



THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Message to the Participants of the Vital Voices Pan African Summit
January 14 - 19, 2007
Cape Town, South Africa

On behalf of the U.S. Government, I extend a warm welcome to all of you who have gathered from nearly fifty countries throughout Africa and around the world for the Vital Voices Pan-African Leadership Summit for Women and Girls.

I commend Vital Voices for its commitment to strengthening the leadership of women and girls across Africa. Vital Voices, together with its partner organizations and sponsors, recognizes that investing in women and girls is not only the right thing to do, it is also one of the smartest investments we can make in building a stronger and more peaceful world.

I am pleased that the U.S. Government has been part of this public-private partnership. American embassies throughout Africa have partnered with Vital Voices to nominate and support participants from over twenty countries.

We are also working with Vital Voices on the *International Women Leaders Mentoring Partnership*. This important program is an opportunity for women leaders from all over the world to participate in mentoring programs with *Fortune* magazine's most influential women leaders. I was pleased to meet with the participants last May and thrilled to hear that a number of the African women who were mentored through the program are participating in this Summit as mentors for the next generation of emerging young leaders.

Over the course of this week, I hope that you will take the opportunity to connect with each other across generations, countries, cultures, and professions in order to build lasting relationships and new partnerships. This summit is a catalyst to strengthen your role and that of your communities in the global society.


Condoleezza Rice