

PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA ON KYRGYZSTAN'S ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION:

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SPEAKER:

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JAMES F. COLLINS: Well, welcome, everyone. And it's a great pleasure to have you with us. I want to acknowledge two special guests who are with us. We have the deputy prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Atakhanov, who is sitting here, and Kyrgyzstan's ambassador – (applause) – to Washington, who is sitting here with us.

It's my duty today, in a sense, to be moderator. I am going to begin the proceedings by asking everyone to turn off a BlackBerry or a cell phone if you have one, because they make strange noises and interfere with our system.

And my second pleasure, in addition to having the honor of sitting next to President Otunbayeva, is to introduce Assistant Secretary Robert Blake, who is responsible for South Asia and Central Asia at the Department of State, who will introduce our guest of honor. So Bob?

ROBERT O. BLAKE: Well, thank you very much, Jim. And out the – at the outset, let me just thank Carnegie for arranging this very, very special occasion today. Carnegie, through the efforts of Jim Collins and also Martha Brill Olcott has really been a leader in helping to help all of us to understand the important developments in Central Asia.

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I have the distinct honor and pleasure today to introduce a head of state whose extraordinary courage and achievements are about to be honored tomorrow by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Americans have admired President Roza Otunbayeva and appreciated her friendship since she was ambassador to the United States and also Kyrgyzstan's permanent representative to the United Nations.

But it is her exemplary leadership of Kyrgyzstan through the tumultuous transition of the past year that has helped hold her country together and set Kyrgyzstan on a democratic path. And these have cemented President Otunbayeva's reputation as a leader on the world stage.

Nine months ago, many worried whether Kyrgyzstan would be in a position to hold peaceful, competitive elections and accomplish a change of government by democratic means and without violence. President Otunbayeva, however, did not waver from that vision. And today Kyrgyzstan leads Central Asia with a new constitution and a new government chosen by its citizens. And it is moving to make sure that government is increasingly responsive to its citizens.

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It is, as Secretary Clinton recognized during her trip to Bishkek last December, nothing less than a bold endeavor by the people of Kyrgyzstan and their leaders to reinvent democratic governance.

Secretary Clinton also reaffirmed that democracy is a journey, not a destination. All of us engaged with Kyrgyzstan know very well that a long list of challenges remains. And no one appreciates that better than President Otunbayeva. Rather than rest on her laurels with the accomplishments of the last year, she is focused on – in 2011 on several strategic goals, perhaps the most challenging of which is strengthening and upholding the rule of law throughout government and society. In doing so, she has made clear that – her commitment not just to the security but also to the rights of all of her people.

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The United States will continue to fully support Kyrgyzstan in that effort. We do so because we understand that bolstering rule of law helps build a strong democracy and a strong partnership between the government and those they govern. We do so because the rule of law is fundamental not just to good governance but also to national reconciliation, justice and peace. The United States and Kyrgyzstan share interests as partners seeking a stable, secure region not just in supporting international efforts in Afghanistan, but also rooted in the quality of life of ordinary people throughout Central Asia. The work will not be easy, but our partnership will endure.

So without further ado, and on behalf of the Department of State and our gracious hosts today, please join me in extending a very hearty and warm Washington welcome for the president of Kyrgyzstan, Roza Otunbayeva. (Applause.)

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PRESIDENT ROZA OTUNBAYEVA: Mr. Blake, I thank you very much for your warm welcoming. And I do see in this audience so many friends, a gift to my heart. And I just want to hug everyone – (chuckles). So it's really a pleasure to be here today. And this is my – probably one of the real visit to Washington, D.C., because we are very much engaged with all the domestic issues over the last years.

Topic which was announced, “Kyrgyzstan – Moving Forward: Economic Challenges and Political Achievements,” is important, certainly. But I want to tell you about else, what's going on throughout the world, and try to give you some thoughts about the development in my country and of the surrounding world.

Today, as probably you know, that in Kyrgyzstan, at least these two revolutions which our country has gone through, and ethnic conflicts, rise of nationalism, all of these are the manifestation of something more systemic and deep-seated than just the process of post-Soviet democratization, and even more so than a manifestation of savagery of the Kyrgyz people.

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Kyrgyzstan and what is happening there in recent years is, to my mind, a harbinger, the first rays of the huge, impending changes in the world architecture. These changes have two vectors, two historical content. The first is connected with the attempts of communities to overcome the identity crisis which was generated by rapid globalization and the unification of the world, and which is a universal phenomenon today. We see that not only in the regions returning to the historical mainstream, such as Central Asia or the Middle East; but in Europe also, the desire for ethnic self-determination is increasingly making itself felt.

Indeed, in the first years, it was thought – and now some still continue to believe – that the model of the so-called color revolutions is a desire to democratize the society. Probably, and even likely, it is sure, to some extent.

But, for example, in the post-Soviet space, there is another, in my opinion, internal defining power of a revolution of such kind. It is a desire to achieve the self-identification. There is every reason to believe that this is a question of breakthrough, of a new identification by national communities.

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In our country, we have to deal with a stage of acute political, social, cultural, ideological transformation, the cause of which is our attempt to move out from the protracted 20 years of identification crisis, a crisis of national self-determination. The problem is that Kyrgyzstan, getting a rare chance for the Kyrgyz people of independent historical design, still could not use it.

The policy course of the period of the first president is a rejection of an independent path and selection of modernization according to the external model that is Western. The policy course of the second president is also the adherence to the external model, but another: the Russian model – both who is, as history has proved, are the dead-end tracks.

As in many such cases, the existing power set's nationalism, or the set of national ideas, ideas and feelings which create national and ethnic self-identity. A feature of the national renaissance of the 21st century is that it has a professed character with a high degree of possibility of conflicts, whether it is a conflict against the government or against another ethnic group.

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In the processes and events of the recent years, and especially within the recent months, we see two types of protest. The first is the negation of the Soviet type of relationship that continues to exist and to determine the situation in most post-Soviet countries. Because of the initiation of the new state system, the Kyrgyz Republic was moving, and is moving, along the path that is different from what its neighbors – its neighbors have chosen, guided by the ideals of social freedom, a networked world and an open society. This is in line with the complexity of social organization. Plurality of different ways, clan power, restriction of freedoms and other characteristics of the Soviet type of social organization was faced with acute rejection and resistance.

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The second objection related to the rejection of the country is poly-ethnic, and the type of society which was defined as a common house. As studies have shown, an increase in mono-ethnic identity existed throughout the years of the existence of the sovereign state. That is absolutely natural for the first fathers of national self-determination, which went through ethnic alienation and opposition to others. It is absolutely clear why these trends have emerged for a country that has no vision of the future; sufficient resource base to ensure not only development but also survival; stable ethnic structure or coherent national ideology and ethics.

For a small nation burdened with numerous corresponding complexes, rather, it would be strange if what is happening had not happened. By the 20th anniversary of independence, we have reached a state of systemic crisis. It was a crisis of common-country consolidation. It can be defined as a problem of common Kyrgyz identity, either as an inadequate economic system or as subcultural disunity. But we see but one thing: The absence of unified nation. It was crisis of sovereignty. It manifested itself in the lack of political independence, energy dependence, the absence of even basic economic self-sufficiency, and other parameters indicating the absence of the country itself on the territory.

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It was a crisis of state governance. This was indicated by their alienation of people from power, more and more artificial political and public administrative structures that did not provide an effective social contract or a functioning state. We obviously had to deal with the absence of the state.

It was a crisis of sociocultural normalization of society. Developmental goals have been lost, values twisted, regulatory mechanisms of society and its institutions destroyed. It was a question of an absence of positive national ideology. That was the legacy left to us by two authoritarian rulers. And we paid a heavy, tragic price for the opportunity to realize this and turn the country onto another path.

In difficult circumstances, we've done the main thing: managed to keep the Kyrgyz state, return to the people what they had been – illegally taken away. We stopped corruption in the government, managed to carry out constitutional reform and ensure fair elections. As a result of the constitutional referendum and the first truly democratic free elections, we managed to provide revolutionary changes in the political system of the state, opening up opportunities for the establishment of real democracy.

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People chose new foundation for building up an independent state, a system of parliamentary government. Kyrgyzstan came to that not out of despair. After waging all the pros and cons, taking into account the historical experience of the country, nature, traditions of the people, we are convinced that parliamentary government is the most suitable for us. Despite the difficulties and concerns of our foreign partners and neighbors, we nevertheless retained our sovereignty, kept our work in place in the international community, demonstrated loyalty to our international and bilateral obligations and our commitment to democracy and human rights.

Today, after several months, we see that these decisions and steps have fundamentally changed the atmosphere in the country. We parted with monopoly in power, and monopoly of power in the society. The coming of democratic forces to power opened up opportunities to run a new country such – we hope to see all these years.

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Today, Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, has a great chance to become, at last, the civilized modern state, to find its destiny worthy of our great history. We believe that the basis and guarantee for the successful development must become a truly democratic polity. The first truly free elections give a powerful impetus to political parties' development. We must strongly support the formation of the political party structure of the society.

I'm not sure that all current parties will survive until the next elections, but I believe that, in the end, there will remain real parties joined by the community of ideas, not just electoral alliances of capital or countrymen.

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Powerful tools, rigid rules and procedures for the participation of civil society in the governance are needed. Today, we realize a large gap between the central government and local governments, between NGOs and ministries, between intellectual community and government.

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People, and its active part, remain largely alienated from governance of the country. I intend to make full use of the presidential status and my nationwide mandate to build an extensive and pervasive system of interaction between society and government. Special support will be provided to the mass media. We are actively engaged in the transformations in this area, transforming our state television into public television. Along with the democratic system of society administration, cardinal improvement of public relations is of key value. We have to make Kyrgyzstan a country where honor, conscience, justice, kindness form the core of the spiritual world of every person, community or nation.

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We must return to our society decency, honesty, those moral rules that we had before. To do this, first of all, we need an honest government, honest and decent government. Of course, democracy provides an important impetus and a good foundation for the recovery of power.

But there is another important thing: a return to the society of a legal nature. We need for radical cleansing of the whole law-enforcement and judicial system. And this work is in progress. We need to establish fair and just economic rules that are equal for everyone. The provisional government has returned misappropriated public property that was taken away from many Kyrgyz citizens by family clan of the former president.

It is important now to give freedom to entrepreneurs, to relieve them from the excessive power of the rent. Only this way, we can overcome the economic crisis. Along with this, we expect that the government will not only mend defects of the crisis but will be able to develop an efficient model of Kyrgyz economy, providing a breakthrough into the list of economically successful countries.

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It is crucial to ensure the economic revival of the regions, increasing economic growth and income in remote parts of the country weakened by policies of the past authorities, especially in the south, highland and border areas. Kyrgyz people can and should work to get richer and live with dignity, not worse than people in other countries, including developed ones. And it's not a question of natural resources rather than good governance. We find it in dozens of large and small countries.

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We will have to work very hard in the field of the foreign policy. We do not think that holding of elections and formation of a new government in the Kyrgyz Republic will eliminate or remove all the problems existing in its relations with foreign partners.

First of all, contradictions, impositions of external actors have been retained regarding the prospects of the Kyrgyz parliamentary system. The U.S.A., European countries intend to support of the Kyrgyz authorities to form parliamentary system. We must restore the sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan, to stop the games and bargaining in our foreign policy, to restore good relations with all our neighbors, Russia and other countries.

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Our state should not be hostage to military merrymaking and the platform for competition between various military-political alliances and between large countries. Along with the internal political and social changes that the Kyrgyz evolution entails, is it – it is at the same time also a sign of other processes that have, as well as national identity, global importance.

Among the reasons that gave rise to the dissatisfaction of our people, significant factor is the dissatisfaction with the conditions of existence in the current political and economical architecture of the world. For small countries, especially deprived of attractive resources and/or self-sufficient economics, the existence in the modern system of relations is a difficult, sometimes unbearable choice. Just such countries suffer the worst effects of global economic and political disorders and crisis.

Being in total dependence on global economic and political conditions, such countries, which are in the majority, with the Kyrgyz Republic among them, are the first victims of any global shocks. At the same time, the world institutions of governance and coordination do not possess any effective tools to help these countries and to reduce the effects and consequences of social and natural cataclysm.

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We realize it due to low efficiency of international assistance to the countries – victims of earthquakes and tsunamis. We realize it in our country, with the tragedy case in Osh, which happened last year in June. We realize it in the latest events in the Middle East and North Africa. And it is only an obvious, acute form of social catastrophe. But there are also economic disasters which many countries are being pulled into as a result of economic crisis or selfish policy of major powers. There are also energy and ecological disasters which most of the countries in the world cannot cope.

I do not believe that today, when we have a reverse trend, national egoism, the desire to localize and to close the existence of universal spaces in growing under the threat of terrorism and economic problems – I do not believe that interethnic and inter-civilizational contradictions and conflicts that engulf the world today should give cause for rejection of multiculturalism.

On the contrary, these kinds of intents and attempts will lead to aggravation of the situation and will create critical threats to the states wherever they are located. A new cultural nationalism, which is now in the rise in Europe, has many supporters; may be the way to the answer of Europe itself. The diversity has always been and will be the source of developments.

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Dear friends, I'm very optimistic about what is happening today in Kyrgyzstan, in Asia, in the Middle East. The passion of nations to change – which bastions, dictators and authoritarian leaders, though armed to the teeth, cannot stop – is a manifestation of vitality and highest development potential. I'm confident that the future belongs to these forces, to these nations.

(Applause.)

MR. COLLINS: Thank you very much, Madam President. We have about 20 minutes, I think, for you, if you would be good enough to take some questions or at least – or listen to observations. And so I will, at this point, if it's all right with you, simply open this discussion to the audience. And I'd like people to identify themselves when they ask a question and wait until the microphone comes to you. Yes, please.

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Q: Thank you. Your Excellency, it's wonderful to see you here. I'm Navbahor Imamova from the Voice of America. It was wonderful to hear you say that diversity is probably the best source of development in any country or in any continent. There is a lot of distrust in your government in southern Kyrgyzstan, and people we talk to say that the justice has not been served following the violence last year. What concrete steps has your administration taken – have your administration taken to ensure the safety of all citizens? Thank you.

PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Just question –

MR. COLLINS: I think – yes, ma'am. Okay.

PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: You are right. The situation in the south is still tense, and – aftermath of the violence, we still have a lot of grievances. The judicial system needs full set of reforms. And now, according to the new constitution, we should – will reappoint or bring new judges to the corps of the judges. We have 445 judges in Kyrgyzstan.

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And 400 of them are local judges; about 45 who will be judges of supreme court and constitutional court. And we are working now on formation of the commission or committee on selection of judges. And this new committee, which will select judges and reappoint some of them, should be a very – such a – high quality of body.

And this is really very important to bring new people, or very professional people, because all the problems relate very much to the judiciary, to the matter that – if we give them – to the victims and to the people who suffers today, right of such – right trial.

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And what we do – Mr. Atakhanov, he will also inform you – we do quite a big rotation of militia, bringing people from the north to the south and southern militia to the north. We can't do en masse, because people need housing in both sides, and so this is really quite difficult for us. But still, we do a lot of such transfer of militia, forth and back.

We – at least three, four times, I renew the heads of militia and security forces in the south, just to remove those whom we consider they are guilty. Our – such a bold decision to attack organized crime. This is our response to the events in the south because organized crime played a critical role in – of – in the events of June 2010 and aftermath. And today we think that crushing the organized crime, this should be a serious response to that.

And so the last – we are working on the concept of ethnical interrelations within the country, because this is the most touchy issue now in the whole policy of the country. And we have not just the Uzbeks; in Kyrgyzstan, probably about 30 percent are so-called minorities. And so to have a right policy to the other ethnic groups, this is one of the main such task of our government.

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MR. COLLINS: Okay, thank you. Yes, please.

Q: Thank you. My name is Andrew Sovronsky (ph). I'm a correspondent with ITAR-TASS News Agency of Russia. Madam President, thank you for your remarks. My question is this: The U.S. government has proposed to build an antiterrorism training center in Batken. And I'm wondering if this offer still stands. And do you want to have this facility in Kyrgyzstan?

And secondly, if I may, very briefly, who are you meeting with while in D.C.? I mean, the people in the Obama administration. And what issues will be discussed? Thank you.

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PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: I have a great honor to be invited to D.C. And with great pleasure, I'll receive this award which will be given tomorrow to me, among other 10 women. And meanwhile, I'll have some meetings with the officials in the capital of the United States. I'll meet with Secretary Clinton. I'll meet with the advisor to President Obama.

I met yesterday with Mr. McFaul. And I'll meet – and my deputy prime minister will do his meetings in parallel and will meet with Mr. John Kerry, Senator McCain, and Republicans also. So we have quite essential meetings in city. And I brought a set of issues which are of great importance to Kyrgyzstan, and among them security issues.

And you raised this issue on the base in Batken, which is on agenda, still on agenda. And I'm very concerned with the borders, Kyrgyz-Tajik borders and the Batken oblast, exactly from this – the region which borders with Tajik oblast. So – and we work closely with Russia.

By the way, with this regard – Russia considers its borders starting from Tajik–Afghan border, since we work closely. And – but I do seek assistance here in the Washington, D.C., also. And we want to build this Batken training center. Border troops itself, they need a lot of really – of financial support.

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Unfortunately, for example, per kilometer, there is only three of border guards on Kyrgyz side, whereas Tajiks have put there seven and Uzbeks put nine to 12. So we really badly need a lot of support and equipment. So this is my response to you.

MR. COLLINS: Okay.

Q: Thank you, Ms. President. Very good to see you here. I have, actually, two small questions. First is if Georgia's experience was relevant to you. And second is what advice you would give to new leaders of the Arab countries who just got rid of the oppressive regimes.

PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Advice. (Chuckles.) What kind of advice? I think what have – what we've done, probably, they should do months ahead, a year ahead. I mean, look at last year, when we overtook the power. We draw straight the roadmap, that in three months, we have a referendum and change the constitution; in half a year, we'll have elections.

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And we've done – we've coped with all these problems. And you should go straight to the business and build again from the scratch, sometimes, the institutions of the power. And we've done this.

And one of our friends and others, they are – worry about coalition, our government coalition. Look, it is not easy to keep up this coalition. It's – it's quite a difficult coalition. But we are going, day by day, month by month, and keeping up – streamlining toward the presidential elections. This is in October. And everyone who want to shake up the country and make noise and problems for the country, they should put all their energy to these presidential elections.

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And this is how we'll survive, I hope, until October and our – finalize this year. And I would think that there is no easier option, no easier – simple recipe for such countries where the powers are collapsed totally.

Georgia inspires us through the real effects of the – of the fight with corruption. Deputy prime minister just came from Georgia. He's excited to see your results, that you are now third in the Transparency International list, sharing the third place with Sweden. And we want just to be behind after you. And – (laughter) – this is what – (chuckles) – I'll really work on. And I think this is – if you have a role model of – on some points, this is important. And it will be really helpful for someone to follow. This would be a matter of honor for us.

MR. COLLINS: Yes. And way in the back.

Q: Eric McGlinchey, George Mason University. Madam President, thank you for making the visit and speaking with us today. You talked about criminal organizations in the south and their responsibility for the June events. I was wondering if you could give us a little bit more specificity about what these criminal organizations are, and also how your government is working to limit their influence. Thank you.

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PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Criminal organizations became part of our political scene, and economical as well. And just the obvious structure: half-sports, half-criminal. You'll never recognize what they are about. But when you have more than half the economy in the grey zone of then – of no transparency in this huge process of privatization, and bureaucracy is very much involved into this privatization – and such a movement like raiders, of raiders' movement, let's say – so then of course they took care of each other, of people in the power who takes, untransparent (ph) way, some public goods under their – let's say, into their domains; and criminals who look after this stolen stuff.

So I mean, that was just life in life. And that – for – that was quite a long time. And as soon it will come to the – to the polity – to the – (inaudible) – such events as riots or unrest within the country, then those organized-crime people will be immediately caught through these events, and they will again look for that or other site.

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So, now, we want to clean up the political field, first of all. We want very much that no political forces will use them. And first of all, that was the case with some members of the parliament, with some political – for example, Bakiyev, he used very much last year, May, June, when he wanted to stay in the power and tried to return back.

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And secondly, we want to make free the business in Kyrgyzstan, because the heavy burden which criminals put on the business within the country, that was unbearable anymore. And again, the crisis in the south, that was a part of this activity of organized crime. How they look? Again, they are sort of sports groups sometimes. A lot of sort of local-sized politician – they look – they carry that sort of clubs, and call every time them, when they need support of their involvement in unrest in local or nationwide formats.

We have, I understand, four or five big groups, organized groups in Kyrgyzstan. Two of them are the highest-rank criminals. Now, they are on the search. And they comprise out of more than 300 people. And so we have a bank of the details of them. We've put into the jail about -- more than 90 now. They are very nervous. Their information comes sometimes to the – to the officials who are somewhere on high – of high ranks. And so that's why they want to tell us that, oh, coalition will collapse, and don't touch this, and don't be involved in that, and so on and so on.

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Well, you know what they are talking about. And we do this very – in cold manner and with great passions. But we want to continue this struggle and fight. And we encouraged very much police now, because police itself was humiliated by criminals. Criminals started to dictate them to what to do and how to behave. And police was really – or militia was in very bad mood. Now, they are in good mood. They are really back to their business. And I hope that the fight will be really in favor – in the sake of the society.

MR. COLLINS: Charles?

Q: (Off mic.) Charles Gati, Johns Hopkins University. How wonderful it is to have you back here. Welcome.

PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Thank you.

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Q: Given your pro-Western, including pro-American, views, does that affect your relationship with

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PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Thank you very much, Charles. But you have – (chuckles) – shown, or proving, that I am pro-American or pro-Western. (Chuckles.) I'm portrayed all the time that I'm sort of pro-American and so on. You see, this is a matter of big struggle back in Kyrgyzstan. What kind of politician – oh, she's pro-Western, she's pro-American. (Chuckles.) Oh, this is pro-Russian. And so on. I mean, this is something – (chuckles) – sorry, but –

Q: Actually, that is my question. (Laughter.) We know who you are. And we're rooting for you. My question is, does it complicate your relationship with the Russians?

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PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Yes, it complicates very much. (Laughter.) I ask sometimes – we work together with Ambassador Karasin. He is now first deputy ministry of foreign affairs of Russia, very dear friend of mine. And I asked him, Grigorgash (ph), why of the – in Russia, they don't tell that you are pro-British or pro-American? (Chuckles.) And me, I was ambassador in America and in London, and they called me that I am absolutely pro-American.

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And I don't – I don't care about this, by the way. And I don't think that it is really serious, in the sense that it will be not a serious obstacle for my country, because I am the person who is really – who leads now the country. And it is important for us to have equally good relations with Russia – of Russia, a strategic ally for Kyrgyzstan – and with the United States, who cared, from the first our day of independence, about Kyrgyzstan and democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

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So Charlie, you are my dear friend. And it means that I love my friends here in America. I owe so much to Russia, because I am Russian-educated person; I have graduated Moscow State. I am Russian-speaking person, if you wish. But I do hope that Kyrgyzstan will benefit from both hemispheres and from both countries. (Applause.)

MR. COLLINS: OK, I'll take one more question. Here.

Q: Erica Marat from Voice of America Russian service. You're here to receive an honor for your courage being as a female politician. How would you assess the current situation with female politicians in Kyrgyzstan and in Central Asia? Because you do stand out from other, you know, governments and countries. Thanks.

PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Erica, you must come home and – (laughter) – and you must replace us. You see, we'll give you opportunity to grow up in this flourishing democracy just in order that you should absorb everything positive and go back home. And you see, we have, of course, a lot of young people who are like you, with new visions, democratic values, and so on.

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But we are struggling with many, many problems as women. Just the other day, I have – I called women from all of the corners of the country and had the opportunity to – of – greet them and congratulate to the March 8, which is – which has a hundred years of its establishment. This is significant something, so. And I noticed that certainly, we have, in my country, 27 percent of women in the parliament. And it is great. It is not every country has – and it's by the quota, by the way. It's not just a real achievement of women. But parties should carry every fourth person in their party list as women. And we have 27 percent.

Last year when I was in the parliament, we have adopted laws which carry 30 percent of women in their accounting chamber, in the electoral – Central Electoral Commission. So this year, when it comes to the – of – to the point of – nine people out of all the chamber – of accounting chamber, three person give coalition, three of opposition, and three is supposed to offer myself. I offered one woman and two men, and

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the coalition and the opposition, they offered all six men. And cynically, they told that me, who should offer three women. So you see – (laughter).

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And look – I said, look, this is not a response. It is not approach which we should take.

And I think we'll fight for every such – for the implementation of every law which we have in Kyrgyzstan. I point at such new moments, which were not on agenda of my country, that in the boards of the ministries, rarely we see the women. And I do think and I do believe that we should have women on the boards of the ministries. We should have women on the board of the big businesses: airport Manas, Kyrgyz Telecom, hydrostations, they have boards of directors. And we never thought about this, but this is the case. And I do know, like you in the West, you fight for every such woman's seat in those such crucial boards also.

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And I do care about the women in ministry of defense, in ministry of security, in ministry of interior. Last year, we set up the association of women – militia women. So – and I do think that we'll really fight every day for such warfare and decent place of women on the decision-making level.

MR. COLLINS: Madam President, I think our time has come to an end. And I know you're going to have a busy schedule. But let me take this opportunity, first of all, to congratulate you on the award which I think your last set of remarks eloquently attests is being given to someone more than deserving.

It's a pleasure for Carnegie to have had been able to host you. I want to thank the audience for being a part of the proceedings. And we look forward to having you back at some point. And we wish you all the best as you proceed for some very difficult months to shape the future of your country in a direction that is, I think, highly valued by Americans. So Madame President, thank you very much. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT OTUNBAYEVA: Thanks.

[00:58:20]

Let me thank Jim Collins and all the Carnegie Endowment people in front in this endowment, for such opportunity. Every time when I am in D.C., I get such a warm welcome. Thank you again to everyone. Thank you. (Applause.)

[00:58:46]

(END)