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AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FEDERATION PARTICIPATES IN MEETINGS WITH SENATOR OBAMA'S AND SENATOR CLINTON'S FOREIGN POLICY ADVISORS

Washington, DC– On Wednesday, February 27, 2008, the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC), comprised of 19 national organizations representing more than 22 million Americans, including the American Hungarian Federation (AHF), discussed a number of policy issues with presidential candidate Senator Hillary Clinton's advisor, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Also present at the meeting was Lee Feinstein, Senator Clinton's campaign National Security Director.

Thereafter, on Friday, February 29 the CEEC met with Anthony Lake, Ph.D., senior foreign policy advisor to Senator Barack Obama. Joining Dr. Lake, and facilitating the meeting, was Mark Brzezinski, a foreign policy expert. Frank Koszorus, Jr., the Chairman of AHF's International Relations Committee represented AHF at both meetings and raised questions relating to NATO and the security of Europe.

Among the topics of discussion with Dr. Lake included NATO enlargement (especially in light of the upcoming Bucharest Summit in April 2008 and Russia's policies). Mr. Koszorus, who has been involved with the CEEC for several years extending back to his involvement with the organization's advocacy of NATO's enlargement to include Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, inquired about NATO's further enlargement and the steps necessary to secure Europe, especially the countries vulnerable to Russia's aggressive policies. Other topics discussed with Dr. Lake included the backsliding of democratic trends in the Russian Federation and Visa Waiver.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Lake touched on many important issues of concern to the member organizations of the CEEC. In regards to NATO, Dr. Lake clearly stated that the enlargement process "reinforces democracy in all nations of Europe," and brings all European nations together. Dr. Lake described the process itself as "not just of strategic importance [to the United States], but of morality, as well."

Russia's recent trend of more authoritarian control also elicited comments from Dr. Lake. Having expressed concern for the current government policies of President Vladimir Putin, Dr. Lake noted that the United States needs to be clear regarding human rights abuses and stressed, "We must engage them [the Russians] on issues of mutual interest and concern, but at the same time broaden our relations with the Russian people, not just the Russian government." He also observed that we should not divide our allies into categories such as "Old Europe" and "New Europe."

Dr. Lake expressed support for expanding the Visa Waiver Program to five additional countries in Central and East Europe, as it pertains to Senate Bill S.342, which has been supported by Senator Obama. In addition, Senator Obama's statement in support of congressional passage of the Armenian Genocide resolution, as well as support for Ukraine's commitment to join NATO, were referenced and made available to the CEEC participants.

The meeting with Secretary Albright focused on similar areas of concern for the CEEC, including Russia's actions in the region, energy security and diversification, NATO enlargement, immigration and the visa waiver program, re-affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, as well as other human rights issues.

Secretary Albright noted Senator Clinton's record supporting the countries of the region and noted the challenges that America and its allies face. Recognizing the strong bonds that exist between the democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, Secretary Albright announced Senator Clinton's plan to extend the visa-waiver program, in which Senator Clinton stated, "our central and eastern European friends are first-class allies. Americans whose families hail from these countries should not be treated as second-class citizens."

Senator Albright thanked the CEEC for its important work and both Secretary Albright and Dr. Lake urged the group to remain engaged on the issues.

"We enjoy ongoing and strong relationships with various government officials," noted Mr. Koszorus. "We appreciate Senator Clinton's and Senator Obama's commitment to issues of concern to the CEEC and look forward to continuing to work closely with them and other policymakers on these critical issues of mutual concern," Mr. Koszorus added.

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