

Hello, everybody. Good afternoon. Thank you very much. Raj, very good to see you. Thank you to you and Margie and everybody at USAID. Obviously everybody at HHS for the good work and the State Department and all of our agencies that have been working not only on this conference but on global health in general, something about which the president feels very strongly and appreciates a great deal your leadership and your work which is bound – based in something the president feels very strongly, namely the dignity of each and every human being.

I want to also add to my thanks Amy Batson for all the good, hard work that she's driven on the call to action. (Applause.) Let me also recognize the critical role that UNICEF has played for the last 30 years in leading the global charge on child survival. Tony, I can't say how good it is to see you. I hope you're as proud of what you're doing as we are of you. It's great stuff.

Let me also acknowledge the governments of India and Ethiopia, who are cohosting the event, sharing lessons learned from their successful efforts to reduce child mortality and setting the standard on the global stage to end preventable child deaths.

We thank you for your leadership and for the inspiration, frankly, that you're offering us and so many others. Finally, welcome to all of the health ministers who champion this effort around the world each and every day and to our guests from over 80 countries represented here at Georgetown today in Washington.

I join you today as President Obama's deputy national security advisor. The president has directed me to be here because he believes, as all of us do – moms, dads, brothers, sisters – that every child around the world, no matter where, when he or she was born – deserves the same chance that each of our children has, the opportunity to thrive, consistent with, as I said before, the inherent dignity that each and every child possesses.

This is a tenet of his religion and mine. And it's something, a fundamental human aspiration that crosses all cultural, religious, economic and political divides. Today, I'm here to convey his strong support for your efforts toward a goal that we all know can be achieved – an end to preventable child death. And the United States has a clear message for each of the governments here, for the international organizations, the NGOs and all -- each of you who are gathered.

We are serious about making concrete progress on child survival. To each of you who shares this sense of purpose, who are serious about improving child health, using what science has now shown to be the most effective, targeted interventions and about transparency and accountability, the United States stands ready to be your partner to make a vision of ending preventable child deaths a reality.

Now, I know you've heard from Secretary Clinton, from Raj and from many others today. So you may be asking why the deputy national security advisor is here carrying this message. The answer is that as the president laid out in his 2010 national security strategy, the United States has both a moral and a strategic interest in promoting global health. And this includes obviously preventing child death.

Doing so aligns with our values, promotes economic growth and promotes stability. Let me talk about each of these in turn. First, and most fundamentally, this is a humanitarian imperative and it's one, as a father, that I share and the president shares. He sees it as an opportunity to act consistent with his values and with our country's values. It's a hallmark of his leadership over the last three-and-a-half years.

As he said, quote, "Our values have been our best national security asset." Over the last century, we've seen countless examples of how this commitment to our values, the dignity of every human being, has made a profound difference in the lives of millions around the world.

The global health community has pioneered some of the most powerful life-saving interventions the world has ever seen, from new childhood vaccines to inexpensive drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, to insecticide-treating bed nets for malaria. These innovations are inexpensive and they are effective.

As those of you who are practitioners and leaders in the field know better than me, they work and they have saved the lives of millions of children. Today, the United States is working to harness these innovations and maximize their impact. Last year, our PEPFAR program prevented 200,000 infants from becoming infected with HIV.

On World AIDS Day, the president announced an ambitious new target to eliminate pediatric HIV and reach more than 1.5 million HIV-positive pregnant women with antiretroviral drugs to prevent them from passing that virus to their children.

In the focus countries where USAID is leading our malaria efforts, we are seeing major reductions in childhood mortality and our support for GAVI in partnership with the U.K. and others, will immunize more than 250 million children in the world's poorest countries by 2015 – 250 million children in the poorest countries by 2015 and prevent more than 4 million premature deaths.

Second, child survival increases economic growth and lifts nations and people out of poverty. This weekend, the G-20 will meet in Los Cabos, Mexico, to continue discussions about how to meet our most pressing global economic challenges including strengthening the resilience of our Eurozone partners and promoting growth in Europe and globally. But even as we focus on these immediate challenges of the global economy, we are focused squarely on building the strong foundations for growth all over the world.

That's why President Obama and G-8 leaders last month at Camp David launched a new alliance for food security and nutrition. It's designed to accelerate the growth of African agricultural sector upon which millions and millions depend. And that has a very clear goal. Over the next decade, helping 50 million men, women and children lift themselves out of poverty.

Economists have shown that improving child survival along with importantly investments in educating girls, can change the demographic – the demographic structure of countries, allowing

them to benefit from what we call the demographic dividend that can add as much as 2 percentage points of economic growth over a period of years. We've seen the impact of this demographic – demographic dividend in East Asia.

We are currently seeing it in India. And we will soon see it in Africa and recent rapid decreases in child mortality are sustained. Now, earlier this morning, the president issues his new strategy on sub-Saharan Africa. One of its four pillars – that is to say, one of its top priorities – is promoting opportunity for development. And that includes opportunities for women and youth.

A key element is focusing on maternal and child health as a centerpiece of the global health initiative so that we can keep building on recent progress. He is committed to investing in child health because this is an investment that pays dividends for all of us for years to come. Third, child survival promotes stability and therefore security.

A country's infant mortality is an indirect but important indicator of a country's risk of instability. According to some estimates, high infant mortality rates suggest that a country is four to seven times more likely to experience instability. So protecting children is not only right, and we know that children disproportionately suffer during conflicts as we're sadly seeing in Syria, it is smart governance.

So failing to prevent children's deaths is not just a moral tragedy. It saps a country of its greatest potential – the energy and talent of its people – indeed, saps a country of its future. When child mortality improves, in country after country we have seen families willingly choose to have fewer children when they know that each child has a chance for a healthy life. I never asked my parents if that's why they had 11 kids because they were worried about me but I'm a benefit – I'm a beneficiary of that.

When children and communities have – when children have a greater chance of survival, their families and their communities invest more in each of those children. More children, again especially girls, attend school. More children receive the nutrition they need to thrive and all children have a greater chance of receiving the health care they need.

We see a cycle, which too often is vicious, be turned completely upside-down into a vicious cycle of greater survival, greater opportunity and I would add over the long-term less dependence on the foreign aid and assistance that we invest so much in.

And as President Obama has said, that ultimately is the purpose of development, to create the conditions where assistance is no longer needed, where more people are self-sufficient. That's good for these children. It's good for their families. It's good for their communities and their countries. It's good for the world and it's good for the United States.

So let me end where I began. This is a simple but powerful mission that you have all taken on. Ending preventable child deaths – it aligns our values as a people with our interests as a nation and this mission matters to our national security leadership and to the president himself.

And I know it matters to everyone in this room. But, to borrow a phrase, what is said here, the call, will long be forgotten.

What will matter, what will be remembered is the action it engenders, the action that will follow that call. As I said earlier, working with Congress, we will do our part. And I know that each of you will do yours. So I'm proud to join you today in support of this powerful, ambitious yet simple goal.

And I'm confident that we will succeed in that effort, seeing this group, knowing the committed leadership of our team and knowing that we're going to do it together. So thank you. Thank you for this conference. Thank you for all you're doing. And thank you for all the children that you're on the verge of saving. Thank you very much.