

Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Donald M. Payne Sr. Global Foundation Lecture Series - As Prepared for Delivery

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Remarks at the Donald M. Payne Sr. Global Foundation Lecture Series
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As Prepared

Hello, Seton Hall! It's always a pleasure to get out of Washington, but today is special. Today, I'm deeply honored to celebrate the life and legacy of a man who I was blessed to work alongside and to call my friend—one of Seton Hall's finest—Congressman Donald Payne, Sr.

Let me start by thanking all the members of the Payne family who are here—his brother, Bill, who was such a valued partner to Congressman Payne throughout his life, and who is keeping his passion for global causes alive through this Foundation. And, of course, Junior. Thank you, Congressman, not only for your kind introduction, but for carrying on your father's work. It feels right that there's still a Donald Payne fighting for the people of New Jersey.

I also want to thank everyone at Seton Hall, especially Dean Bartoli and his staff at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, for hosting this lecture series and for keeping Congressman Payne's papers so that future generations can continue to learn from his extraordinary example of service. Since there are a lot of students here today, I also want to put in a plug for the Donald Payne fellowship program to help young people from diverse backgrounds earn their graduate degree and then pursue a career with USAID's Foreign Service. What a wonderful testament to the Congressman's legacy.

He prided himself on being a role model—to make sure young people knew that nothing was off limits for them, no matter where they grew up or what their background. That was true for his own children—who he raised as a single father, and to whom he was devoted. It was true for the kids he met on the streets of Newark—Congressman Payne wanted them to look at him and see that “there are no barriers to achievement.” And, it was true for the children he met throughout Africa, in camps for refugees and displaced people, and whom he worked tirelessly to help.

I first met Congressman Payne working on Africa issues—when I was on the National Security Council staff during the Clinton Administration, and later when I was Assistant Secretary of State. He was Mr. Africa. He taught me so much, and he always kept me straight. He knew the issues, he asked the hard questions, and he cared so very deeply about making life better for people.

Congressman Payne was instrumental in changing the way the United States engages with Africa. In the 1990s, he was one of the few voices in Congress who insisted that Africa be given the same weight in our foreign policy as every other region of the world. In a town too often stymied by politics, Congressman Payne built a bipartisan consensus to get important things done for Africa—from passing the African Growth and Opportunity Act to launching PEPFAR, President George W. Bush’s initiative to fight HIV/AIDS. In 1998, Congressman Payne and I traveled with President Clinton on his six-country trip to Africa—the first visit by an American president to Africa in 20 years.

Donald Payne made sure Africa was treated with the seriousness it deserves, not as an afterthought. To my mind, that’s one of his great legacies. He would have been proud that, this coming summer, President Obama will make his fourth trip to sub-Saharan Africa. And that last year, we welcomed almost every African head of state to Washington for the historic U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. Over three days, we held intensive and substantive discussions exploring opportunities for the United States and Africa to do more business together, to strengthen democratic progress across the continent, and to deepen our security cooperation. Congressman Payne would have been right in the thick of it.

He was probably as well known in some parts of Africa as he was in Newark. There are Donald Payne libraries and medical clinics across the continent. At his funeral, a group of Liberian immigrants who had lived through the horrors of that terrible civil war stood outside the church singing songs praising the Congressman. They didn’t know him, but they knew what he stood for and what he did. And, not just for Africa—he went to bat for people in the Caribbean, and he worked for peace in Northern Ireland. Wherever people were in distress, Donald Payne reached out a hand.

I miss Congressman Payne. Thinking about his quiet passion and the tenacity he brought to every challenge, we could sure use him with us. Around the world, we’re countering a more diffuse terrorist threat, and political upheavals and violence are destabilizing the Middle East. Together with our European partners, we’re imposing costs for Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in defiance of long-standing international norms. As more and more countries around the world assert their leadership, particularly in the Asia Pacific, we’re navigating shifting global power dynamics and taking on challenges that will impact our shared future, from climate change to cyber security.

We’re facing complex global challenges, and today it’s worth remembering how Donald Payne approached the world. So, I want to highlight three ways the United States is focusing on issues that may not always make the headlines, but that are so vital to our shared security and common humanity.

First, we're dealing with multiple, large-scale humanitarian crises around the world.

Time and again—no matter what challenges—when disaster strikes, the United States shows up. We respond to an average of 70 crises every year. We resettle more refugees than any other nation, and we grant asylum to tens of thousands of people each year, many of whom have suffered through unspeakable war crimes and atrocities.

The United States is the only nation with Disaster Assistance Response Teams, or DARTs—teams of humanitarian experts and technical advisors who can deploy within hours of an emergency. We were among the first on the ground after the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster in Japan, and when the biggest typhoon in history hit the Philippines. We have emergency responders on the ground in Nepal right now, including specialized urban search and rescue personnel, to help in the aftermath of Saturday's terrible earthquake. The Department of Defense is providing logistics support—we've sent a team from our base at Okinawa to make sure Nepal's airport can handle the high quantity of air traffic and cargo. Within hours, we made funding available to support local and international NGOs responding on the ground. And, as President Obama told Prime Minister Koirala yesterday, the United States will continue to offer whatever support and assistance we can to help the people of Nepal.

Around the world, our humanitarian efforts are consistently the most generous, the most comprehensive, and the most effective. That's America. That's what we do. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is our response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Last September, with hundreds of people dying each day, infections spreading like wildfire, and health systems pushed past the breaking point, the United States rallied the world to action. We ramped up our civilian capacity to treat patients and curb transmission rates. We helped bring together more than 60 countries who contributed more than \$2 billion as well as manpower and resources. At the high-point, there were more than 10,000 civilians on the ground in West Africa. American personnel trained 1,500 healthcare workers to treat Ebola patients, and we deployed 3,000 American service members to galvanize the global response.

Tragically, more than 10,000 lives have been lost to this disease, but thanks to American leadership, we averted scenarios that predicted upwards of 500,000 infections. In recent months, the number of new cases has declined drastically—fewer than 35 last week—and we're not stopping until we get to zero. And, for those countries in West Africa whose communities and health systems and economies have been decimated by Ebola, we're going to remain strong partners as they rebuild their health systems and their economies.

Around the world, conflicts have displaced more than 50 million people—innocent civilians, including mothers and children—more than at any point since World War II. Nowhere is the scale of human tragedy more dramatic than in Syria. After more than four years of war, fully half of Syria's population has been displaced, including more than 7 million children. Of those still living in Syria, more than 12 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance—3 million more than last year. In the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, 18,000 people are trapped between a regime that drops barrel bombs on its own people and the barbarism of ISIL.

This crisis has also long-since spilled over to cause serious hardships for Syria's neighbors. Syrian refugees make up one-fourth of the population of Lebanon. In Jordan, more than 100 schools are now splitting the day, teaching Jordanian children for half and Syrian refugee children for the other.

The people of Syria—both in Syria and scattered across the region—desperately need our help. So, even as we seek a permanent political resolution, President Obama has made sure that the United States is leading the global response to what is now the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. To date, we have committed more than \$3.5 billion in humanitarian funding to the Syrian people—more than any other country. We provide emergency supplies to feed 7 million Syrians each month. We've helped more than 2 million people receive needed medical care. And, we deliver critical supplies—flour for bakeries, fuel to help families through the winter, tools and parts needed to repair water systems—to help the millions who need immediate relief.

Even as we respond to pressing humanitarian crises, we're also addressing the root causes of conflict and instability in our world. In Syria and in so many other cases, humanitarian crises often stem from outbreaks of violence. Always, it's ordinary citizens who pay the heaviest price. So, the second point I want to make today, as Congressman Payne always reminded us, is that we can never stop working for peace—no matter how difficult it may be.

The Congressman would no doubt still be deeply involved in our efforts to resolve the conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan. He was the first American leader to call the horrifying slaughter in Darfur by its rightful name: genocide. And, he played a central role in ending a decades-long civil war so that the people of South Sudan could chart their own future. I had the great privilege to share with him one of the most joyful days I've ever experienced, when the people of South Sudan finally realized their dream of independence. And I'll never forget the image, from that day in Juba, of world leaders coming up to thank Congressman Payne for standing with the people of the world's newest nation.

Had he lived, it would have broken his heart to see South Sudan descend into conflict, as it has mine. The violence and human rights abuses he worked so hard to end have resumed. Rather than working together to build a peaceful, prosperous future, South Sudan's leaders have torn the country apart. Thousands of innocent lives have been lost—men, women, and children killed for no reason other than being from the other side, a different ethnic group.

While the South Sudanese people face a collapsing economy and the threat of man-made famine, the parties in South Sudan continue to choose violence over a negotiated political settlement. Since the senseless conflict in South Sudan began, our Special Envoy has been shuttling between capitals in South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda to try to broker peace and support negotiations. At the same time, we've built a sanctions framework at the United Nations so that those who abuse human rights and stoke

violence will pay a price. But ultimately, South Sudan's leaders must remember the hard work it took to gain independence. They must choose to prioritize the future of their country, or get out of the way.

In Darfur, the situation remains dire. The atrocities that Congressman Payne shined a light on have not ceased. Aerial bombings continue. Women and girls are assaulted; mass rape continues. Millions are still displaced in camps across Darfur. And, far too little progress has been made in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The conflicts in Sudan—in Darfur, in Southern Kordofan, in Blue Nile—all stem from one root: the way the ruling party in Khartoum treats its own people. So, with the African Union and other international partners, we're supporting a nation-wide approach to peace. As we work to strengthen opposition parties and help them develop political platforms, we're building a framework for a national dialogue that will engage all the Sudanese people and, we hope, fundamentally improve the way Sudan is governed. We've developed a regional strategy to engage Sudan's neighbors and build international pressure to end the crisis. And, we're working to cut off the funding to government-affiliated militias by disrupting the illicit trade of diamonds and ivory coming into Darfur.

Beyond Sudan, the decision by Burundi's ruling party to disregard the term-limit provisions of the Arusha Accords and name President Nkurunziza as its candidate for a third term has launched the country into crisis. This decision jeopardizes an historic opportunity for Burundi to affirm its commitment to democracy and peace. During the past year, the Burundian government has taken alarming steps to restrict the activities of the media, disrupt public gatherings, and arrest members of the opposition and civil society. There have also been disturbing reports that groups of youth militia connected to Burundi's ruling party may have been armed.

Now, the violence the international community warned about has broken out in the streets of Bujumbura. We call on the Government to respect the rights of all Burundians to assemble peacefully and express their opinions freely, and we call for an end to the violence. After so many years of civil war, the people of Burundi deserve the chance to build a peaceful, democratic future for their country. And, the United States will take targeted measures, such as denying U.S. visas where appropriate, to impose consequences on those who foment violence or harm civilians.

When conflict breaks out, robust international action can make a difference. We've seen it. When political violence recently sparked sectarian conflict in the Central African Republic, thousands were killed. More than a million people had to flee their homes, and half of CAR's population needed humanitarian assistance. Drawing on the lessons of the past, the United States acted quickly. Together with partners from Africa, Europe, and the U.N., we mobilized hundreds of millions of dollars to support African peacekeepers and humanitarian assistance.

We appointed a Special Representative to elevate our engagement and levied sanctions to make it clear that there will be no impunity for those who commit atrocities. Today, while still troubled and quite fragile, the security situation in CAR has improved, and we will continue to support CAR as it recovers and rebuilds.

We respond to crises. We work for peace when conflicts arise. And, as a third key way to enhance global stability, we are focused on prevention. President Obama has determined that “preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States.” So, we developed a comprehensive strategy to prevent mass violence before it is in full flame and established the first-ever Atrocities Prevention Board to watch for warning signs of impending atrocities. We focus on countries we know to be at serious risk, look for triggers of mass violence, and use all the tools of our power to try to mitigate the chance of widespread conflict.

We’re also strengthening accountability around the world when atrocities do occur. We’ve supported commissions of inquiry and other mechanisms that help discover the truth about atrocity-related crimes—in Kyrgyzstan and Libya, Sri Lanka and Cote d’Ivoire, and most recently, North Korea. President Obama also signed legislation to expand the State Department’s authority to offer cash rewards for information leading to the arrest or conviction of individuals accused of atrocities by any international tribunal. We are committed to working with our partners to bring to justice those who are responsible for such unconscionable crimes.

Of course, there are no silver bullets. In a world where Syrians live under siege, facing starvation and bombings by their government, the challenge of protecting civilians remains formidable. We obviously have a great deal of work to do—as a nation, and as an international community—in pursuit of this mission.

The challenges I’ve described today—responding to humanitarian crises, ending conflicts, preventing atrocities—are not easy. In fact, they are some of the hardest, most complex issues we face. But, if there’s one final lesson from Congressman Payne’s life and work, it’s this: Success isn’t always defined by victory—sometimes it’s about the fight.

Donald Payne said that he was going to be the first black Congressman from New Jersey almost 15 years before he was elected. He ran, and lost, twice before taking his seat in Congress. But, he never gave up because, as he said, “once in a while the marcher and the drumbeat are in exactly the same cadence, and then, finally, good things happen.” That’s the optimism and determination he brought to Congress, whether he was fighting for New Jersey’s working families, or working to lower the burden of loans for college students, or championing the human rights and dignity of every person on this earth. Donald Payne marched on and on until the drumbeat of progress caught up with him.

Donald Payne didn’t grandstand or seek credit. He didn’t feel the need to yell to be heard. Instead, Congressman Payne’s genuine warmth and humility drew people to him. He could speak hard truths to Presidents and world leaders, then turn around and play with children in refugee camps or listen for hours to the stories of the victims of war. To Congressman Payne, the only important thing was standing up for what’s right, even if

you're the only one standing. He took that enduring motto of his alma mater to heart—*Hazard Zet Forward*—even when, on occasion, the hazard was militants in Somalia firing at his plane. He never shied away from taking a bold or controversial position, if he was following his own moral compass.

In many ways, Congressman Payne helped pave the way for me, and for so many others who still strive to fill his shoes. Today, President Obama nominated one of those people who so admired Donald Payne to be the next Administrator of USAID: Gayle Smith. Gayle, like Congressman Payne was, is a fighter, a humanitarian, an expert in development with deep and long experience in Africa. Gayle and I were able to visit Congressman Payne together in the hospital just a few days before he passed away, and I'm grateful that I got to tell him just how much he meant to me—as a role model and a comrade-in-arms and friend. I got to say thank you. I treasure that. But of course, if Congressman Payne were still with us, he wouldn't want a thank you. He'd urge us to get back to work on behalf of those who have too few champions in this world.

So today, I hope that each of you leaves here with that same spark of compassion and commitment lit within you. We need more people who look at the world and see, not the enormity of the challenges ahead, but the possibility for a better world that lies beyond them. We need more people who ask not "What's in it for me?" but "What can I give so that others may have more?" When it comes right down to it, we need more leaders like Donald Payne.

Thank you so much.

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