

## Town Hall Meeting on the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review

### Townhall

**Hillary Rodham Clinton**

Secretary of State

**Patrick F. Kennedy**

Under Secretary for Management

**Dean Acheson Auditorium**

**Washington, DC**

**January 26, 2012**

**QUESTION:** Good morning, Madam Secretary. My name is Virginia Benninghoff. I work in IIP in the Office of European Affairs, and I have a question on our foreign policy, if I may.

Regarding the atrocities that happened in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that some would label the Armenian genocide, I am wondering why it is that we do not recognize it as such, and if it has to do with our classification of what a genocide is, or more to do with our relationship with Turkey. And given the recent legislation that was passed by lawmakers in France criminalizing the denial of the Armenian genocide, whether – what our stance is on that? My understanding is that Under Secretary Sherman was there recently, and I wondered if that came up and what our position is. Thank you.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, first, one of our great strengths is we do not criminalize speech. People can say nearly anything they choose, and they do, in our country. (Applause.) And so other countries, including close friends and allies like France, have different standards, different histories, but we are, I hope, never going to go down that path to criminalize speech.

I think it's fair to say that this has always been viewed, and I think properly so, as a matter of historical debate and conclusions rather than political. And I think that is the right posture for the United States Government to be in, because whatever the terrible event might be or the high emotions that it represents, to try to use government power to resolve historical issues, I think, opens a door that is a very dangerous one to go through. So the issue is a very emotional one; I recognize that and I have great sympathy for those who are just so incredibly passionate about it.

But I think the free market of ideas, the academic community, the open architecture of communication that is even greater now than it was in the past, are the proper fora for this kind of engagement, and that's where I hope it is worked out. And eventually, people will have their own conclusions, which needs to be respected, but we need to encourage anyone on any side of any contentious historical debate to get out into the marketplace of ideas. Muster your evidence, put forth your arguments, and be willing to engage, and that's what I think should happen on that too. (Applause.)