

Assistant Secretary Ann Stock

**“OUR PARTNERSHIP FOR AMERICA’S ENGAGEMENT
WITH THE WORLD”**

Alliance Annual Membership Meeting
October 5, 2010

Good afternoon.

To the Alliance Board and member organizations, thank you for welcoming me today. It is an honor to be here.

Christine, thank you for that kind introduction and for your service as the Board Chair of the Alliance. And to Mike McCarry. Under your leadership, the exchange community has soared to new heights while continuing to address today’s challenges. During your tenure, both the number of exchange sponsors and participants has grown substantially. I’m especially grateful to you and Christine for your advocacy on behalf of international exchanges.

On June 23, I was confirmed as Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs and spent much of July and August meeting in person and on the phone with Alliance organizations as well as other key ECA partners. I wanted to hear your concerns and your ideas on how to address those concerns.

One of my very first meetings was with Mike and several Alliance representatives along with ECA’s leadership. Our relationship is both wide and diverse, encompassing broadly shared issues as well as a myriad of specific details. As we talked, it became apparent that we needed to forge a new partnership—one based not just on program and participant growth, but on enhanced cooperation. Because you are our key partner on the front lines of international engagement, we decided to hit the proverbial “reset” button and find ways where we could work together.

We must collaborate to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century. The educational and cultural programs that result from our partnership are a critical tool for reaching our goals of mutual understanding and respect. Our programs:

- Create a foundation of trust with other people of the world;
- Establish relationships that endure independent of political movements and specific governments;
- Engage unofficial figures of influence who often cannot be reached by traditional Embassy events;
- Reach out broadly to young and underserved audiences in the U.S. and abroad;
- Demonstrate values that counter popular misconceptions of Americans;
- Increase the capacity of Americans to understand and engage globally;
- Provide a positive agenda for cooperation and a neutral platform for dialogue; and
- Highlight the richness and diversity of the American private sector.

For more than six decades, the Alliance has contributed to these impressive goals. You connect high school and university students, writers and artists, media figures, professors and researchers, NGO and business leaders. You are instrumental in giving millions of men and women the opportunity to experience the diversity of America and its people. This year alone, more than 350,000 women and men will participate in our Exchange Visitor Programs.

Because I believe so deeply in these exchanges, I want to recognize and salute all of the work you've done to strengthen them.

One of my policies at the Bureau—or wherever I have worked, from the White House to the Kennedy Center—is “no surprises.” I owe you no less as part of our “reset,” so let me share with you my priorities as Assistant Secretary in some detail, greater detail, in fact, than I have done publicly thus far.

Global engagement begins, first and foremost, with youth. Today, nearly half of the world's population (almost 3 billion people) is under the age of 25. Youth programs connect us with young people who will one day be leaders in their communities and, perhaps, in their nations. Secretary Clinton and Under Secretary McHale have asked me to spearhead the effort to find new ways to reach younger and more diverse audiences at home and abroad. New media and technology can help connect us with these citizens of the globe.

An ideal illustration of youth engagement is the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, which allows high school students to spend ten months in the United States, studying in an American high school and living with an American family.

When I meet these young people, I am filled with the greatest respect for their audacity in undertaking such a great adventure at such a young age. I have a deep sense of responsibility for their wellbeing.

For this reason, ECA, in partnership with our sponsor organizations, will work to ensure that we are taking all the steps necessary to provide a safe and rewarding experience for these young people. As many of you know, the rising volume of youth programs has led to some unfortunate cases of mistreatment. This is unacceptable. We have addressed the situation and are restructuring the way youth programs operate. The Department has:

- greatly enhanced the regulatory oversight of high school sponsor organizations, with much valuable input from the Alliance;
- restructured our youth programs office and increased the size of its staff to permit closer monitoring of each student's program experience;
- created an independent monitoring unit to track our efforts; and
- developed additional means of direct outreach to students.

Shortly, as soon as the Office of Management and Budget review is complete, the new high school regulations will go into place. We will partner once again to develop a local coordinator training course that will be an important enhancement to these regulations.

Also, I want to thank the participating high school sponsors for supporting our onsite reviews of your organizations. These reviews will help ECA have a greater understanding of your experience, and will result in even stronger programs.

Expanding on this successful collaboration, I am again calling on the Alliance to help us strengthen the Summer Work Travel program. Due to your efforts, over 2 million students have come to the United States through this program. They too are a vulnerable population. We must all do our utmost to ensure the integrity of this program and the welfare of the participants.

ECA DAS Stanley Colvin is leading the Bureau's efforts in this area. The Alliance will spend this week taking a hard look at summer work travel operations. We need to build awareness of potential fraud issues, and examine ways to provide safeguards for students.

It is also critical that we continue to engage youth as they reach their college years. We plan to complement our long-standing inbound undergraduate exchange programs with expanded efforts to provide young Americans with study abroad opportunities.

I am especially proud of the Gilman International Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships to U.S. undergraduates who have been traditionally underrepresented in international education exchanges. To date, 4,728 students with financial need have studied in 106 countries. I am especially pleased with the high participation of minority students. It is two to three times higher than in U.S. study abroad as a whole. Additionally, about fifty percent of Gilman scholars are the first in their families to go to college. Since I was the first person in my family to go to college, I know how important this step is. Our strong partnership with 750 colleges and universities is a key element in Gilman's success.

The Fulbright Program, of course, is the anchor of the State Department's educational exchanges. Participation is at an historic high with almost 8,000 scholars participating each year. Fulbright is one of the most prestigious scholarships in world and exemplifies our successful partnership between the academic, NGO and private sectors, and foreign governments.

Our EducationUSA network provides comprehensive information to foreign students about how to study in the United States, and helps U.S. institutions with study abroad opportunities. We are expanding these services. This summer, we hosted the first U.S.-based "EducationUSA" forum, bringing our educational advisers directly to U.S. institutions. I was delighted by the forum's success and plan to replicate it in the future.

Another of the Bureau's priorities is to provide opportunity and empowerment for women and girls. Secretary Clinton has been their champion for more than 40 years and I am delighted to join her in this global endeavor.

In fact, nearly 50 percent of ECA program participants are women and we ensure that women and girls are represented on all of our programs.

Just last week, we launched TechWomen, a ground-breaking professional mentorship program linking women from the Middle East and North Africa with their counterparts in Silicon Valley. TechWomen is a public-private partnership, with a number of leading U.S. tech companies

involved, including Google, Facebook, Microsoft and IBM to name a few. This is one example of how 21st century tools and the private sector can help create exchanges that advance the Secretary's priorities.

Recently, our International Visitor Leadership Program hosted 36 African women entrepreneurs for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum. These entrepreneurs—who are leaders in their own communities and business organizations—were here to expand their networks and gain skills to help them thrive in a competitive marketplace.

These businesswomen stressed that while it is valuable for them to meet Americans, and for us to meet them, it is equally valuable for them to meet each other. This likely would not have happened without our catalytic role. Our program also allowed them to establish their own pan-African linkages and network.

Before we can begin to build networks, however, we must be able to communicate. English language programs are a priority and in high demand around the world. English is a gateway to education and employment and the key to economic development.

Under Secretary McHale has asked us to invest more in our English language and education advising efforts. The English Access Microscholarship Program, which reaches disadvantaged high school students overseas, is a major component of these efforts. Funding for student and teacher resources and for online “e-teacher” training has increased. We've expanded the number of overseas Regional English Language Officers, and added more exchanges and professional development for teachers.

We will also continue to invest in Critical Language exchanges abroad for American students and teachers. These language programs demonstrate respect for others while helping our students and teachers to succeed in an interconnected world.

Finally, where would we be without culture and the arts in our lives? In a recent interview on CBS Sunday Morning about the power of cultural diplomacy, Secretary Clinton said, “There are certainly times when music conveys American values better than a speech.”

And she is so right.

Cultural exchanges can transcend crises, changes in policies and governments, and daily headlines. They connect with people in a way no other kind of diplomacy can. It will come as no surprise to you that cultural programs are very near and dear to my heart. In my twelve years at the Kennedy Center, I had the privilege of working on many exciting international cultural exchange programs. I want to update you on our key initiatives in culture.

Our newest venture, *smART Power* will send 15 American visual artists abroad for 6-12 week to collaboratively create new works of art. This innovative project offers great opportunities for community collaboration and open dialogue.

In dance, four new American contemporary companies will travel to Asia, Latin America and Africa for performances, workshops, and master classes. This year, as part of

DanceMotionUSA, we are adding an exciting, incoming component—an international dance company will travel to the U.S., partner with a local company, and perform both here and in their home country.

Another program, The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad, focuses on American roots music ensemble, including jazz, urban/hip hop, and zydeco, and continues to be popular. Shortly, we will announce a new program will send ten foreign performing artists to the United States for month-long tours in small and mid-sized communities to perform and participate in community outreach programs.

All of these different exchanges create a legacy for us. Today, there are more than a million alumni of our programs worldwide. As we continue to engage these alumni, we foster relationships with new generations and fuel an engine for change that is perhaps unprecedented in American diplomacy.

I said this at my swearing in and I continue to repeat it, because I believe it so very much: When you meet Americans, you meet American values.

Exchanges, together with other forms of cultural and educational outreach, are a quintessentially American form of diplomacy that I hope to increase, to amplify, and to sustain in a lasting and meaningful way.

Our combined commitment to these efforts will strengthen our partnership and our common goal of promoting mutual understanding between Americans and people around the world.

Thank you for your commitment and your willingness to make a difference. I look forward to working with you.