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25 May 2010

Clinton at U.S.-China People-to-People Engagement Ceremony

Secretary Clinton announces U.S.-China high-level consultation on exchanges

U.S. Department of State
Office of the Spokesman
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REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
at Event Celebrating People to People Engagement

May 25, 2010
National Performing Arts Center
Beijing, China

SECRETARY CLINTON: I am delighted to join State Councilor Liu and Vice Minister Hao Ping at this magnificent national center for the performing arts. It is a personal pleasure for me to be here with all of you for the launching of this very important U.S.-China high-level consultation on people-to-people exchange.

I am pleased to announce it will be accompanied today by a delegation of distinguished Americans who are committed to expanding citizens' engagement between our countries. And our effort will be coordinated by Under Secretary Judith McHale in the months ahead with a broad range of officials throughout our government who are here in Beijing for the second round of the U.S.-China strategic and economic dialogue. This is the premier convening mechanism for building cooperation between our two governments.

This relationship, however, must extend beyond the halls of governments to our homes, businesses, and schools. We need Chinese and Americans of all ages, professions, and (inaudible) to get to know one another, to understand each other better, to connect and collaborate.

In his speech on Monday, President Hu Jintao spoke about how important this is to both our countries. What we call people-to-people diplomacy has taken on greater significance, as our world has grown more interdependent, and our challenges more complex. Government alone cannot solve the problems that we face. And as State Councilor Liu said, we have to tap in to the challenge of our people, their creative and innovation, and their ability to forge lasting relationships that build trust and understanding.

It is exciting for me to see so many of you here today from both China and the United States who are committed to this relationship. As I was coming in, I met some of the leading Chinese Olympic athletes whom I have watched over the years and admired.

And we have students from both of our countries represented here, tens of thousands of Chinese and American young people studying in each other's country each year. We want to see those numbers rise. President Obama has announced a goal of sending 100,000 American students to China in the next 4 years to learn Mandarin and experience the hospitality of the Chinese people. We call it 100,000 Strong, and we are grateful for the support that the Government of China has shown for this project. And I especially want to thank Madam Liu for her leadership in this effort. It was just about a year ago that she and I first met to discuss the

importance of people-to-people exchanges. And here we are today, announcing a significant commitment.

A few minutes ago Madam Liu and I met with several American exchange students, including: a high school student who is living with a host family here in Beijing, a college student who has performed with the Beijing Music Ensemble, and a doctoral student doing research in renewable energy education.

A few days ago I visited the Shanghai Expo and met the young American student ambassadors who had already welcomed more than 700,000 visitors to the USA Pavilion. They have all studied Mandarin. And they come from cities and towns across the United States. They will return home having shared the experience of being part of the Expo, and meeting people from all over China and the world. Many more American and Chinese students want and deserve similar opportunities, and I applaud the announcement today that there will be 10,000 Chinese students supported to get their Ph.D.'s in the United States.

China has established dozens of Confucius institutes across the United States that offer Chinese language instruction and cultural programs to help Americans better understand China. We would like to see similar American language and culture centers on the campuses of Chinese universities. I understand that a proposal between an American university and a Chinese partner for an American study institute is now under review. And we hope the Chinese Government will support this proposal and others like it, paving the way for an even more vibrant exchange of language and culture.

The U.S.-China Fulbright program, one of the largest in the world, and represented here by some of the Fulbright scholars, has helped 2,500 Americans and Chinese students and scholars study, teach, and conduct research at each others' universities. The U.S.-China Friendship volunteers teach English in four provinces in China. And we would like to broaden their support for English language instruction in China, including county-level teacher training, smaller cities and colleges, and additional provinces.

These opportunities provide new perspectives on this fast-changing world that we both share. And they remind us of how much we have in common. Despite our differences and the distance between us, we share common aspirations. And I believe the more we talk and learn from each other, the greater our chances of making progress together.

And education is just the beginning. Professional, creative, scientific, and cultural exchanges also hold great potential. Sesame Workshop, a non-profit organization that produces Sesame Street, an educational television program beloved by generations of American children, recently formed a partnership to produce children's educational programming in China. Tulane University in New Orleans has partnered with east China's (inaudible) university in Shanghai, to trade (inaudible) in disaster response and wetland management. And the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra recently (inaudible) famous 1973 visit to China, playing at both the Shanghai Expo and here, at the Center.

To bring together women to the public and private sectors I have discussed a proposal with Madame Liu for a U.S.-China women's leaders forum. And the relationship between our two countries will change the 21st century. We want it to be a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship. We want it to be based on our people-to-people outreach and understanding. Our people represent our greatest resource in both of our countries. And encouraging their mutual engagement will better ensure that the United States and China make the most of this exciting time in our shared history.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

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