

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Verveer, Melanne S <VerveerMS@state.gov>
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To: H
Subject: Community of Democracies

Welcome back to an unbelievable snowy mess in DC!

I wanted to tell you that I met with the Lithuanian official who is heading up the Community of Democracies. Lithuania has the lead for the next two years. They are extremely energetic and recognize that CD needs to be reinvigorated. It was not given much leadership from us during the Bush years and besides democracy got a bad name – among other reasons. Their plan is to create a few working groups focused on issues that are current and important with specific practical goals and tangible results – among them, one will be focused on women and their critical role. As you know, they have a female president, the EU has just established a Gender Institute in Vilnius and they remember Vital Voices when you headed up the conference in Iceland and the successor conference which was held in Lithuania in 2001. We talked about a more concerted commitment -- to advocating for women and the role they need to play in conflict resolution (1325), helping women in Afghanistan and working to help women in eastern Europe and the Caucasus where things appear to be going backwards in many ways (takes me back to our first-ever VV conference in Vienna). I agreed that we would co-chair the gender working group with Lithuania.

The Lithuanians believe that in many ways the younger generation takes for granted what the older generation fought for (they remember being a “Captive Nation and how the US kept them going with an embassy when they was little likelihood at the time that they’d ever become a democracy), and that today democracies are struggling in too many places. It’s as though we have to take back democracy’s good name and focus it as a universal value to address the critical challenges.

Mike Posner has the lead on CD. I talked to him about all of this. He is all for our doing the gender working group as something tangible. He is concerned about where the Community of Democracies goes more broadly. Since this was a creation of the Clinton Administration and since democracy is under siege in so many places, I hope we will find a way to work with the Lithuanians and others who still want to see it make a difference. In some ways it may be more relevant today. They are planning the first ministerial in Krakow in July and hoping so much that you will be a part of it.

Assuming I can get there, I’m going to their embassy in the morning where several government reps of participating countries will be meeting to announce next steps, including the gender working group.