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Population, Refugees, and Migration

U.S. Response to Refugees Worldwide

Patricia Ellis:

Good morning everyone and welcome to our members, guests, and friends. We are just delighted that you could all join us this morning. I am Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote women's leadership and voices on pressing international issues of the day, and global engagement. We are well-known for our international issues programs such as our program today with Assistant Secretary of State Ellen Sauerbrey, who will talk about the U.S. Response to Refugees Worldwide. We are so pleased to welcome her back. This is the second time she has spoken to us. She spoke to our organization in New York earlier this year and it was a wonderful program. So we're extremely pleased that she joined us again. I also wanted to welcome everyone here on behalf of the WFPG Board. We have two Board members here today, Dawn Calabia, our Secretary/Treasurer, and Isabel Jasinowski. We are just so pleased that we could all be together on World Refugee Day.

So much attention is focused on the plight of the refugee with growing numbers of refugees around the world and with great concern about what to do about this. This is part of a new series that the Women's Foreign Policy Group started, the State Department Series. This is the second program in our series. The first was with Henrietta Holsman Fore who spoke to us in April at the Department of State. We hope to do many more. We also have an Authors Series. Our most recent speaker was Martha Raddatz of ABC News and that was a great program on her book on Iraq and the lives of the soldiers. We

recently held our second annual UN Study Visit and we have an upcoming conference following on a series of programs we've been doing on Islam. So we hope that you can all join us for all of these activities. And hope that you will think about joining the organization.

I just wanted to thank our interns and staff here for working so hard to put this together. And Susan Hovanec and her team for helping to make this all possible.

I now would just like to briefly introduce our moderator for today, Dawn Calabia. She's an officer of our Board, she's a Senior Advisor for Refugees International, and ten-year veteran of the UN and also worked for UNHCR and on Capitol Hill. Thank you for joining us and moderating the program Dawn.

Dawn Calabia:

Good morning ladies and gentleman, we are delighted to have you with us on World Refugee Day. There are 35 million people in the world who are refuges, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons who would be refuges except they can't get out of a country- as well as the stateless who are repatriating home often to almost nothing, particularly in the southern Sudan.

We have with us today a woman who has been active in public life for the last 30 years, who is an educator by trade and now must be the voice of the voiceless around the world. She has to bring to the tables of government and to the Congress not only intellectual rigor but compassion. We believe that it is in the interest of the United States to help people who are in need, to resettle those who cannot return home, and to bring assistance to the millions, without which there would be no hope. We are very pleased to have with us this morning this voice of compassion, Ellen Sauerbrey. (Applause.)

Assistant Secretary Ellen Sauerbrey:

Thank you Pat for hosting this gathering today, and thank you Dawn for not only your kind introduction but all the work that you do on behalf of refugees. It's really a tremendous pleasure to be here this morning. I'm honored to be speaking before the Women's Foreign Policy Group again and it's always a pleasure to be in a room full of professionals who are concerned about other people and concerned about foreign affairs. Today is going to be a very busy day of events with regard to World

Refugee Day. And it's an occasion for us both to reflect on the suffering but also the successes of refugees. And also, and I think this is equally important, to recognize the contributions of the many people who give refuges assistance and hope.

I want you to think for a moment about a young woman burned out of her home by an armed militia; seeing her husband brutally killed in front of her children, trudging for miles in an uncertain quest for safety, stifling her own terror and confusion so that she can bring comfort to her children. As the posters around the room depict, she's probably not alone but joined by many others who have been driven from their homes by violence and by threat of death. The women will gather in crude shelters and use the meager provisions they have managed to bring along. Later, if they are lucky, they will get supplies: food, clothing, bedding, clean water, and medicine. Often initially it's the local people who share their own meager resources with the people who have fled. And it's organized help that has to come from the international community. This woman is grateful but she is frightened about what's going to happen next. Will her children grow up in this makeshift refugee camp? What kind of a life is ahead for them if and when they can move on, or might they someday be able to return home? And despite her courage she is totally dependent on others for her survival. After a time a sense of helplessness creeps in as if the door to the future has closed in her face.

There are millions, as many as ten million, like her in the world today. But I want to focus on the faces behind the numbers. We who have been so blessed have a duty to respond to these terrific needs. It's rooted in the Muslim tradition of protecting the stranger and in the injunctions of the Hebrew prophets to care for the widows and orphans. It applies on an individual level and on a national level. Secretary Rice has said as a wealthy nation we have an obligation to help those in need. And we respond generously to this obligation. Americans care and I know this; I know this to be true. You may have heard about the quest of Pamela Cope, a hairdresser who lives in a small town in Southwest Missouri with her husband Randy. Their son died of a heart condition, but they turned their grief into a mission of mercy by rescuing seven young boys in Ghana that had been trapped into slave labor fishing in Lake Volta.

In the work that I do I've had the opportunity to collect a lot of these kinds of stories, of individual Americans who care about the less fortunate. And especially women and children who are trapped in unspeakable situations like those that exist today in the Congo and in Darfur. I have to tell you, it's a real privilege for me to head the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and to work with the dedicated people of this bureau. In the work that we do to assist refugees and victims of conflict. And I have to tell you it's life altering work. Each year my bureau directs about one billion dollars to programs for the benefit of refugees worldwide, sustaining life and upholding the rights and human dignity of refuges and conflict victims. On behalf of the American taxpayer, each of you in this room, we fund between 20% and 25% of the budgets of the major international humanitarian organizations. These include the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), International Red Cross, International Organization of Migration (IOM), and what is probably a lesser known organization the United National Relief and Works Agency called UNRWA that helps 4.4 million Palestinian refugees who live in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip and in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. We also fund many NGO's that operate around the world providing food, clean water, sanitation, healthcare, and other social services and emergency assistance to these very vulnerable populations.

The people who carry out refugees assistance and protection work really deserve the highest respect and admiration every day but especially today on World Refugee Day. I've had the opportunity to meet some of these dedicated people and to see them at work in desolate and dangerous, far-flung places. They work at great personal sacrifice, they give up comfort and they often give up being able to have their families with them. And they do it because they want to carry out this mission of compassion and to give hope to people who are hopeless. It was very sad recently to hear of the deaths just this month in Lebanon of two Lebanese Red Cross emergency workers who were trying to bring water into a refugee camp that you have probably been reading about, where the refugees have been caught in the crossfire between armed militia and government forces. Two UNRWA workers were killed just recently in the conflict in the Gaza strip in the conflict between Hamas and Fatah. And just last week there was a killing of an aid worker for Médécins Sans Frontières in the Central African Republic. One of the most

disturbing things is how humanitarian workers today are being targeted. A year ago it was their vehicles that were being stolen, now it seems to be attacks on people themselves.

I want you to know that the U.S. is not just a silent partner in this work. We do more than write a check. As a condition of the very substantial investment that we make in our international response we expect accountability and we monitor very closely to be sure that the money we spend on your behalf is spent wisely and well for the benefit of those in need. We have a very thorough process for making our funding decision and for making sure that every dollar counts. We put American generosity to work through congressionally funded programs to assist refugees around the globe.

People who have fled from places like Sudan, Somalia, North Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Bhutan, and many other places. And I want to speak just briefly about just a few of these. Perhaps the best known refugee crisis has resulted from the brutal ethnic cleansing in Darfur. Years and years of conflict have led to 230,000 Sudanese refugees that have fled to twelve camps in eastern Chad. The camps are too close to the Sudanese border. Security is difficult. Water and fuel, wood for cooking, is scarce. The water table is dropping and everyone recognizes that these camps are not sustainable, but the conflict continues and there seems to be no end in sight. Chad itself has become part of the conflict with rebel forces trying to topple President Déby, with ethnic conflict that is so complicated that you cannot tell from one day to the next who is fighting whom. But the violence has continued inside of Chad to a degree of tremendous internal displacement. 140,000 Chadians are displaced and many have gathered around the refugee camps seeking assistance. Things are so chaotic that refugees from Chad, if you can imagine, are now fleeing back into Darfur. Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) has funded gendarmes to provide some protections for the humanitarian workers and for the refugees but it is far to little. And one of the best things that we have heard this week is that the new French government is now indicating that they're stepping up to the plate, they've been talking to President Déby and they are demonstrating resolve to solve this problem.

But again I want to put a human face on the tragedy. One of our PRM staffers, we are frequently in Chad and in Darfur, told me about a young boy in the Trequine camp in eastern Chad, Abadar is his

name, he's about twelve years old. He suffered such severe post-traumatic stress after he and his sister saw their parents killed in front of them in Darfur. He was unable to speak and his grandmother actually tied this boy to a tree because she was afraid that he would wander off or hurt himself. It was a PRM funded program that provided counseling and when our person returned later to that camp they were really so delighted that this boy had made such strides in recovery. His grandmother no longer had him tied to a tree and he was actually playing outside and talking to other children.

There are rays of hope, and one ray of hope in the Sudan is the situation in the south where the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement is holding and it has allowed over 154,000 refugees to return home. The U.S. has had a major role in funding the return and reintegration and that's one of the things that we try to do as a durable solution, is help people to be able to go home. In March of this year I went to Syria and Jordan and Egypt to see what we needed to do to accelerate to U.S. response to the deepening plight of the growing number, perhaps two million, refugees from Iraq that have fled to the surrounding countries escaping secretarian violence in Iraq. And yes, we have a moral responsibility to help these Iraqis. But it is difficult in the post 9-11 era where security of Americans is also of great concern. So we have a responsibility to help and to do it right. And it takes time, it takes time to verify the claims of persecution and face to face security interviews that every refugee- whether it's in Iraq or anywhere else in the world before they can be resettled in the United States- has with the Department of Homeland Security. And numerous other security checks that are done before refugees are allowed to resettle here. I am very happy that finally, working together with UNHCR, with the Department of Homeland Security, and other partners. We are, with the mechanisms that are now operational; UNHCR has now registered over 138,000 Iraqis who are seeking a protection letter. That protection letter gives them some assurance of not being forcibly sent back to Iraq.

The registration by UNHCR is also the first step to being able to apply for financial assistance, to get help with rent or food or school tuition. We know that most Iraqis are hoping to go home, and that is typical of refugees. They don't all want to go live in a third country, some strange place. They pray for the day that they can go home. And our first and foremost foreign policy goal has got to be to create a

safe environment for Iraqis to be able to return home. But in the meantime we know that there are tremendous strains being put on the surrounding countries. And that many Iraqis, maybe they left with resources but months have gone by and they are not working and they have spent what they brought. So the United States has committed 150 million dollars this year in assistance primarily for refugees who are in Jordan and Syria to help them. To help the countries as well so that their social service networks don't break down under the strain of all of the refugees that have arrived.

For those Iraqis who fear that they can never return to Iraq, particularly those who are at risk because they worked with the U.S. Government, with an NGO, with the press as an interpreter, as a truck driver. They are targeted every day and we have a particular obligation and we are assuming it. And we have set up special mechanisms to expedite and accelerate their paperwork and their security clearance and to get them into the U.S. promptly. But our resettlement program is not limited to those who have worked with the United States. Over 6,000 referrals have been made by UNHCR of those that they recognize to be extremely vulnerable for a variety of reasons. The first Iraqi refugees and their families are going to be arriving in the next couple of weeks. And I am very excited because it has taken a long time to get us to this point. But behind the first planeload is going to come thousands who are going to come before the end of this calendar year. And we will continue to interview, we will continue to admit Iraqis while the need is there.

I want to tell you that when I was in the region one of the things that really upset me, because I am a former school teacher, was to see thousands of children that are not in school. In some cases the parents have chosen not to enroll these children because they are afraid that if they surface they might become more visible and likely be deported. In some cases they can't afford tuition to a private school. But do you know what? This is the next generation of Iraq. This is the future. These children have got to be educated. I brought this to Secretary Rice's attention last week. And she said this is not acceptable. We have got to get these children into school. It's not only unacceptable for the future of Iraq, but it's a looming disaster for the countries when you have several hundred thousand children of school age that are on the streets. I have a picture in mind of the children that you see sometimes on television picking up

rocks and throwing them. This is what we don't want, we want them to be picking up textbooks and reading them. So we have initiated a very ambitious program. And I will say that it is very ambitious because we have ten weeks before school starts in Jordan. We have been working with UNHCR, with the governments of Jordan and Syria, working to expand the classroom capacity. Our goal is to get 100,000 children in Syria and 50,000 children in Iraq in school by the beginning of the school semester. I'm not going to swear to you that we are going to get those numbers but by gosh we are going to do everything possible. We need to find classroom space, we need to identify school teachers, we need to get supplies. And we need to give the assurance to these families that if they put their children into school that they are not going to be deported.

The government of Jordan initially was very resistant. They don't want to give any implication that refugees are there to stay. But they have recognized their problem, and they have now given us the right to use school classrooms over the summer, vacant schools. And we are actually beginning a school readiness program within the next two weeks that will focus particularly on psycho-social assistance to children that have experienced great trauma and to try to help them to be prepared to enter school in the fall. As a former teacher, again, I want to tell you that I have not visited a refugee camp anywhere and not been just struck by the hunger for education that I see among refugee children. As a former teacher in Maryland I often say that I wish I had seen this thirst for education. Someone that is here today mentioned being in a refugee camp and being asked for pencils. I've seen children sitting in the dirt with nothing to write with but trying to write in the sand the lessons they are being taught. I wasn't happy to see that the children, when you go in the first grade, you see an equal number of girls and boys. By the time you go to visit a third grade classroom you are seeing the girls are dropping away because of the lack of cultural appreciation of the need for education. And it becomes even more intense with the cultural acceptance of early marriage, which is an issue that we are working to try to find solutions to. But access to education for boys and girls and keeping boys and girls in school longer provides some form of normalcy, perhaps the only form of normalcy in their lives. It gives them some hope, it keeps them from becoming child soldiers or trafficking victims, and offers a way out of despair. So it's really wonderful

when you can see bright eyes of children in a classroom who are getting that opportunity.

I was in Kakuma camp in Kenya and was very excited to see skills training for women because this is another vital need. The skills training that I was watching was women learning to sew, but I also saw women learning to be auto mechanics and women learning to be electricians- getting the skills to be able to go home one day to Sudan and help to rebuild their country. PRM is seeking new ways to improve educational opportunities and skills training. One of our programs in northern Pakistan in 2005 helped about 250 vulnerable families, many of them were widows. They were in that earthquake shattered area and needed to have some way to start their lives again. We gave them livestock, sewing machines, ways to earn a living and put food on the table. And one of the displaced women said, "after losing my husband and my house in the earthquake I was resigned to my fate but these four goats you gave me have given me new hope. By selling the milk I will now be able to earn some money and meet the needs of my children."

Finally, I want to mention that to protect some refugees there is no other option than resettlement in another country or to the United States, I mentioned it as the case for some in Iraq. But we are also very focused on a new population that you will be seeing arriving in very large numbers. It is one that we are very excited about, because we are talking about Bhutanese refugees that have been stuck in camps in Nepal for fifteen years. Imagine a child being born and growing up and never seeing anything except a refugee camp. This has been a protracted debate between two countries about who is to blame. And we broke that logjam this year by saying it's time to let these people get on with their lives. And we made an offer that the U.S. would resettle 60,000 Bhutanese. They are well educated people. They will be a great asset to the United States when they arrive. They will begin coming next year.

Early this year I visited Charlottesville, Virginia. Charlottesville, hosts some 150 refugees each year. I had an unforgettable visit with an Afghan widow. The woman had lived in a camp in Pakistan for years with two severely disabled children, living in a tent with very little assistance. Two years ago she came to the United States. Today she is the proud owner of a home. The home was built for her by Habitat for Humanity but with her sweat equity. She is a healthcare worker. And when I was there

visiting in her home, her two disabled sons came off the school bus in their wheelchairs. They are in school, they are learning. One of them is a musician and they are very excited about their new lives. It's a struggle, it's not easy to be a refugee, but she has a life of dignity.

I have to say that from everything I have seen refugees can contribute tremendously to American society. Over 2.6 million have arrived since 1975 and have been able to start their lives anew in this country because they were not able to return home, but most importantly because Americans have opened their doors and their hearts. Our resettlement program is based completely and solely on humanitarian considerations. We do not make any political decision in terms of who is vulnerable, who should be resettled here, nor do we consider refugees on the basis of what kind of education or skills or work they can do when they arrive. Our program, and this is critically important, is aimed at helping people to achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible, and the results are sometimes spectacular. Like the Sudanese lost boy who is now at graduate school at Harvard and if any of you are interested in hearing his story in his own words he will be part of a panel that we are holding at George Washington University this afternoon at 1 p.m. of resettled refugees that will be sharing their stories with us. And it's open to the public.

One of the things that I find really inspiring is that so many refugees want to give back. They volunteer; they are part of practically every resettlement agency that I have visited anywhere in the country. I see former refugees who are part of the staff or who are volunteering to help others. One member of our PRM staff came to the United States as a refugee child from Vietnam and is now a refugee coordinator for us in Bangkok. And right now we have a young man who arrived as a refugee from Bosnia and is studying foreign affairs at Tufts and he is one of our summer interns. I often see refugees thrive, and they are to me the epitome of the American dream. I also know that the achievement of the American dream brings the duty and desire to help others.

Let me close on our challenge. Because we have a substantial budget, it is a fact that despite this budget our funds are depleted by the sheer size and scope of the conflicts and the disaster. And from year to year as budgets are planned, you never know what the crisis is going to be. No one saw Iraq coming

two years ago when this budget we are working on today was put together. When we are forced to choose between ensuring that people have adequate food, water, medical care or providing vocational training or education beyond the first grade to refugee children it's obvious that our first concern has got to be keeping people alive. But I've got to tell you, it hurts when we can't go beyond that, when we can't ensure that children have an adequate education, when we don't have the funding to fund programs to protect women from gender-based violence and rape. Such is happening now in the Congo, and Darfur, and so many other areas. It hurts when we don't have the funds to teach women and children to read and to learn a trade, and have to turn down the many worthy projects that are submitted to us by NGO's that want to help and need some assistance to be able to make it .

I am very honored to be speaking before the Women's Foreign Policy Group again. My last opportunity, as you said, was in New York. At that meeting, and it happens so often, someone will say "well how can I help?" And for a while I was stumbling around, I really didn't know how to tell people they could help. So in closing, I am announcing today and it's really exciting, that we now have in place the International Fund for Refugee Women and Children. It's an opportunity for private individuals to contribute through a fund that we administer to proven organizations, that we monitor, that we make sure that the money is going to be spent wisely, to provide hope to refugee women and children. Our first contributor? Hood College. The girls got out and cleaned a highway and they raised $500. Around the world, refugees face a daily battle against desperation. A helping hand can make a world of difference. The fund will provide a mechanism, for anyone, from young students who are inspired to hold a car wash, to women's organizations, to foundations and corporations to reach out and help us to meet that need. Joining me today at this event are some of the earliest supporters of the fund that helped us put together the materials that you see. Our friends from Porter Novelli and others who helped us craft a message that we hope is compelling. Helen, Wendy, and Deanna, I'd like you to stand up and we want to just say thank you for your contribution to this effort. (Applause.) This is the material that they have helped us to design.

And again Pat, I want to thank you for hosting this event. Susan, who has been tireless in helping

us to get not only this event together but to work to put this fund together. It took us six months to get us through all the paperwork at State Department to finally get it cleared. So I hope that all of you will consider joining by giving what you can to help us get this refugee event launched. Somewhere in the world there is a refugee looking for hope. You can open that door. We're not asking for the world, just a helping hand that you can make a world of difference.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Question:

Good morning, I'm Linda Softli. Will you be making the trip with Ms. Bush to Africa on Monday, and will you have any role in any type of assessment during that trip.

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey:

No I'm not traveling with Mrs. Bush. I want to say that I have been to visit the camps in Africa, and will continue. I expect to go back probably this fall. My bureau, if not me personally, someone is out in one of the camps, visiting one of the countries in Africa, constantly.

Ms. Ellis:

Thank you so much again. What more can be done to help the many countries, whether they are in the Middle East or Africa, that are so strained by hosting refugees? Just yesterday the President of Tanzania, for example, urged refugees, thousands from Burundi, to go home because he said there was peace. I'm just wondering what more can be done and how you are dealing with this.

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey:

That is a very good question Pat, and we by the way are taking a large number of Burundian refugees who have been in the camps in Tanzania. This population who will be coming to the U.S., who are coming to the U.S. right now are people who are the survivors of a massacre that dates back I believe to 1974. This gives you an idea of how protracted many of these situations are. But in terms of what do we do, we view this as critical burden sharing on the part of the international community. These countries, many of them, are very generous in hosting large numbers of refugees for large periods of time,

sharing what are often very meager resources. Sharing their land, sharing their water, and it creates conflict sometimes after a period of time. So we as a part of the international community are giving generously to assistance programs but directing them in two ways. Sometimes directing the assistance to the refugees in other cases, seeing as how we are in Syria and Jordan as I mentioned, the need to be able to put money into the Ministry of Education, into the Ministry of Health so that they don't collapse because the last thing we want to see happen is for these hosting countries to shut their borders. That's one of the great fears right now with the number of refugees fleeing from Iraq. That is if Syria and Jordan were to close their borders, the crisis, it would become a true crisis.

Isabel Jasinowski:

Isabel Jasinowski, Goodyear. We very much appreciated your remarks this morning, and I was wondering as someone who is a bit of a novice about these issues. I think it is great that we are doing a lot in the United States but I can't imagine that we could do it all alone. So can you give us your assessment of the international effort, the U.S. joining other countries? Is it well coordinated these days? Is it well financed? What are some of the issues there?

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey:

Great question! Part of our commitment is to leverage funds from the broader international community. Part of the way that we do this is that we don't work, for example, like UNHCR, which is a wonderful organization. It's the prime organization for helping refugees. But we don't work on a project by project basis. We fund a platform of usually 25% of their budget. They know that that's what we are going to provide and they are going to have to raise 75% of their budget from the rest of the world. When UNHCR made their special appeal for Iraqi refugees the first appeal was 60 million dollars. The U.S. funded 30% of that first appeal, the rest of the world has come up with the rest of the money. They're actually oversubscribed, they raised more money for the first appeal than they asked for. We do more of our funding to international organizations and a smaller part of our funding to NGO's. In most of Europe, for example, which is the other major donor, most of their funding is to NGO's with smaller amounts to international organizations. One of the things that we are very proud of as Americans is that we resettle

more than half the refugees that are resettled in the world in any given year. But we also realize that there are many countries that have the capability to resettle refugees who are not doing it. And we are trying to get more resettlement countries. We actually funded three countries in South America to help them to build the capacity to become refugee resettlement countries. But there are many parts of the world that are still very resistant to having any new populations come into their countries. Japan for example is a wealthy country that does not resettle any refugees. And we are constantly nagging and talking to these countries about their obligation to step forward.

Ms. Calabia:

I will take the moderators privilege and ask a question. 20 million people of the 35 million I mentioned are internally displaced. And I was wondering what you are doing on a policy level to try to improve the response to that population. They are still inside their country of origin or nationality and so it can be very difficult at times to access that population, and particularly for protection. The second part of the question is "What are you doing about the U.S. system which is also splintered on this issue" Where USAID has certain parts of the responsibility, PRM has certain parts of the responsibility, and we don't seem to be doing enough for that particular population.

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey:

You're right. And within our own government we are struggling to try to figure out better, clearer lines of responsibility. This has really been intensified because USAID, you're right, has been focused on internally displaced people but so has PRM to the degree that UNHCR, the UN agency, has worked on internal displacement. And the internally displaced has been an area that was recognized by the international community as the most unmet humanitarian need. So UNHCR is now taking on more and more involvement with internal displacement so we are trying to sort out with USAID what our relationship should be there. But from the standpoint of the overall international response, I don't want to get into a lot of the technicalities, but the UN agencies have tried to create what is called a cluster system to make determinations as to which UN agency would have the lead on protection and which UN agency would have the lead on clean water or education or what have you. It's coming together but it's coming

together slowly. There are bumps along the way. But ultimately I think these UN reforms will create a better system. It has taken a long time I think for the international community to recognize the problem of internal displacement. It's not as visible and there are resistances from countries over sovereignty. And when the country itself is the problem- and here we can go right back to Darfur and Sudan- the international community has been totally frustrated about the inability to do anything there because the government of Sudan has not been willing to allow international peacekeepers to come in to try to bring peace. Without peace you can't bring in humanitarian workers, if you don't have safety for the humanitarian workers it's very difficult to provide assistance. And you have other areas of the world with the same kind of problem, where the countries themselves are very resistant to changes in UN regulations because they see this as basically the responsibility of a nation to protect its own citizens. If the country is not doing it they don't want an international presence coming in and telling them what to do. So it is a more difficult environment to operate in.

Ms. Ellis:

A lot of attention has been focused on Darfur, but there are many other situations that don't get a lot of attention, whether it's Somalia or other parts of Africa. I'm wondering what you are doing to shine the spotlight on these other situations. And if you could talk about what key situations aren't getting attention.

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey:

In terms of other situations one of the ones that we have paid a lot of attention to but hasn't gotten a lot of coverage, and I don't think most Americans are focused on, is the tremendous displacement of people from Burma who are primarily in camps in Thailand and in Malaysia. We are doing a massive resettlement of ethnic Chin, from Malaysia and ethnic Karen from Thailand. We had a great deal of problems- as some of you in this room know that have worked with these issues- with something called material support which was an outgrowth of our own after 9-11, our own efforts on the part of Congress, to improve security within the United States. But we inadvertently created organizations that we have actually supported in some of these countries that were resistant to military juntas and oppressors and

inadvertently they became terrorist organizations, because they had used armed resistance and that was quite a hurdle to get across.

In terms of other lesser known situations, I think certainly the Congo and the Central African Republic (CAR) which is a total basket case. 50,000 refugees from the CAR are in Chad along with all the refugees from Sudan that are in Chad and very few people have heard of this problem. In Somalia today we are spending a significant amount of energy at the USAID level because most of this is internal displacement. I'm sure there are many others that Dawn would think of that are not jumping right to my mind.

Ms. Calabia:

You talked about the importance of education which I think is wonderful from the Assistant Secretary, to look at this issue as a solution for now and for the future of these children and these families. 60% to 80% of refugee populations are women and children as you said. The question is, how much is PRM spending for gender based violence prevention and treatment programs and how much of your budget right now is going to education? Perhaps that would help people understand why you need this fund.

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey:

Dawn I wish I had come prepared with those numbers but I can tell you that it is a very small, discrete part of our budget. Out of a billion dollar budget we break our budget down. About 600 million of our budget goes to assistance to refugees wherever they are being sheltered, and about 300 to 400 million goes to the resettlement side. Of the assistance portion of our budget, probably less than 5% is available to do skills training and anything beyond basic education. Now we do recognize that UNHCR builds a lot of education programming, there is funding from some of the UN agencies that we are supporting to provide some of these programs, but we just don't have the funds. And I've seen such wonderful programs. One that I will never forget, I've told this story many times, was visiting this camp in this desolate part of Kenya. It's a huge camp, and there is a small NGO that we fund called FilmAid. And FilmAid, using camp residents, has done these really great commercials, sort of infomercials, on how

you don't have to pay with your body to send your children to school. You don't have to be a victim of sexual exploitation. They would go from one part of the camp to another every night with a great big outdoor television screen like our old outdoor movies. The one that I saw they had a Tweety-Bird commercial. There were hundreds of these little children sitting around on the ground, and you know to see these little kids saying "I twaut I twa a tweety-bird," and they all knew that. Then they did the infomercial. And then they went on from the infomercial to do a regular film. It was dramatic to see the impact that was part of the gender based violence programming in that particular camp.

InterNews, which we are funding, is doing radio based programming in the camps in Chad, trying to sensitize families, women, about gender based violence. So we do have programming, but there is just not enough. The three things that I will say again that this fund is going to be focused on is providing education to women and children. You know there is something that says if you educate a man, you educate a man. If you educate a woman, you educate a family. And I think that's true. Education for women and children, skills training so that women can become self-sufficient because so many of the refugees are women. They have lost their husbands they have to support their children and they have to learn how to be self-sufficient if they're ever going to be able to go home, or survive independently in the country in which they're hosting, or be resettled. And third is gender-based violence.

Emily Harter:

One of the goals of the Women's Foreign Policy Group is to promote the next generation of women leaders. My question is, there are so many young students, recent college graduates especially, that are coming out of college. They might not be able to contribute monetarily to the fund you were speaking about but they are very interested in getting involved in the field. They are willing to move to Africa and work in the refugee camps. I'm wondering what advice you would give to people like that as far as breaking into working in that sector.

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey:

There is also the Peace Corps. One of the ways that I think that many people who end up working in PRM, if you took a census of who is on my staff, you'd find that so many of them began with

the Peace Corps and they get hooked, literally, on doing humanitarian work when they are able to work in that environment. But the opportunities are great. In terms of the fundraising part, don't dismiss the capability of each individual to be able to find some way, just like the Hood College girls did. Its not big money, and we won't reach large numbers of people with the $500 contributions, we need to find the people that can write the million dollar checks. But I want this fund to represent America. I don't want it to be just a fund of corporate and foundations. I want it to be fund where every American feels like they've got a way to make a contribution.

Dawn Calabia:

Thank you very much for coming today. I hope that we've spread the message because public opinion is what counts in a democracy. I would like to note that Ellen mentioned that the U.S. funds 25% of the cost of refugee emergencies around the world through the UN programs. But I would also point out that the U.S. is paying 80% of the costs of the programs in Darfur. And that's why we don't have a humanitarian emergency. People are not dying from hunger or disease because American tax dollars and American volunteers are out there doing something about it, because the public cares about it. And one of the reasons she doesn't have enough money to deal with the Central African Republic, which has a per capita income of under $200 a year, and one of the reasons that people aren't going home to Burundi is because per capita income in Burundi is $90 per person. We need an early recovery program. We used to talk about the gap between relief and development, well it's an enormous gap and Ellen's standing in part of it.

Ellen, I want to thank you very much for what you do and I want to wish you a wonderful rest of World Refugee Day. (Applause).