

Press Releases: Remarks at the #HiddenNoMore: Empowering Women Leaders in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Event

Remarks

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Deputy Secretary of State

William J. Burns Auditorium

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DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Thank you, Alyson, for that kind introduction. And thanks to you and to OES Acting Assistant Secretary Judith Garber for the good work you and your teams have done in putting together this event.

First, I want to extend Secretary Tillerson's regrets that he was unable to

join you today. He's very passionate about promoting women leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, what we call STEM, and sends his best regards for an informative and productive program. I regret that he's sent a pale substitute in his place. I'm a lowly Washington lawyer. He himself is an engineer and the head of the department, so I have – I've got big shoes to fill.

But on his behalf, I am delighted to be here to welcome you to the United States and to the U.S. Department of State. We're honored to host international visitors hailing from 48 countries and participating in our International Visitor Leadership Program. I'd also like to welcome all of our guests from the U.S. Government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector who are with us here today.

Whether at home or abroad, promoting women in STEM is a top priority for this administration.

In February, the President signed bills directing NASA and the National Science Foundation to promote the advancement of women in STEM. Further, on September 25th, the President announced that he would direct the U.S. Department of Education to invest a minimum of \$200 million in grant funding each year to expand STEM and computer science education in schools, and that same week, the private sector announced that it would direct over \$300 million toward computer science programs in school. The administration continues to explore the expansion of apprenticeships and vocational training to better prepare women with the necessary skillsets that are required by industries in an ever-evolving economy.

These commitments from the administration represent a shared recognition that the workplace is changing and that STEM skills are playing an increasingly important role in sustaining America's economic competitiveness.

From a foreign policy standpoint, the United States advocates for the increased participation of women in economies around the world. In emerging markets, women who contribute to a household income reinvest 90 cents of every dollar they earn back into their family's education, health, and nutrition. Improvement in the – improvements in these areas are foundational for a country's ability to take further steps to advance economic development and prosperity.

We know that we have more to do to remove barriers to women in STEM. Our fundamental belief is that when women do better, families do better, countries do better, and the world does better.

The Secretary made clear in an address not too long ago that we at the State Department believe in the value of diversity in the workplace. The inclusion of different experiences and perspectives strengthens the collaborative process. Diversity makes us more aware of the consequences of our decisions as we work to overcome complex global challenges.

I repeat today what the Secretary said a little while ago: The State Department is committed to growing the number of women in our senior

leadership ranks. Only about one-third of our senior Foreign Service officers are women, and we are committed to working to close the gender gap there, as well as in other places across the department.

Now, on to the participants in our International Visitor Leadership. I'm thrilled that we have so many accomplished women here today with us hailing from countries across the globe, including Egypt, El Salvador, Nepal, Nigeria, and a number of other countries where unfortunately women in STEM is not exactly commonplace. To all of you visiting us from around the world, our hope is that you will take what you've learned and the connections you've made throughout this program and keep working to promote the inclusion of more women in STEM fields in your home countries.

You are in a key position, and each of you has a vital responsibility to inspire the next generation of girls. Please take your position seriously. The more girls and women who are able to see and emulate role models who look like them, the more encouraged they will be to pursue their passions and succeed.

When you return home, please share your experiences from this project with others in your communities, especially with girls and young women who might never dream that there is a place for them in STEM. Each of you is living proof of the fact that there is.

In closing, I want to thank you all for your participation in the International Visitor Leadership Program and for your commitment to working in the STEM fields. We hope that you will take what you've learned and spread your knowledge far and wide. I hope today will serve as a valuable leadership opportunity, that you'll have a fun and informative time, and that you will enjoy your visit to the United States. Thank you all for being here.

(Applause.)

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