

It's what they call in Hollywood a tough act to follow. I want to thank the secretary, who is in my estimation one of the great secretaries of state ever to serve our country. I would probably be too humble to make that statement, except that I know it's agreed with by a great majority of Americans. She is the kind of tireless public servant – extraordinarily intelligent, diligent, fair, spectacular person – that makes me even more proud to be an American.

Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. (Applause.)

It – I hope you guys don't notice that these are teleprompters – (laughter) – but I have to – the secretary and I are slightly different heights – (laughter).

Thank you all – (laughter) – for coming to this important gathering. It truly really is an honor to be here. I don't say this very often in Hollywood, but here there is no doubt that I am the least accomplished person in the room. So thank you very, very much for tolerating my speaking to you here. It really is – it really is an honor and I want to thank Administrator Raj Shah, as well as so many other inspiring world leaders.

You know, it's a particular pleasure to welcome friends from a country that I care about very deeply, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Dr. Jo Lusi is here. There's Dr. Lusi, yes. And an extraordinary man who I've spent a lot of time with, who's one of the great, amazing legends of the world. He's an incredible man. You go find his "60 Minutes" episode and it'll tell you a lot about him.

Dr. Denis Mukwege. Are you here, Doctor? Yes. (Applause.)

Dr. Terrisse Mumbo (ph) it's also – where are you, Doctor – there you go – there you go – now is the time to spend – (applause.) And it's also a pleasure to be here with the new minister of health from DRC Felix Kabange. He was sitting next to me listening in French, so I – (applause) – thank you for making a long trip to Congo. It is about at best a 24-hour flight and I really appreciate it. And thank you for lending your support to this important effort and for all you do for kids and families in Congo.

We're here today because we believe that our collective voices and actions can help children around the world live long and healthy lives. For the past six years, I've had the great pleasure to visit Congo many, many time. I visited fast-paced Kinshasa, the LRA-dominated Dangu, and been all over the Kivu provinces, where our Eastern Congo Initiative is located. And everywhere I've been, I've seen extraordinary efforts by the Congolese to usher in a brighter future for their country.

The Congolese must lead in this effort. We firmly believe that. We believe that our role is there to support the Congolese and support community-based organizations. But we believe all of us can help support them and that's really why we're here today. At the Eastern Congo Initiative, we believe that lasting long-term success happens when the Congolese lead and develop solutions that work for their own communities. For ECI that means focusing all of our efforts on highlighting and investing in Congolese-led initiatives, whether it's a program to help former child soldiers reintegrate into society, teach women how to plant, grow, market, and

export sustainably grown cocoa and coffee, or support maternal and child health projects in remote areas. ECI is driven by the Congolese and their resilience and determination on the path toward progress.

It's an inspiring thing to see and it's an inspiring thing to be a part of. For example, I look at Dr. Lusi, who founded Heal Africa, with his wife Lyn Lusi, who we lost earlier this year to cancer. We all miss her activist spirit and her commitment to the health of Congolese mothers. Heal Africa is a community health organization, providing a variety of services, ranging from 155-bed hospital that performs general surgery, serving the pediatric community, to doctor training, to providing safe houses for the victims of violence, to offering critical programs focused on health education and improved health outcomes, Heal Africa is a great example of what can be done when Congolese lead the charge.

Thank you, Dr. Jo. Wherever you are, I thank you again. (Applause.)

I'm pleased that Dr. Denis Mukwege from the Panzi Hospital is here today for this call to action. Panzi Hospital's fistula campaign has not only saved countless women from the stigma and the chronic pain and sometimes death associated with fistulas, but it's also been instrumental in reframing society's understanding of this issue.

At one time, in Congo, fistulas were thought of as an affliction of sexual violence essentially. Now, through the education efforts of Panzi and others, fistulas are largely recognized as preventable with improved maternal care and by ensuring those who help deliver babies and giving them simple tools and knowledge that can help a baby enter the world safely and can help their mother recover healthfully. The tide is turning on these debilitating injuries. And that is not only due to this man, but in large measure due to Dr. Mukwege. I want to thank you again, Doctor.

I'm also grateful that Dr. Mumbo from Kinshasa is here with us today. Dr. Mumbo is a professor and head of the Maternal and Child Health Department at the University of Kinshasa, teaching a new generation of medical professionals. These leaders are remarkable and are creative effective solutions to critical challenges. It was through their work that I met Faida (ph).

Faida is a mother of eight children, two deceased, a girl at birth and a boy at two years old. She lives in a village called Menova on the picturesque shores of Lake Kivu. Faida is part of the Safe Motherhood program at Heal Africa and leads a maternal insurance savings group in her village. Her group of 10 women received a micro-grant to invest in their small business and fields. Every month, each woman says what they can contribute to the group's collective fund. The fund is used as an insurance to pay for maternal health and neonatal health checkups and safe delivery at a health center, which these rural women could not otherwise afford. The group paid for all of Faida's health care and during her last two pregnancies and her children are happy and healthy today.

Faida is a remarkable leader and an entrepreneur in her community. She has started 10 other women's savings groups and is teaching couples about nutrition and family planning. And

this is the kind of example that I'm talking about, Congolese people taking the lead, taking charge of their own communities, and making an extraordinary and dynamic difference.

Heal Africa played a pivotal role in ensuring the health of Faïda and her children. However, there are other core challenges in the Congo that rob children of their futures. It goes without saying. Faïda can have no assurance of her children's health and safety in the midst of the ongoing violence and instability. In the eastern region of Congo, violence is increasing with each passing day. Recent numbers show that the current surge in violence has displaced nearly 40,000 in just a few months. Instability already undermines efforts to deliver basic health services to Congolese communities. A healthy community cannot exist within a broken security sector.

We hope the U.S. will assert leadership and encourage a stronger security sector, resulting in a safer society for Congolese families.

World Bank economists reported that child mortality rates for children under 5 are swiftly declining across the continent of Africa. This is thrilling. Senegal, Rwanda, and Kenya are experiencing drops in child mortality of more than 8 percent a year. If sustained, this will wipe out child mortality each country in half in roughly 10 years.

Overall mortality rates in most countries, regardless of size, religion, or geography are dropping twice as fast now as any time during the past two decades. However, in celebrating this benchmark, we can't forget that this victory is just one step in a tall ladder and in some cases our foot is still on the bottom rung.

In the Congo, the numbers are still grim. With just 1 percent of the global population, Congo represents over 6 percent of the global mortality rate for children under 5. According to USAID, 148 out of 1,000 DRC children will not reach their fifth birthday – nearly 15 percent. This is the fifth highest under-5 mortality rate in the world.

Congo is one of only a small handful of countries in which the number of under-5 mortalities has actually increased since 1990 from roughly 300,000 to over 460,000 a year.

Now, how about some good news? Potential for change in Congo is abundant. The IMF projects that the DRC will be among 10 of the world's fastest growing economies, growing at a rate of roughly 6 percent a year until 2015. Ninety percent of Congo's arable land remains uncultivated. Once the breadbasket of Africa, this virtually untapped resource could return and transform the lives of millions of children and countless communities in Central Africa. The potential in Congo is clear.

For the first time in history, we have the means and knowledge to end unnecessary child deaths in the DRC and globally. Much of the time, saving a child's life is as simple as ensuring kids sleep under bed nets to help avoid malaria and they receive nutritional supplements and that they have immediate access to health care. This could save millions of lives a year alone and would cost less than \$30 a child.

I'm honored that the Eastern Congo Initiative was asked to participate in the Advisory Council on Child Survival. We are pleased to have helped bring together Congolese stakeholders from the government, civil society, the faith based community, and the health practitioners sector, and NGOs working on the ground so that we together can turn the tide on child mortality.

I am pleased that Eastern Congo Initiative is a member of the Council along with Dr. Lusi, Dr. Mukwege, Dr. Mumbo, and other members of the health care civil society and religious communities.

These diverse voices will work with the central, provincial, and local governments of Congo and with health stakeholders to contribute to a national strategy aimed at reducing child mortality and increasing positive health outcomes for women and children, including improved health education and nutrition programs.

As part of ECI's commitment to help the council develop Congolese solutions to this challenge, we're pleased to announce the completion of an online searchable database of community based organizations doing important and impactful work in Eastern Congo. This rigorous landscape analysis developed in collaboration with USAID identifies Congolese led organizations that are improving outcomes in their community. With sincere thanks to Maura O'Neill and the Idea team at USAID for their work to make this important work a reality, so thank you, guys, as well.

As Americans, I believe our actions define our values. I have three children that fall into this vulnerable age range. I cannot imagine what it would have been like driving my wife to the hospital, pregnant, about to give birth, and thinking to myself, well, there's a 15 percent chance that each one of these children won't live to be 5 years old. It's abhorrent. It's unacceptable. We wouldn't abide it in this country. And we must not abide it in the world globally with our brothers and sisters. It is morally incumbent on us to work to eradicate this problem and stay with it until our work is done.

I want to thank you all very, very much for the honor of speaking here today. It is now my extraordinary honor to introduce the new minister of health from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Dr. Felix Kabange. (Applause.)

Come on up.