

Good afternoon. Thank you for the kind introduction. I'm pleased to join you here in Ohrid, this jewel of history and natural beauty in Macedonia.

I am indeed honored to help open the 2010 GLOBE conference for all of Europe and Eurasia. GLOBE began as an American initiative. For 15 years it served as the gold standard for what is now almost a well-known mantra: think globally, act locally. Today, the international GLOBE network has grown to include representatives from 111 participating countries coordinating GLOBE activities that are integrated into their local and regional communities. Due to their efforts, there are more than 50,000 GLOBE-trained teachers representing over 23,000 schools around the world. GLOBE students have contributed more than 20 million measurements to the GLOBE database for use in their inquiry-based science projects.

I am also proud to represent a United States government that is once again at the forefront of the worldwide effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and heal our planet. As 2009 came to a close, President Obama joined world leaders in Copenhagen to sign a new accord to slow the pace of global warming and build a vital partnership between the developed and developing worlds. The United States has committed to cutting its carbon emissions in the range of 17 percent by 2020, and by more than 80 percent by 2050 in line with final legislation. And the U.S. will join a global effort to mobilize \$100 billion in financing by 2020 for efforts to combat climate change and transfer clean technologies that help reduce emissions in the developing world.

As President Obama has noted: "Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it -- boldly, swiftly, and together -- we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe."

In my own government, including in the State Department, we are doing what we can to change mindsets and habits. Under Secretary Clinton's leadership, the Department has installed solar panels on its roof. Our new Embassy in Skopje uses some of the most energy-efficient technology in the world.

Through USAID, we have also invested American taxpayer dollars in helping Macedonia go green. First, we have made a significant impact on the environment in Macedonia by supporting the establishment of a plastic recycling industry. As a result of our Plastic Recycling Project, initiated back in 2005, we have seen the amount of plastic bottles recycled increase substantially, thus cleaning up public spaces such as parks and rivers.

Today we are proud to witness the effects of this industry on the environment and economy in Macedonia. U.S. assistance to the recycling industry has created an economic opportunity for hundreds, if not thousands, of informal collectors. And now these micro businesses are an integral part of the recycling industry's collection system that supplies critical raw materials for industry. Our estimates show that 5,000 people earn a livelihood from collecting the bottles and participating in recycling activities.

We have invested 1.3 million dollars in support of recycling plastic bottles in Macedonia. We have supported two large investors to open recycling factories in Macedonia so that there is a steady demand for bottles. We have also helped smaller recycling businesses acquire improved equipment, expand their operations, and meet legal and environmental requirements.

This has proven to be a worthwhile investment, as it generated an economically viable system for protection of the environment. Through the efforts of the informal collectors, the processing capacities of recycling facilities and business linkages that ensure export of the recycled material, almost half of all plastic bottles sold now end up being recycled, rather than in landfills, on the streets, or in our green spaces. We are proud to say that Macedonia has become a regional leader in recycling, far exceeding the plastic recycling rates required by the EU.

But none of this would have really worked if the people of Macedonia did not start to appreciate and understand the importance of the environment. To educate the young generation on the importance of recycling, as well as energy efficiency, preservation of natural resources and other environmentally friendly initiatives, we have supported Green Clubs in 20 primary schools throughout the country. We also sponsor sports and leadership camps for youth that teach kids to take care of their surroundings. We know from our own experience that by educating children about environmental issues you not only have a lifetime's worth of impact but that they also prompt adults to change some of their own bad habits. Our efforts have not stopped there. USAID has provided significant assistance to help Macedonia achieve greater energy efficiency. Increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. In Macedonia, these efforts will improve the economy by increasing industrial competitiveness, and by reducing Macedonia's energy imports.

Most importantly, energy efficiency interventions in residential buildings with low-income households and in primary schools have significant social and educational impact. In addition to providing technical assistance to the Macedonian government, we have also implemented 12 Municipal Energy Efficiency Demonstration Projects in schools and other municipal buildings in five cities. We are currently providing assistance on municipal energy efficiency planning, project preparation, and municipal creditworthiness analyses, in cooperation with a Norwegian-funded program.

To provide access to finance for the implementation of these activities, we established Development Credit Authority facilities in September 2007 with UniBanka and NLB Leasing to provide loan guarantees for municipal and residential energy efficiency loans, with a total combined portfolio of \$10 million.

Our Primary Education Project is carrying out energy efficiency improvements and associated building renovations in primary schools throughout Macedonia. Projects have been implemented in over 85 schools up to now, with a total goal of 120 schools by 2011.

Development assistance invested in safeguarding the environment such as in recycling and energy efficiency projects is money well spent. Current and future assistance in these and other important areas will contribute to Macedonia's efforts to green its economy and protect our shared global environment.

Although Macedonia is a relatively small country your efforts are as important as anyone's. We all must cooperate to bring climate change under control. In "An Inconvenient Truth," Al Gore said, "The solutions are in our hands. We just have to have the determination to make them happen." I salute your determination and your ongoing efforts, and wish you a successful conference.