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To: H
Subject: The Rio document and women

Importance: High

I understand that you were interested in hearing the S/GWI perspective on the Rio Outcome Document. The overall result was outstanding. The outcome document underscores that women's empowerment and gender equality are critical to achieving all three pillars of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental) and prioritizes measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The document references key conferences (including Cairo and Beijing) as critical platforms for advancing sustainable development, rather than in the narrower frame as conferences focused on women's issues. It also includes important provisions on women's leadership and good language resolving to undertake legislation and administrative action to give equal rights to economic resources, including credit, land, and inheritance.

The United States fought very hard but did not succeed in getting a specific reference to reproductive rights in this text. As you know, this is a critical and hard-won phrase that was included in the Cairo and Beijing outcome documents. While the Rio Outcome Document does include language on the importance of sexual and reproductive health and universal access to family planning services to women and to sustainable development overall, it does not include the phrase "reproductive rights." It was in the text until the final session, but the US faced ferocious opposition from the usual suspects, including the G77, with no support from the EU given their internal divisions. This unfortunate result could be a sign of a coordinated assault on reproductive rights in UN documents. Recently, at the March meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, negotiators were - for the first time -- unable to reach agreement on an outcome document because of a dispute over this same issue. The same group of countries that resisted inclusion of reproductive rights in Rio held the document hostage at CSW, where again this issue was only a small part of the broader purpose of the meeting. I suggest that we develop a strategy -- first internally (IO, USUN, PRM and my office) and then with key allies in the EU, including the UK, Norway, Sweden, etc. -- to prepare for what promises to be an ongoing and difficult issue.