in mine action – Roots of Peace – and the UN Global Compact Initiative. I know there are other partners and key mine action organizations in attendance today, such as Adopt-A-Minefield, Landmine Survivors Network, and others, and I am pleased to acknowledge them as well.

This is also an occasion to salute the leadership of Secretary General Kofi Annan. Many years ago – I don't know how many – the Secretary General earned his doctorate at MIT studying under a Professor of Political Science, now Professor Emeritus, named Lincoln Bloomfield Sr. So I take particular pleasure today in coming to the United Nations and being with Mrs. Annan to join in this event.

As Secretary Powell said last week, "Public-private partnerships will be crucial to find the money needed to help nations address the daunting problems that they face in their development."

I think you will agree that one of the daunting problems faced by nearly 60 nations around the world is the menace posed by landmines.

U.S. efforts in mine action programs are consistent with the UN Global Compact, enlisting private support to tackle the world's problems in cooperation with governments and the United Nations. Through events like this, we see the power of the private sector. As Secretary General Kofi Annan stated in the principles of the Global Compact, it is not only the right thing to do, but in our growing global economy it makes good business sense for the private sector to invest in countries recovering from conflict. I am particularly grateful to the California vintners represented here today who have recognized this for several years already and who have worked with Roots of Peace to eradicate a threat that contaminates valuable agricultural land: namely, anti-personnel landmines.

As we have seen recently in much of Afghanistan, the very first priority when hostilities end is to make the land accessible by clearing mines. Sure enough, in Kabul and other areas last fall, the first people in on the heels of the combatants were the deminers – almost all of whom, by the way, are well-trained Afghans. Humanitarian assistance cannot get through without safe roads, air fields, and footpaths. The U.S. has just provided large quantities of seed to Afghanistan to support the wheat crop, potentially enough to feed the whole country if rains are good. Yet Afghan farmers, such as those returning to the Shomali Plain, can safely replant only if the "hidden killers" buried in their fields and orchards are first removed or destroyed.

Just last month, part of a U.S.-funded Quick Reaction Demining Force based in Mozambique was deployed to Sri Lanka in the wake of the cease-fire there so that internally displaced persons may return home and begin to farm again without fear of these calamitous accidents. Another unit of this QRDF force is also now in Sudan to do a quick survey and begin mine clearance in support of the peace process there. None of these recent war zones can look forward to economic recovery unless and until the landmine threat is brought under control. That is how important mine action is.

I would like to say a word about mine action, and the roles U.S. Government and other entities as well as individuals can play in making the world mine-safe.

What we now call landmines have been around since at least the American Civil War. Indeed, in the 1960's, five still-potent Civil War landmines were found in Alabama. The fact that they were still dangerous one hundred years after the war had ended tells us

all we really need to know about the challenge posed by landmines in the ground all over the world.

Humanitarian mine action is an interest I brought with me from private life back into government service last year. I cannot overstate the personal and professional sense of privilege and obligation I feel to have been entrusted by President Bush and Secretary of State Powell with the responsibility of guiding our nation's efforts to work with citizens and governments everywhere on this immensely important problem.

For me, humanitarian mine action is very much about mines, and getting them out of the ground. But it is even more about the devastating effects that mines have on people, innocent people whose lives and livelihoods are too often destroyed by these devices. We should recognize the direct connection that our work – your work – has with the advancement of national reconciliation and social stability in crisis-affected areas.

In addressing the legacy of landmines, we are not only helping to keep innocents out of harm's way and restore valuable land to productive use, but we are providing something larger to entire communities ravaged by war, and that something is hope. Hope that the future will be better than the present, and hope that the grim patterns of political hostilities and social dislocation can give way to a return to normality, and a secure and more tranquil life.

In the early 1990's the first mine clearance programs were taking shape in Afghanistan and Cambodia. In the intervening years, these fledgling efforts have grown into a world-wide movement, a humanitarian campaign that has galvanized international commitment and mobilized financial resources from sources large and small, to address the harm caused by past indiscriminate use of landmines. The American people helped to fund these first demining efforts, and the U.S. Government has remained very active in the process ever since.

So I came to this role as Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for Mine Action with a humble recognition that enormous good and hard work had already been done by many of the people with whom I am now dealing.

Some of these people are experts within my bureau at the State Department, where we provide financial support and training for mine risk education initiatives, mine clearance efforts, investigating new technologies, development of indigenous capacities, and facilitating a public-private partnerships of all kinds.

The record to date is very good indeed. We now have a whole range of safe technologies that enhance a deminer's "toolbox," including new methods pioneered and put to use, resulting in dramatic increases in both productivity and safety. We have a well-developed set of international standards and protocols addressing all aspects of mine action. Recent findings indicate that the reported number of victims per year has dropped from 26,000 to something closer to half that amount. It is still far too many; but we are charting real progress. Similarly, since 2000, there have been fewer mines going into the ground than have been coming out. Naturally we want to keep it that way.

Public and private funds are turning this problem around. We all know that donor fatigue is a real concern in a world with so many demands. But I see dramatic benefits resulting from even modest donations; I want those donors to see it too. We need to reach the point where we can link funding and other inputs directly to such results as increased food production, restored roads, decreased casualty rates and enhanced livelihoods. We are working on ways to do that.

The mine-affected countries themselves have a greater role from here on, I would suggest. They must establish credible national strategic plans setting priorities, balancing risk with resources, and making the most of the precious funds provided. These plans should point the way to a condition where the most acute threats are gone and the country can carry on largely with indigenous, self-sustaining expertise and management.

We must also expect affected countries to embrace mine action as a national priority, accorded its rightful place of priority among other development programs. My goal is for host governments in mine-affected countries not only to take real ownership of this problem, but to claim a full share of co-authorship of their countries' solutions.

Landmines place a huge and unfair burden on developing societies; they are often a feature of lawless crisis areas, where political repression and fanaticism take hold, their monopoly of power enabled by hunger, poverty and economic deprivation.

As the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, I have a range of duties, among them contingency planning, peacekeeping policy, and small arms/light weapons destruction. My bureau plays a role in responding to crisis and seeking to restore stability to zones of conflict. I can see in my daily work just how much mine action fits into the overall fabric of foreign policy.

So I tend to look at mine action programs through a broader lens. The countries and villages that receive our help are in the emergency room, and we and others are providing intensive care. The goal is to restore them such that they can continue recovering without our having to minister to them permanently.

The good news is that indigenous capacity can grow; we see it happen all the time. The mine detecting dog program in

Afghanistan began in the late 1980's with foreign contractors provided the initial dogs as well as training and veterinary support. Today, the Afghan Mine Dog Center is the largest user of mine dogs in the world, fully sustained by its own breeding and veterinary programs, with only limited outside technical assistance.

The mention of Afghanistan's demining dogs brings to mind a visit I made just two weeks ago to the Thailand Mine Action Center, located two hours northeast of Bangkok. Here, the Thai Army has what it believes is the best method yet devised of clearing large mine-affected areas safely: first they run bomb-proof heavy machinery over the land, clearing the vegetation and detonating some mines; second they have mine detection dogs systematically cover the entire area; and third, if the dogs locate additional mines, deminers come in and remove them. One of my goals is to ensure that any successful innovation is quickly shared by all who can benefit.

Finally, it is already clear to me that there are more needs and worthy mine action programs out there than there are dollars, despite all of the generosity of people and governments to date. The U.S. Government has spent about \$600 million on mine action since 1993 in 45 countries. This year we will provide \$101 million to 39 countries, including \$8.6 million to Afghanistan. This is a major commitment by the United States.

Yet I will tell you today, from what I have seen since taking on this role late last year, I am personally hoping to persuade the powers that be to raise our official funding levels; a great deal of good can be done with still more resources from Washington and other capitals.

But I would also like to highlight the essential role that individual citizens, civic and religious associations, non-governmental organizations, charities and corporations play in helping to address the harmful effects caused by landmines.

It is obvious to me that a key to our success is to diversify the funding base for mine action, with deeper participation from more private sources in the coming years. Working with me at the State Department is an Office of Mine Action and Initiatives Programs, coordinating over two dozen public-private partnerships already engaged in mine action. Today we salute non-governmental organizations such as Roots of Peace, and private companies, such as leading California vintners, for their special place in the world of mine action. Our team is ready and eager to engage more partners from America's great private sector, who often bring expertise and ideas that no government could produce.

In sum, I think we can project a future for mine action that intensifies existing efforts and opens some exciting and very productive new areas of effort. The landmine issue has attracted many supporters, but I feel the base of support is actually growing. Just as no one who steps on a live landmine walks away, I have observed that no one who gets involved in mine action walks away either. An issue that draws us in based on the desperate need of faceless war victims, rewards our interest by letting us see the courage and humanity of one survivor after another, carrying on with so little support.

All of us, acting together, have become part of this extraordinary and unique international franchise of humanitarian mine action. Each of us must now set our sights higher, and concentrate all the financial and human capital at our disposal, to restore war-ravaged communities and recreate stable societies. This is no small endeavor; the end is not yet in sight. But given the talent, commitment and energy that all of you bring to the cause, it is now possible to say with conviction that we can succeed. That is my conviction, and I look forward to pursuing it with you.

[End]