

Building Entrepreneurship Abroad

**An Interview with Lorraine Hariton,
Special Representative for Commercial and Business Affairs,
Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State**

EDITORS' NOTE *Lorraine Hariton was sworn in to her current post on September 14, 2009. She has more than 25 years of experience in the information technology sector in Silicon Valley. From 2003 to 2005, Hariton served as President and CEO of Apptera. She served as the CEO of Beatnik from 1999 to 2002. She also spent 15 years at IBM serving in a number of executive capacities. Hariton is Chairman Emeritus of the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs and Executives. She has an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a B.S. in Mathematical Sciences from Stanford University.*



Lorraine Hariton

ORGANIZATION BRIEF *The mission of the Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs (www.state.gov/e/eeb; EEB) is to promote economic security and prosperity in the United States and abroad. As the point where international economic policy tools and threads converge, the bureau helps promote a coherent economic policy across the U.S. Government. The EEB is divided into sections covering the following seven areas: Energy, Sanctions and Commodities; International Communications and Information Policy; International Finance and Development; Trade Policy and Programs; Transportation Affairs; Commercial & Business Affairs; and Economic Policy Analysis & Public Diplomacy.*

When the opportunity presented itself to lead in this role, what excited you about it and made you feel it was the right fit?

This role allows me to bring my wealth of experience in Silicon Valley, in the business community, and in entrepreneurial endeavors to the State Department. It's a great opportunity to utilize the broad platform that the State Department provides to help the American business community, while also helping build entrepreneurship abroad by bringing the well-respected competency of the United States to developing countries as they build their entrepreneurial cultures.

Is the entrepreneurial spirit something you're born with or can it be taught?

Secretary of State Clinton says talent is everywhere but opportunity is not. We are trying to create an ecosystem in countries so that the

people who have the talents and the desire also have opportunity.

Some suggest the U.S. is losing its edge in innovation, which seems to be coming more out of the emerging markets, but you say that's not a bad thing.

High tide raises all ships. On behalf of U.S. business, I'm also very involved in expanding our exports and trade relationships.

But in many countries, if we want them to reach their full potential, they need to learn how to build businesses.

We just launched the Global Entrepreneurship Program in Egypt and Indonesia. If those countries want to grow and create good role models for youth, it has to be around how they can create their own jobs and not just look for a job in the government or in a family business.

Is the playing field becoming one where women have opportunities, and has that been a focus for you in trying to create opportunity for diverse groups?

Supporting women in business and women entrepreneurs has always been a passion of mine but, as part of the State Department working for Secretary Clinton, I'm even more delighted to have such an alignment with the leadership.

In launching the Global Entrepreneurship Program, I brought in Shelly Porges, who has a lifelong commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs, because that is how we think we will get the most job creation. There needs to be a proactive focus around empowering women to make it happen, because it doesn't necessarily happen naturally.

Women face unique challenges in terms of work/family balance, and in some cultures, unique constraints in terms of their ability to access education and resources.

We also believe that, for economies to reach their full potential, women have to participate actively in the workplace.

Has there been enough of an effort focused on education?

Our Global Entrepreneurship Program has six areas that represent the ecosystem necessary to create an entrepreneurial environment.

It starts with identifying entrepreneurs and educating them, then sustaining them and connecting them to mentors as resources through things like Web sites and our e-mentor

program; providing them access to capital and building the capital networks that enable economic democratization in these countries; working on the regulatory environments to make sure they are conducive for developing companies; and celebrating so we create a culture that celebrates both success and effort around entrepreneurship.

Education is a critical part of this, and this program brings together partner resources – it's not just about the State Department or USAID providing programs; it's about enabling and empowering the broad base of resources that are available and connecting them to make them more effective.

For example, Legatum Institute at MIT has a fabulous entrepreneurship development program. As part of our efforts, we want to take people we identify as high-potential entrepreneurs and send them to a program like this or to one like Cisco's entrepreneurship institute.

In our launch program in Egypt, we signed up 17 partners from various sectors and they all agreed to expand their commitment to Egypt. We brought them together, they talked about what they're doing, and they started to talk about how they can connect with us to do more things together.

Are you focused on certain countries and regions where there might be more potential for advancement or does the program span the globe?

We are very focused. It's not that there isn't interest in entrepreneurship all over the globe – there is. However, Secretary Clinton announced the Global Entrepreneurship Program as part of the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship where we brought in 215 delegates from Muslim-majority communities all over the world. The genesis of that was from the President's Cairo speech, where he spoke of new engagement with Muslim communities and pointed towards entrepreneurship.

We have a list of 15 focus countries that we're planning to roll out. In selecting them, we considered countries of strategic importance to our foreign policy objectives, as well as where we think the program can be of value. That means they have to be at a certain entrepreneurial tipping point where they are ready to take advantage of this, yet not so far along that we're not going to provide added value by focusing on it. ●