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Press Release

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Miami-Dade Country Public School Delegation Participates in the International Student Exchange Partnership Program.

(Kigali, Rwanda) On Monday – October 4th 2004 – A delegation from Miami-Dade County Public Schools System arrived in Kigali, Rwanda for the second year to visit the FAWE Girl's School. The purpose of the trip was to build on the physical and virtual student, teacher and parent exchange program that was initiated in 2003 and was funded by the USAID Education for Development and Democracy Initiative (EDDI).

Among the delegates were: Carrington Bester- 10th grade student, Angela Youngblood- elementary school teacher, Erhabor Ighodaro – aide to the Miami-Dade Public Schools, Dr. Robert B. Ingram- School Board Vice-Chair and leader responsible for establishing the Sister School Partnership and Student Exchange Program with schools in Africa, and Anthony D. Okonmah- Executive Director of the Foundation for Democracy in Africa.

The US delegates were exposed to Rwanda's cultural, social and economic diversity. The delegation, as a way of sustaining and ensuring the continuity of the International Studies Partnership Exchange Program, donated school supplies, books, treats, and established twenty-three school scholarships for the FAWE Girl's School's needy students. A monetary donation, presented by Miami-Dade County elementary school teacher Ms. Angela Youngblood, was also made to Remera Elementary School, which is a newly adopted elementary school for the Miami-Dade Sister School Program.

“These sister school partnerships and exchange programs will not only expose the students and teachers to the cultural dynamism of the African continent, but will also allow students from FAWE Girls School and others to begin to develop an understanding of American Culture and Society. We are here to continue to foster cultural, social and economic understanding between the United States and Africa,” said Anthony Okonmah – Executive Director of the Foundation for Democracy in Africa, which coordinated the exchange program.

A vital part of the trip was to give students from both countries a chance to develop friendships. Carrington Bester, the honors student from Carol City High School, met with students from the FAWE Girl's School and engaged in discussing class subjects such as pre-calculus, music and lifestyles in their respective countries. An exchange of email addresses ensued, marking the beginning of an enduring relationship between the youths of both countries. According to Mr. Okonmah, “this type of relationship will help bridge the knowledge gap between the African students from FAWE Girls School and the American student from Carol City High School.”

The delegation remained in Rwanda until Saturday October 09th, 2004, visiting the Kigali Institute of Science, Technology and Management, the Kigali Health Institute and the Kigali Institute of Education. During this visit, the Minister of State in charge of Primary and Secondary Schools, Dr Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya, the Permanent Secretary of Education and the Minister of Education, Dr. Romain Murenzi, met with the Miami delegation. Dr. Murenzi, discussed scholarship opportunities for Rwandan students to study in the United States. He also committed to sponsoring a few of the Rwandan students to visit Miami for the next round of the student exchange program.