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**MAYOR DE BLASIO APPOINTS PENNY ABEYWARDENA AS MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER**

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced the appointment of Penny Abeywardena as commissioner of the Mayor's Office for International Affairs. Abeywardena, Director of Girls and Women Integration at the Clinton Global Initiative—a non-partisan organization that convenes global leaders to devise and implement innovative solutions to the world's most pressing problems—brings a wealth of experience in strategic relations and first-hand knowledge of international affairs to this position.

As the head of the Mayor's Office for International Affairs, Abeywardena will be charged with leading the office's mission to serve as the primary liaison between the City of New York and the diplomatic community, foreign governments, the United Nations, and the U.S. Department of State. Under Abeywardena's leadership, the office will also be tasked with responding to all requests from those entities on the City's behalf. Additionally, the Mayor's Office for International Affairs will work with City agencies and the diplomatic community to ensure safety and security through adherence to City codes.

In addition to the important formal function of the office, Abeywardena has been charged with building a global platform through which the City can promote its equity agenda and share policies and best practices globally.

"I'm proud to welcome such a savvy, resourceful and dedicated leader aboard," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "Penny's philosophy—and extraordinary track record—of integrating women into political life and lifting up others for the benefit of society as a whole completely aligns with our goal of creating a more inclusive city, where everyone rises together. Her ability to take a program with a low profile and little resources and transform it into a powerful vehicle that improves people's lives is impressive, to say the least. With Penny at its helm, I'm confident the Mayor's Office for International Affairs will flourish as New York City's ambassador to the world."

"I'm thrilled at the opportunity and excited to get started," said **incoming commissioner of the Mayor's Office for International Affairs Penny Abeywardena**. "From maintaining and building upon our strong relationships with the international community to forging new partnerships and advising the City on diplomatic and consular matters, I look forward to representing our exceptional city to the rest of the world on this administration's behalf."

"Penny has urged the CGI community to think strategically about how to abandon silos and empower women and girls across all of our work," said **Bob Harrison, CEO of the Clinton Global Initiative**. "Penny is a global thinker, and her passion, experience and drive will have a lasting impact on CGI. We look forward to seeing how her efforts will benefit the citizens of New York City and the world with this important new set of responsibilities."

“Abeywardena is an effective, inclusive, and inspiring leader. She has extensive experience working with local and global issues on behalf of those most disadvantaged, building solution-oriented multi-sectorial collaborations. She has wisely leveraged the power of local and global partners. We look forward to working with her in her new position and know she will be an asset to New York City,” said **Ana Oliveira, New York Women’s Foundation**.

“Penny is a tireless advocate for social and gender justice, and I am so glad that someone of her high personal integrity is appointed to this position. I can think of nobody better to reflect and represent the true spirit of New York City and to welcome all visiting governments and dignitaries,” said **Tiloma Jayasinghe, Executive Director, Sakhi for South Asian Women**.

“Penny Abeywardena has the unique sensitivities and skills in understanding international affairs in bi-cultural ways while remaining anchored in American culture, along with a deep respect and awareness of other diverse cultures worldwide. She is a trusted and respected voice known for her integrity and discernment of complex international issues. Abeywardena is an illustrious figure who has been able to bring players from various cultures and parts of the globe to join hands and collaborate on moving social issues, such as girls and women, as her work through the Clinton Global Initiative so highly demonstrated,” said **Zainab Salbi, International Humanitarian Activist and Author**.

### **About Penny Abeywardena**

Penny Abeywardena is the Director of Girls and Women Integration at the Clinton Global Initiative. In her capacity at CGI, Abeywardena is responsible for the portfolio of CGI commitments focused on empowering girls and women worldwide, developing year-round programming, and integrating the gender lens across the CGI platform. During her time in this role, Abeywardena has advised multinational corporations, philanthropists, NGOs, and multilateral institutions to increase investments in gender-focused development initiatives; and expanded the community of CGI members who are incorporating the gender lens in their work.

Before joining the Clinton Global Initiative, Abeywardena worked as the Director of Strategic Relations at The Drum Major Institute and as the Funding Exchange’s Development Program Officer prior to that. She is a member of the World Bank’s Advisory Council on Gender and Development, a Term Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and a contributing author in the book “Women in the Global Economy: Leading Social Change.”

Abeywardena earned her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Southern California and her M.A. in International Affairs from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. Abeywardena lives on the Upper West Side.

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