

CHICAGO, IL (May 20, 2012) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky joined Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and U.S. Ambassador at-Large for Global Women’s Issues Melanne Verveer to speak at a “Shadow Summit” hosted by Amnesty International to underscore concerns that world leaders are ignoring Afghan women during the NATO Summit that kicked off today.

Rep. Schakowsky also signed a letter to Afghanistan President Karzai and President Obama calling for the protection of Afghan women’s rights and freedoms in planning for the military exit. The letter calls for an eight-point plan to ensure that the progress Afghan women have made over the last decade to secure basic rights will not end with the troops’ departure in 2014.

“Afghan women should be part of the NATO summit and protecting women’s rights should be a prominent point on the agenda,” **said Rep. Schakowsky**. “I urge the world leaders gathered here in Chicago to begin discussions about a comprehensive plan for protecting women and promoting their involvement in peacemaking.”

Rep. Schakowsky also spoke on a panel with Secretary Albright, Ambassador Verveer and Afifa Azim, general director and co-founder, Afghan Women’s Network, titled “The Critical Role of Women in the Transition Process.” Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, author of *The Dressmaker of Khair Khana* and deputy director of the Council on Foreign Relations’ Women and Foreign Policy program, served as the moderator.

“Afghan women have made incredible advancements over the past decade,” **said Rep. Schakowsky**

“Many women now own businesses and millions of girls attend school. In 2010, over 400 women stood for Parliamentary elections. Despite ongoing threats, intimidation, and violence, Afghan women have stepped forward to become leaders in politics, civil society, and business.”

Suzanne Nossel, executive director, Amnesty International USA, said: “After the billions of dollars and thousands of lives given to the cause of a secure and peaceful Afghanistan, turning back the clock on women’s rights would be tragic. Afghan women understandably fear that a return to the dark days of Taliban control over their lives will set back their rights, undermine Afghanistan’s stability and prosperity over the long term, and erode the legacy of the last decade of U.S. and NATO engagement in that country.”

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