

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Santiago, Chile)

For Immediate Release

April 18, 1998

FACT SHEET

ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND DISCRIMINATION AND THE SANTIAGO SUMMIT

The Summit leaders reaffirmed their Miami Summit commitment that all citizens must participate in the opportunities and prosperity created by free market democracy. The Summit agreed to intensify efforts to show working men and women that democracy is responsive to basic human needs and creates economic and social mobility. In addressing these concerns, the governments agree to focus on creating stakeholders, enabling all citizens to participate and seeking to improve the quality of life for all.

Building Stakeholders

- Summit leaders pledged to ensure access to financial services for a significant number of the 50 million micro, small and medium size enterprises in the hemisphere by the year 2000;
- Summit leaders pledged to work with multilateral institutions and regional organizations to invest in the range of \$400-500 million over the next three years; combined, donor efforts should provide new financial resources to over 1 million new microentrepreneurs;
- Governments will streamline and decentralize property registration and titling procedures and assure access for the poor; USAID will work with other donors and governments to introduce new mapping technologies and find ways to ensure that the rural and urban poor secure title to their property;
- USAID will provide \$120 million over the next three years to support microenterprise; since Miami, the IDB have adopted a five year \$600 million strategy to promote microenterprise and microlending institutions have increased coverage by over 250,000 new borrowers annually, creating over 175,000 new jobs.

Participation of All Citizens

- Summit leaders pledge to strengthen mechanisms for gender equity and to support follow-up of international conferences on women;

- Governments will cooperate to promote core labor standards recognized by the ILO starting with an exchange of information at a Labor Ministerial in 1998; IDB and World Bank will devote \$307 million over the next three years and USAID \$15 million to programs designed to strengthen respect for core labor standards and modernize the capacities of labor ministries;
- Governments will work to eliminate exploitative child labor; USAID and the Department of Labor will work in Central America to eliminate child labor in areas that are most hazardous, including quarries and fireworks factories;
- Governments will negotiate a new Declaration of Principles on Fundamental Rights of Workers;
- Governments believe that trade liberalization contributes to the promotion of labor standards and should lead to higher levels of employment;
- Governments will promote education and training for indigenous populations.

Quality of Life

- Summit leaders pledge to support regional initiatives that by the year 2002 will reduce the incidence of diseases such as pneumonia, meningitis, rubella and mumps and continue to pursue the elimination of measles by the year 2000; USAID will devote \$60 million over the next three years to health care initiatives focusing on reducing the incidence of communicable diseases, improving access to safe water, and make increased use of low-cost telecommunications technologies to spread these benefits as widely as possible;
- Summit leaders pledge to strengthen regional networks of health information such as through telemedicine;
- Summit leaders pledge to give highest priority to reducing infant malnutrition; USAID will spend \$375 million over the next three years, including \$340 million in food assistance;
- Summit leaders pledge to strengthen cooperation to implement Santa Cruz Sustainable Development Plan of Action.

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FACT SHEET

EDUCATION AND THE SANTIAGO SUMMIT

The leaders of the democracies of the Western Hemisphere are making education a central focus of the Second Summit of the Americas. At the opening session of the Summit, the leaders agreed that education is the centerpiece of the "second generation" reforms -- reforms aimed at making democracy work for all the people of the Americas -- that they will strengthen and advance in the Summit's wake.

The Summit Action Plan adopted at Santiago will build on the achievements of the 1994 Miami Summit. It will launch and advance numerous cooperative efforts, based on four guiding principles: (1) equity -- providing opportunity for all; (2) quality -- achieving high levels of skills and achievement; (3) relevance -- making sure the education system takes into account social, ethnic and linguistic diversity; and (4) efficiency -- providing adequate resources and optimizing their use.

The Summit Plan reaffirms the Miami Plan's targets of ensuring, by the year 2010 universal access to, and completion of, quality primary education for 100% of children; and access to quality secondary education for at least 75% of young people. The Santiago Summit leaders also agreed to use technology to link schools across national boundaries and to increase international exchanges of students.

The Santiago Plan includes solid commitments to carry out the education initiatives of the Summit by financing schools, textbooks, teacher training, and technology for education -- and creating education partnerships between the public and private sectors:

- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has pledged to double new lending - to over \$3 billion over the next three

years -- as compared with the previous three years, for primary and secondary education;

- The IDB is also working to establish a Special Regional Fund for education, to make additional loans;
- The World Bank will make more than \$3 billion available for education lending over the next three years and will host a major conference in June to discuss financing options for education;
- Overall, the IDB and World Bank will provide over three years a total of \$45 billion in loans, on favorable terms, for development: education, poverty reduction, health, microenterprise and other programs;
- The US Agency for International Development will commit approximately \$130 million in grant funding for education between 1998-2000 -- out of a total of \$1.2 billion in USAID grants for development in the Americas in this period.
- With the assistance of multilateral banks and the private sector, a new web-site -- *Americas.edu* -- has been launched to use the Internet to link schools around the hemisphere, and to operate as a clearinghouse for the public and private sectors as they work together to deliver educational services, such as bilingual electronic content, to all the hemisphere's citizens;
- Brazil has announced it will host an OAS conference on education in July 1998 to develop an implementation strategy for the Santiago Action Plan. The conference will focus on key objectives of the Plan, such as early childhood strategies, criteria and methodology for assessing quality, enhancing training for teachers and administrators, and helping prepare adults for changes in labor markets.

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USIS Washington File

18 April 1998

TRANSCRIPT: CLINTON REMARKS AT SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

(Highlights need for "higher quality education for all") (1750)

SANTIAGO, Chile -- As Western Hemisphere countries launch "second generation" reforms building on more than a decade's worth of progress, education must be at the top of every agenda, President Clinton said April 18.

"The fate of nations in the 21st century turns on what all citizens know and whether all citizens can quickly learn," he said. "Too often, resources are spent primarily on higher education for the few. We must all redirect our focus toward higher quality education for all."

Clinton was speaking at the opening session of the second Summit of the Americas, where leaders of the region's 34 democracies gathered to carry out a broad agenda that included launching formal talks for a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005.

Following is a transcript of Clinton's remarks:

(begin transcript)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Santiago, Chile)
For Immediate Release April 18, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT OPENING SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Sheraton Hotel
Santiago, Chile
9:35 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: President Frei, distinguished heads of state, leaders of the Chilean Congress, Supreme Court, members of the diplomatic corps, President Wolfensohn, President Iglesias, Secretary General Gaviria, Secretary General Ruggiero, Director General Alleyne: Four years ago in Miami, we, the democratic nations of this hemisphere, met in the historic Summit of the Americas and pledged ourselves to a common future rooted in shared values, shared burdens, shared progress, and embodied in our call for a free trade area of the Americas by 2005.

I thank all my fellow leaders and their governments for their faithfulness to the summit process. I thank especially those who helped us to begin the Summit of the Americas in 1994.

Now we come together in Santiago. What shall we do? First, we should celebrate a new reality in the Americas -- the march of freedom, prosperity, peace, and partnership among our nations. Second, we should recognize that in all our nations too many people have not felt this new reality, and we should resolve to continue to work together until they do.

As we look back on the three and a half years since the Miami Summit, there is much to be proud of, as our report, "From Words to Deeds," documents. The economy of the region has grown 15 percent. Last year, average growth was five percent, and inflation was the lowest in 50 years. Chile and Uruguay have set the standard for poverty reduction

and fiscal responsibility. Brazil and Argentina have slowed inflation to a crawl. Mexico has overcome adversity, transformed its economy, broadened its democracy. Bolivia has attracted new foreign investments and given its citizens a greater stake in their future. Venezuela's Apertura program is drawing investment to develop its energy resources. Peru and Ecuador, with a little help from their friends, are working towards a peaceful end to their decades-long border dispute. Central America, after years of strife, is well on the way to achieving its long-held vision of democracy and integration and growth. Caribbean nations are joining forces to expand their economies and to defend their shores against drugs and crime.

Together we have begun to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a thriving market of 800 million people invested in each other's future, enriching each other's lives, weaving a tapestry of interdependence that strengthens every nation. The Americas have set a new standard for the world in the defense of liberty and justice through our collective commitment to defend democracy wherever it is at risk in our hemisphere. Concerted action by neighbors and friends already has helped to restore or preserve democracy and human rights in Haiti, Guatemala and Paraguay.

Our cooperation in the fight against drugs has intensified, based on an understanding that drugs are a problem for all of us and all of us must work together to attack both demand and supply. We've adopted tough new measures against money laundering, forged the first multilateral treaty in the world to fight corruption, so that our societies will be governed by the rule of law.

We have signed an historic convention to stop the illegal trade in guns in our hemisphere. We're working to advance the environment and public health. Our people are healthier, our water safer, our air cleaner than four years ago. We are wiping measles off our hemisphere's map, dropping from more than 23,000 cases in 1994 to less than 500 so far this year. We're phasing out lead from gasoline. In 1996, 12 nations achieved this goal; by 2001, there will be 20. We're working together to promote a clean energy future and to meet the challenge of climate change.

I thank the efforts of many people in this regard -- the Vice President in our government, and many in other governments throughout this hemisphere.

The Miami Summit was a watershed in the history of our hemisphere as the leaders of free people embraced a common vision of the future and a common strategy for achieving it. The journey from Miami to Santiago has been filled with progress toward our goals. Now, here, and on the road forward from here, we must do more to ensure that the path of reform and democracy and integration actually lifts the lives of ordinary people in all our nations.

Poverty throughout the hemisphere is still too high, income disparity is too great, civil society too fragile, justice systems too weak, too many people still lack the education and skills necessary to succeed in the new economy. In short, too few feel change working for them. Therefore, with democracy and free markets now in place, we must vigorously launch a second generation of reforms for the next generation of Americans. No priority is more important than giving our children an excellent education.

The fate of nations in the 21st century turns on what all citizens know and whether all citizens can quickly learn. Too often, resources are spent primarily on higher education for the few. We must all redirect our focus toward higher quality education for all. I especially thank Presidents Frei, Cardoso, Menem, and Zedillo for their leadership to give all our children a good education, with well-equipped classrooms, well-trained teachers, high standards, and accountability. This is a goal we must vigorously embrace and work

hard to realize.

We will also work here to deepen democracy and respect for human rights. We know free elections are democracy's first step, not the last. We'll support the Organization of American States' special rapporteur for freedom of expression; launch a regional justice center to train judges and prosecutors; strengthen local government institutions to bring power closer to people; and in its 50th year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we will redouble our efforts to protect the human rights of all people.

We will also do more to defend democracy against its enemies -- corruption, terrorism, and drugs. The new hemispheric alliance against drugs we will launch here will encourage, support, and improve all our nations' efforts to fight this common threat as partners. We'll continue to promote our common prosperity, by launching negotiations for a free trade area of the Americas.

I want to underscore the importance we attach to a special civil society committee that will allow a broad array of stakeholders within all our societies the opportunity to make their voices heard. If economic integration in a global economy is to work for all people, we must demonstrate that we can have economic growth and lift labor standards for all our workers. We must demonstrate that we can grow the economy and preserve, indeed, even improve the environment. This civil society committee will give the peoples of our nations the chance to make that argument, and we must prove that we can make the argument work.

Let me reaffirm to all my colleagues, the United States may not yet have fast track legislation, but we will. And I assure you that our commitment to the free trade area of the Americas will be in the fast lane of our concerns.

We must do that. After all, more than one third of the United States' growth in the last few years has come from expanded trade. More than 40 percent of our exports go to our neighbors seated on this platform. We can only continue to grow and create jobs in the United States if we continue to reach out to our neighbors for more open markets and freer trade. That is the fundamental observation that all of us share. Your prosperity lifts ours; our prosperity lifts yours. As more good jobs are created in any nation, as economies grow and people thrive, they become better partners for each other and for others around the world.

Finally, we must take further steps to lift people from poverty and spread the benefit of progress to every member of society, from supporting women's full participation in the lives of our countries to providing loans to microentrepreneurs, to broadening property ownership.

Now, this Santiago agenda is ambitious, but it is imperative. Again, let me applaud President Frei for his leadership, for bringing us all here together, and for supporting such a broad and deep agenda. If we are to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of our time, we must pursue this agenda, and we must do it together.

The first broad meeting of representatives from our hemisphere took place in 1889 in Washington, D.C. Times were different and slower then. The delegates met for more than six months and toured around our nation by train. The only bad thing was they had to listen to even more speeches. But in that meeting our predecessors, drawing on Bolivar's vision of hemispheric unity, set a precedent for cooperation that grew over 50 years later from that seed into the OAS.

Four years ago at Miami, we planted the seed of a new partnership for a new century. Now we can and must do what is necessary for that seed to grow -- to grow in freedom and opportunity and cooperation. The

Americas can be a model for all the world in the 21st century. That is, after all, the spirit of the Summit of the Americas and the promise of Santiago.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END 9:47 A.M. (L)

(end transcript)

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President Clinton meets with Guatemalan President Arzu, Casa Santo Domingo, Antigua, Guatemala. [Photo by Sharon Farmer.]



President Clinton with Central American leaders in outdoor chapel of Casa Santo Domingo, Antigua, Guatemala. [Photo by Sharon Farmer.]



President Clinton applauds remarks by President Arzu of Guatemala, during opening remarks of the Central America Summit Meeting, Antigua, Guatemala. [Photo by Sharon Farmer.]



President Clinton addresses the Central American Summit. [Photo by Ralph Alswang.]



President Clinton poses for group photo with Central American leaders at the Central America Summit, Antigua, Guatemala. [Photo by Ralph Alswang.]



President Clinton and Central American leaders sign summit communique, Casa Santo Domingo, Antigua, Guatemala. [Photo by Ralph Alswang.]

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**The President's
Trip to Central
America Today's
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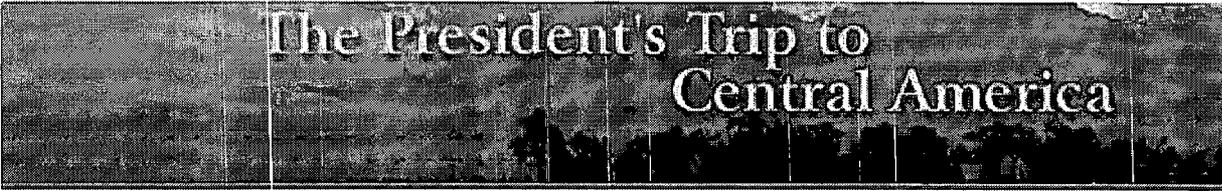
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THE WHITE HOUSE

The President's Trip to Central America (March 1999)

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THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO CENTRAL AMERICA

The President travels to Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala to reaffirm U.S. support for relief and reconstruction efforts in the wake of Hurricane Mitch, and to help the Central Americans maintain the momentum in their historic transformation towards peace, democracy, human rights, and free markets. Central America's full recovery and continued transformation is clearly in the U.S. national interest. A region of strong, stable, and prosperous democracies serves as a vital partner in trade and investment, and in combating common problems such as drug trafficking, corruption, illegal migration, and environmental damage.

Central America March 1999

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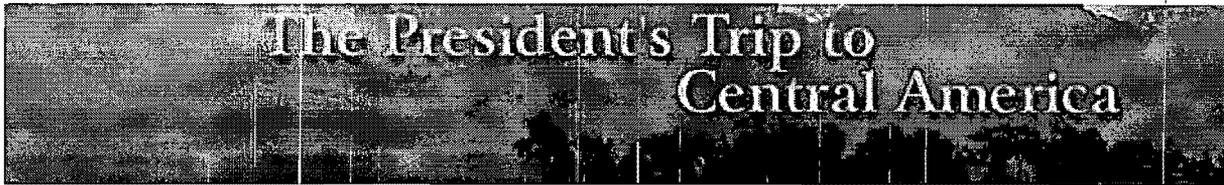
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THE WHITE HOUSE

Central AmericaTrip: Remarks by the President in Roundtable Discussion with Hurricane Mitch Survivors

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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Tegucigalpa, Honduras)

For Immediate Release

March 8, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT ALEMAN OF NICARAGUA IN ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH LAS CASITAS VOLCANO MUD SLIDE SURVIVORS FROM HURRICANE MITCH

Auditorium, Cotton Research Center
Posoltega, Nicaragua

3:45 P.M. (L)

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Here you have four people, Mr. President, who have suffered the indignities of nature and Hurricane Mitch: two women from the same area we visited today. You heard the stories there in Posoltega. As we were saying, it didn't look at all like it looked today. It was like something out of Dante's Inferno. And Ricardo also -- and we wanted them to tell you very simply what they went through and what it is that they want. And also this little boy, Juan Pablo -- is anybody a relative of his? Yes, his brother is outside.

So talk very frankly with President

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Clinton now.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Could I just say one word? This is Senator Graham, who is from the state of Florida, in the United States. First of all, thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I know it must be hard to relive your story. But I think it is very important for us to be able to go home to the United States, having seen not only the President -- who is my friend, I enjoy that -- but also the people who have lived personally through this terrible tragedy.

It is also important for the health of Nicaragua's democracy that he and I, when we respond to this terrible tragedy, respond in a way that helps you the most and that is consistent with your wishes. So I would like it if, in your own words, you could just tell us a little about what happened to you and your family, and what would help most going forward.

MR. SANTELIZ: Yes, President Clinton. First of all, we want to thank you -- we want to thank you for your visit. We think it's extremely important at this point in time for us. The assistance we have been given by your administration and by the people of the United States have been such that they have reanimated us in our efforts.

To a certain extent, it has not been easy to forget the circumstances that we've undergone. But, as I was saying to our President, Dr. Aleman, hope is the last thing you should lose -- and today more than ever, because as you said, we have to strengthen the hope in our lives.

Mitch was the total tragedy, starting from the mud sliding down the Casitas Volcano. From the end of that until now -- an event that did away completely with our communities and did away with everything we had and with a future that we'd carved out for ourselves. It wasn't easy, because our communities lived together, worked together. And from international organizations we would get assistance, like CARE, like Save the Children, like Marina (phonetic), which has also strengthened aid to the environment there through forestation.

But at one point we were able to get through that very bitter situation, that terrible tragedy and that mud slide that we suffered. This happened on October 30th, at 11:00 a.m., 1998. We were still very frightened, there was a lot of water. And we thought that we were about to die, with everything that had happened. When suddenly we heard the thunderous noise from the volcano.

I remember, I was at home, in one of the devastated communities, around 11:00 a.m. I was listening to the radio, listening to the news when suddenly I heard the mountain thundering. It was almost as if -- twice as loud as if all the helicopters had suddenly come down from the skies. I had never been as afraid in my life as I was that day. I really felt that my life was slipping through my hands. And the neighbors all started shouting.

I remember I had my four year old son sleeping inside my house. And when I went out to the porch my neighbor, my brothers and my brothers-in-law started shouting at me, "Get out of there, because the mountain is falling down." And I shouted at my wife, "We can't get out." And she said, "RUN." I ran out, but suddenly, I remembered my little boy was sleeping inside. I ran back, I picked up my son. I threw a sheet around him and put him over my shoulder.

I left running, towards an area where on one side there was a ravine, there was a ravine on the other side. And the water was higher than the ceiling. It was impossible to cross the river. My children ran along with me and they said to me, "We're going to die." And somehow or another, gathering all my strength together I said, "No, children, we will not die." But when we got there it was full and there I lost hope.

I thought that the mountain had all come down and it was going to bury us. I remember there was some young people who were with me and they wanted to jump in. Since I was in the back and I was holding someone I shouted at them, "No, don't jump in" -- because they were going to kill themselves like that. So we started

walking all along the edge, trying to find a farm. We weren't able to do anything. We were there from 11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on the 30th.

When we saw that the water was not going down, we went back. I said to my wife, "We won't be able to do anything here." Our children were very, very cold. So we decided to go back to the house. When we got back to the house. When we got back to the house, since I didn't have the strength to close and lock my house, I found people inside the house. I found a little boy -- bigger than he is -- about nine years old. His eye was cut completely all around him, had no clothes on at all.

I started to look outside. I was very cold and all wet, and my children were, too. But when I saw these people wounded I started taking off my own clothes. Since I couldn't put my pants on, I cut them with scissors and I put them on him and I put my shirt on him. He went to sleep, that day. Thank goodness, I had a sleeping pill and I gave it to the little boy so he could sleep. But the water just kept rushing through.

The next day, on the 31st, Saturday, I spent all day with the water up to my waist. I had taken my children, I had taken wounded people. We had taken about 15 wounded people already. It was a tragic moment. It's very difficult to forget that.

And now we are slowly recovering, because in spite of everything -- we lost relatives, I lost 22 relatives of my own; my wife lost 45 relatives. And that's how it happened. It was truly a tragedy. And there is still more sadness. I had to take my wife away to Leon because she was extremely nervous. She was really overwrought and I didn't want her to suffer a crisis, to have a breakdown. So now we're trying to recover our lives, slowly but surely.

We've abandoned our homes, because they're right on the edge, just 30 meters from the -- that's where the water came by our house. It was tragic.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And of your --

how many people died?

MR. SANTELIZ: Forty-six.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And what family suffered the most? Rolando's family and El Porvenir is another place that disappeared completely.

MR. SANTELIZ: I remember that when -- I found people, I found about 50 people, those are the ones who got out and they weren't touched because they ran as soon as it started.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: How many people do you think died in both communities?

MR. SANTELIZ: Well, Doctor, I think -- these were very big communities. It's impossible to calculate. I don't know what the census are. But I think there must have been about 4,000 people died.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Do you think many people are buried there?

MR. SANTELIZ: Many, many people are buried there. And many were able to go out through the --

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And what about this child?

MR. SANTELIZ: This was Rolando's boy. He was there in the village. The story of this boy was very, very sad. We rescued him on Sunday, the 1st. We went out, because we couldn't get in. And we found this little boy under some enormous branches, tree branches. And this was all he had, this was the only thing we could see. He was calling his brother that he was with, Ecedro (phonetic). The only thing you could see was his eyes and his nose; and we found a little girl with him who died immediately, as soon as we got her out of the mud.

And, thank God, as I told you, all these organizations supported us. The main organization that helped us completely, immediately, was Save the Children. I remember all the assistance they gave us -- water, nourishment, utensils for cooking.

They helped us a lot -- CARE, as well. And the support of the Army, the support you gave us with the planes. But I never lost hope. When I was running I kept thinking, this current has already gone down to the road. They are going to realize what's happened and the helicopters will come. But if it doesn't stop raining it's going to be very difficult.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And how many survived from this child's family?

MR. SANTELIZ: Just three. His mother and father died. Just him and two of his brothers and -- PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And who is your older brother?

JUAN PABLO: Vasilio (phonetic).

MR. SANTELIZ: That's his oldest brother who survived.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And who are you living with now?

JUAN PABLO: Vasilio.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: How old is Vasilio?

JUAN PABLO: Twenty-one.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: So he has two brothers now?

MR. SANTELIZ: One is 13 and one is 21.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: And are both of them living with him-- he's living with both of them?

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Are you going to school, Juan Pablo?

JUAN PABLO: No.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Why not, sweetie? You were going to school back in --

JUAN PABLO: No.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: No? Didn't you go to school back in-- but there was a school there, wasn't there?

JUAN PABLO: Yes.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Is your other brother going to school?

JUAN PABLO: Tonio (phonetic).

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Tonio, is he the one going to school?

JUAN PABLO: No, he's not.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And how many of your brothers and sisters died?

JUAN PABLO: Three.

MR. SANTELIZ: And his mother died.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And you have uncles and aunts?

JUAN PABLO: No.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Did your father have any brothers or sisters? What about your mother?

JUAN PABLO: One.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And where are your uncles and aunts, did they die?

JUAN PABLO: Yes, the whole family.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: So now it's you and your two brothers?

JUAN PABLO: Yes.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: And you have to stay close with them.

JUAN PABLO: Yes.

MS. PANTOJA: I thank you for -- for our great good fortune being here with you. What I can tell you is that when the mud slide happened, I wasn't there then because I was being attended at a clinic, I was about to be operated on. And that's what saved me.

But from what people tell me, she was dragged by that mud slide and these people all tell me that it sounded to them

like it was a whole group of helicopters coming from the sky. And when they heard that noise they turned around and her husband told her to get out. And she picked up her little girl, but then she saw the mudslide was coming down on them. I didn't see it-- but I was from Rolando, I wasn't there at that point. But I lost my children, my grandchildren, my sisters, my brothers-in-law, my sons-in-law and my daughter-in-law. We weren't able to do anything. We weren't even able to pick them up, dead or alive -- we didn't know where they were.

And my two sisters had a shop there. And my sister had four girls who were studying in Leon. So I went to my mother and father, and these girls, because they weren't well at all. And some of my children were looking for them. But it was impossible, we couldn't find them in the hospitals or anywhere. There was no way to locate them. My children who survived were trying to see how to get in, and then they would get into the mud -- and they'd get very deep into the mud, it was very dangerous. Since it was a Sunday -- you couldn't even recognize the bodies anymore -- and so we weren't even able to give them Christian burial.

That's the story I have to tell.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: How many survivors from Rolando do you think? How many people in your community there?

MS. PANTOJA: In Rolando I think there were about 2,000 of us -- 2,500, maybe.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And how many do you think were alive-- like you, who were able to get away before it happened?

MS. PANTOJA: Well, there are several survivors because since there was a lot of rain the crops were finished -- the beans and the corn and everything. So all the people had gone to Costa Rica to find work so that they could eat.

So only -- that's why many women were widowed and many men were, as well, because their families had left.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Do you think there are more than 2,000 people who died in Rolando?

MS. PANTOJA: No, it must be about 3,000, between the two communities.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Rolando and which other one? MR. SANTELIZ: El Porvenir is the other community. There were 46 who died there. And Versaillo (phonetic) was also affected in part of that community. MS. PANTOJA: I have faith in God, and in you. We're desperate here because we were left with nothing at all, absolutely nothing. There we are, living in those shelters, in those tents. And I thank you and the government and all of the organizations, like the Red Cross and Save the Children, who have brought us food. I thank God for that.

And more than anything what concerns the people now is their shelter, a place to live so they can have a little house -- so we can see how we can work to get ahead. Because we lived off of our farming there and we don't have anything to live off of now; we have no way to work. And basically you know that to work you need to have some kind of money to start off. And I have about six people -- nieces of mine who survived, apart from my own children, and I need to work so that I can support those children.

I hope that your government and you, as well, you all have good hearts and I hope that you will help us.

MS. ACOSTA: I thank you for being here with us. In spite of all the sorrow and all the tragedy that we've suffered, for three days I was terrified -- Friday, Saturday, Sunday -- I'm sorry, I was buried in the mud. It was cold and wet. I lost 28 people from my family -- my four children and my husband. And in spite of everything I had the hope, buried as I was, that I'd be able to find them. But I never was able to find my family.

Then they took me to the hospital and I waited and asked all my friends there to look out the window and to look in other rooms to see if they could find my family. It was impossible to go to find. I

hope that we will be helped, as the President has always helped us, so that we can get ahead.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: No one from your home was saved, my dear? No one?

MS. ACOSTA: My sisters were saved because they had gone to work in Costa Rica. But the people who were living there, who were still there from my family, I'm the only one who survived.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And where were you?

MS. ACOSTA: In El Porvenir.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And that's exactly where the mudslide went through?

MS. ACOSTA: When it came through it was a terrible noise of helicopters. My husband went out and he shouted at me, "Sweetheart, run." And I grabbed my little girl and I ran out. But when I ran out the house had been destroyed and I was dragged by the water. I lost my little girl and I never found her again.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And your husband died, too?

MS. ACOSTA: Yes. And my little girl was shouting at me, asking me to save her -- but the water was dragging me away and I couldn't do anything. I was struggling to try and stand up again, but I couldn't do anything, I couldn't see anything.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And who rescued you?

MS. ACOSTA: I was rescued by people from the Red Cross who were there, and some people from the area. Two people from the area were there, as well. They found me. I was terrified and they were able to get me out, they were able to dig me out of the mud. I was there stuck for three days.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: So what are you going to do now with your life?

MS. ACOSTA: I still have problems with one knee. I want to get well and I want to fend for myself, because now I have nothing and no one left. All I want to do now is work to survive and just get by.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: She said, "I just want to work until my day comes to go."

MS. ACOSTA: That's all I'm waiting for.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And what's wrong with your leg?

MS. ACOSTA: I had a cast on this leg and it wasn't set properly. And so now they have to x-ray it again and see what they can do.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And where are you staying now?

MS. ACOSTA: I'm over there in the shelter.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: You know, the President was explaining to me when we were coming out that the people need not only homes again, but homes that are close enough to land which can be farmed again. Because a lot of this land which is covered by the mud, even though it's dried out, it may or may not be suitable for crops now. And a lot of trees will have to be replanted to guard against further flooding.

So I think we in the United States have to try to get some financial help to the President to do that. And then you will have to work together to identify the land where the people can farm again; and then the houses can be built.

You were explaining that to me, on the way out, what you have done -- find the land.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Yes. We have to be able to recover and to be able to dig deeper channels. Because otherwise you're going to suffer flooding here again. And we need to improve on that.

What's the name of this co-op that's over here? No, down here. El Tanke (phonetic). Let's see who's dealing with that over

there. But there are individual cases like her -- she's alone, she has no husband or anything. And this little boy with his brothers. Let's see what else can be done. These are different things. And you -- you can still work and do things and you still have part of your family, but there are some people who are completely on their own.

Let's see what we can do to rehabilitate your leg. And you're still young. There are many things that we can do. There's some kind of work that we can find for you. You have no child who survived?

MS. ACOSTA: I had four.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: All of them little?

MS. ACOSTA: The oldest was 13. My little girl was 7-- 13, 12, 10 and 7.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: And how old are you?

MS. ACOSTA: I'm 29.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: You're still young.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: So you became a mother when you were

PRESIDENT CLINTON: What about you, Juan Pablo? Do you want to say anything to us? Do you want to say anything to your President about this terrible thing?

JUAN PABLO: I lost my whole family and I miss them -- my mamma and my pappa.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Where are you living, Juan Pablo? With his brother?

JUAN PABLO: Yes.

MR. SANTELIZ: Yes, he lives at the co-op there with his brother.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: How many people are in that co-op? Fifty people, they said? And all these new people are coming in? You said that there are 2,500

people in a block. Will they accept them there?

MR. SANTELIZ: I'm going to give you my opinion. I think that what we need here for this problem is we need to sit down and talk to them and say, let's visualize. What's your point of view; what is their point of view; what about the opinion of the organization -- any organization, international or a government organization, whatever.

So I think it would be easier to sit down and talk with them to see what's the possibility; to find out what the alternatives are. Because maybe they won't all be admitted; because maybe there's somebody who doesn't --

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: I want to explain to you more or less what I understand from what they were saying. I was telling the President when we were going over there this whole sector that was destroyed was all co-ops. And they were destroyed.

But here in the Posoltega sector, down there, where they didn't have the problem with this mud slide, there's a property that's 2,500 blocks that provide -- that's about 2,000 acres -- only in the hands of about 50 people. And there are survivors from this community, about 300 people. And what they're asking for is to convince the other 50 who are over there that they should carry out some kind of agrarian reform, so that they give these people some work, so that they can all get three or four hectares per family. But the matter is convincing these people, convincing those 50 who have 2,500, and have them admit these 300 new families.

But we still have political problems here. These are co-ops -- and I'm talking very openly here in front of everybody. Those co-ops maybe aren't going to admit any of them because they're going to say, oh, no, they want to take away my land. But the question I want to ask you here is, are they cultivating all that land or not?

MR. SANTELIZ: To be honest with you, what I've understood so far is that the land has actually been rented to other people,

it's been leased to other people who have money -- so they can plant peanuts or whatever.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: The co-ops, themselves, are doing that?

MR. SANTELIZ: Yes.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: We have to sit down and talk with them so we can convince them.

MR. SANTELIZ: I think what we need to do there is sit down, as I was saying, to see what points they propose, see what they want to do.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And what about Juan Pablo's brothers? Have they already been admitted?

MR. SANTELIZ: No, they're in the same situation.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: So you're like squatters?

MR. SANTELIZ: No, I'm not there. I was given a parcel, it's 12x20, by an organization from the U.S., as well -- in Washington. An Evangelical church gave us a little plot of land, about six blocks of --

PRESIDENT CLINTON: World Vision, was it World Vision?

MR. SANTELIZ: It's managed by the Evangelical Conference of the Assembly of God in Washington.

So since we didn't have anything we said, okay, give me a little plot of land where I can go, and that's where I am. The only thing is that we're all so very much reduced right now and we're under so little plots of land.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: How much land did the average family farm before the hurricane and the mud slide?

MR. SANTELIZ: About five or six blocks -- what they call blocks, which are actually more like hectares.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Ten acres? So the average family had 10 acres?

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Per family, that's what each family had.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: And then this block, you say, with the 50 families, they have an average of 25 hectares?

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: It's, like, 100 acres per family -- this particular group.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: So they could actually sell it out?

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: And what they're doing is they're renting out the land that they're not farming themselves.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: So it's your proposal for the government to buy this land on behalf of the other people, if they will accept them?

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: That would be the ideal situation. The problem is that the co-op with those 50 people -- and it's very, very good land, they know that land, very fertile land. This co-op got it back in the Sandinista days. So I don't think they're going to want to give it up. They're not going to give it to anyone or sell it.

They prefer it, as he was saying, to rent it, to lease it, because it's better business for them. We'll see what measures can be taken. And the discussions we're trying to hold -- we'll see how we can change this. Because the other problem we have, Mr. President, is there's land, but not in this area, not on the Pacific side.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Too far away?

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: This has been traditionally farmland. But we'll see what solution we find. Faith in God.

Juan Pablo, you have to go and study now. Do you promise you're going to study?

JUAN PABLO: Yes.

PRESIDENT ALEMAN: Are you going to study? You promise?

JUAN PABLO: Yes.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: You can learn a lot and pray to God to take care of your mother and father. And they will know and be very proud of you.

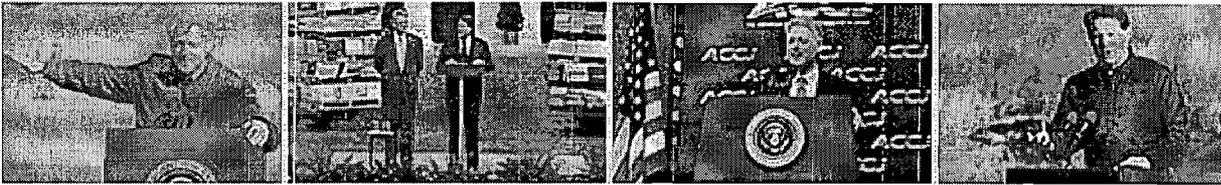
JUAN PABLO: Yes.

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Office of the Press Secretary
(Managua, Nicaragua)

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March 8,
1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE PEOPLE OF NICARAGUA

Jose Dolores Toruno Lopez High School
Posoltega, Nicaragua

2:00 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. President Aleman, Mayor Zeledon, Mayor Palcio, Bishop Vivas. To our school director, Julio Martinez Toruno, and all the children who are here. To the members of the government of Nicaragua and the National Assembly. To the Chinandaga Boys Choir and to the young woman who sang the National Anthems of both nations, the granddaughter of former President Violeta Chamorro, and to all the people of Nicaragua, thank you for making us feel so very welcome today. (Applause.)

My fellow Americans and I are moved and humbled to be here in Posoltega, where the terrible mudslide took so many sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, neighbors and friends. I have come to pay my respects to those who lost their lives and to reaffirm the support of the American people for those who were spared, and for your rebuilding. In this decade, with courage and strength, you have created a new Nicaragua. You have earned the world's admiration and now you deserve the world's support in this moment of need. (Applause.)

Somos humanos nos ayudamos. (Applause.) We are

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brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends. We must help each other. (Applause.)

I thank President Aleman for recognizing the work of the United States to provide food, shelter and health care; to renew the farms and small businesses; to rebuild the roads and bridges and homes. I thank our Armed Forces for all they have done, including building a new health center in Wiwili, north of here. Now our Agency for International Development will provide equipment, training and immunizations for this health center, and others in Nicaragua, so that your people can get back on their feet and stay healthy as they rebuild their lives. (Applause.)

Today we have brought 3,000 pounds of school supplies for the children of Posoltega, donated by organizations all across America, and by our own workers at the White House. (Applause.) I know that you need more temporary shelters until permanent homes can be built. I know you need to speed the discovery and removal of land mines left from the war, because the hurricanes may have moved them and made them more dangerous. With these tasks, too, we will help. (Applause.)

I know that more is needed, and urgently. I have asked our Congress for \$956 million to support our reconstruction effort here. I am grateful that leaders in our Congress from both political parties have expressed support, and I thank the members of the United States Congress who have come to Nicaragua with me and are sitting over here -- Senator Graham and

Congressman Becerra, Deutsch and Reyes.
(Applause.)

This aid will help to speed the rebuilding of homes, farms, businesses and roads. It will help your government to deliver aid better. It will allow us to send more Peace Corps volunteers. And I would like to thank the Peace Corps volunteers. And I would like to thank the Peace Corps volunteers who are here today for their service in Nicaragua. (Applause.)

As we see the dust in the wind today, it reminds us that you must rebuild in a way that helps you to manage the environment better -- by preserving trees that can help prevent a mudslide, or curbing pollution that can cause temperatures to rise. We can avoid or lessen future catastrophes. We can manage the land and water, and grow your economy, and I know you want to do that.

To help you focus on reviving your economy, my aid package would also defer or forgive much of

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Nicaragua's -- and Honduras's debts to our government. And I have asked our Congress to reduce trade barriers between the two of us so that all the people of Central America can work and grow their way back to prosperity and normal life. (Applause.)

We have provided temporary immigration protection for Central Americans in our country, and I will seek a fair solution to all the immigration issues this tragedy has heightened.

In times past, there was conflict, turbulence and distrust between our two nations. But now, we are bound together in our common commitment to democracy. And democracy will light the way to a brighter future for Nicaragua -- through government, through voluntary organizations, through local officials working with citizens who are participating in decisions that affect their lives; through leaders working to see that no one exploits this tragedy for personal gain and no one is left behind. And we will work with you every step of the way. (Applause.)

A hurricane, a mudslide -- they can destroy lives, they can destroy homes. They can destroy a life's work. But they must not be allowed to destroy hope. Not so long ago, your country overcame a terrible war, and emerged even stronger. You will overcome this adversity as well. And we will work with you every day until the task is done.

Thank you. God bless you. Muchas gracias.

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**THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Tegucigalpa, Honduras)**

For Immediate Release

March 9, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT TO U.S. TROOPS AND PEOPLE OF HONDURAS

Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras

11:45 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: President Flores, Colonel Ramirez, General Wilhelm,

Colonel Rosner, members of the Honduran and American militaries; to the people of Honduras, the American delegation and members of Congress who came herewith me; ladies and gentlemen. Yesterday in Nicaragua, today in Honduras, we see that this disaster has taught us that what happens to one in the Americas affects us all. It reminds us that in good times and bad, todos somos Americanos. (Applause.)

Mr. President, I thank you for your kind words about the First Lady. I spoke with Hillary last night and she asked me to give you her best. She remembers so well her trip here, and she wishes you well.

Mr. President, as our military leaders

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know, at this Honduran airbase, our Armed Forces trained together for this sort of disaster just a few months before the storm. When the real test came, they passed with flying colors.

This long runway, turned into a lifeline, connected the countries all over the world. Over 47 million pounds of supplies came through here. Helicopters performed daring rescues and delivered food; engineers repaired

roads; medical teams gave treatment and comfort; relief workers provided clean water, built schools and shelters, and restored faith in the future that nearly washed away.

Operation Fuerzas Apoyo turned into one of the largest humanitarian

missions performed by the United States military since the Berlin Airlift

years ago. To all who were a part of it, I thank you for your courage, your confidence, your compassion.

I believe the United States must do more. I have asked Congress for \$956 million to support the reconstruction effort in Central America. We expect almost a third of that to come to Honduras to improve public health, to build homes and schools, to rebuild roads so farmers can move their produce to market, and to prepare for future hurricanes. It will also forgive and defer Honduran debt, and it will be targeted to local communities to make sure the people who need it get the assistance.

I would also like to announce \$56 million to expand our New Horizons program which brings civilian guardsmen and reservists to the region for two weeks of training and relief work.

Mr. President, I know Hondurans are determined not just to rebuild, but actually to create something better out of this tragedy -- to build a reconstruction that protects the environment so that people are not exposed to unnecessary risks in the next storm; to build a reconstruction that ensures that those who suffered most

participate fully and benefit equally; to build reconstruction that consolidates democracy by engaging local government, NGOs and the private sector.

I would like to especially thank the members of our Armed Forces for their hard work to advance these goals -- (applause) -- for their enthusiasm, even when you have to sleep in hootches in Tent City -- (laughter) -- for your cooperation between the services and between our U.S. personnel and our Honduran hosts. You have shown the people of Central America the true colors of our men and women in uniform. (Applause.)

Today, I am proud to announce the Award of Humanitarian Service Medal to all those members of the U.S. Armed Forces who serve and support the relief effort in Central America. (Applause.) And to announce that I have just presented to Colonel Rosner a Joint Meritorious Unit Award to JTF Bravo for its sustained commitment to our mission in this region. Congratulations on a job well done. (Applause.)

Later today, I will see the Juan Molina Bridge in Tegucigalpa. It was built jointly with U.S. assistance and Honduran efforts. I can't think of a better symbol of JTF Bravo's efforts or our cooperation, building bridges between people and nations in Central America, with Central America itself the bridge between North and South America.

In this tragedy's aftermath, Hondurans and Americans are giving new

meaning to the words written by Juan Molina in his poem, "Eagles and Condors." "Pueblos Americanos in este continente debemos ser hermanos. (Applause.)

Not far from here is Comayagua, the old capital of Honduras, built because it was near the center of Central America and of the entire New World. That city boasts a clock said to be the oldest in the Americas, made by Spanish Moors in the 12th century. When that clock began ticking, about 900 years ago, the world was a smaller place in every way. Now

that clock is ticking away the final hours
and days of the 20th century, headed
toward a new millennium.

But one thing remains as true today as the
day the clock was built: We humans still
have the urge to start a new course for the
future and the obligation to make it a
better one for our children.

Thanks to your work here, a new and
better world truly lies within our grasp.
Thank you and God bless you.
(Applause.)

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**THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Tegucigalpa, Honduras)**

For Immediate Release

March 9, 1999

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON
HURRICANE MITCH
RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS**

Central Bank
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

2:52 P.M. (L)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Thank you, Mr. President, for your remarks and for the extended visit we have already had today about these matters.

I wanted to have the opportunity today to hear from abroad cross-section of citizens of this country, and so I will be extremely brief. I agree with the President that this period of reconstruction should be seen as the opportunity to build something even better than what was here before. And furthermore, I believe that if all elements of a society are properly involved and feel fairly treated, that the country's social fabric, sense of community will be stronger than it was before the disaster occurred.

Many of you have paid a very high price for what has occurred, and the losses have

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been staggering. But I think the--I have been quite impressed by what has already been done and by the attitude of the people. What the United States is interested in is how we can best be an effective partner with you from our end. And so I'm quite interested in your perspective on that, as well as anything you would like to tell me about your present activities.

I'd also like to introduce -- this is Congressman Javier Becerra, who came here before with the First Lady, and has just finished a term as the head of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. He is from California. And I am delighted to have him back with me. And Congressman Reyes from Texas is also here with us.

Q We have our Archbishop -- perhaps he can kick off the discussion.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President. President Clinton, Congressman Becerra, we are very happy and very honored by your visit, especially because this country, which truly wants to pick itself up and continue down the path of democracy and development, after being hit so hard by Mitch, finds in your visit, Mr. President, a gesture of solidarity.

I very specially want to thank the people of the United States for their solidarity, and especially their churches. I'd also like to refer to the Catholic community of the United States with Cardinal Bernard -- who visited us just four days after the tragedy, Cardinal Mahoney of Los Angeles, and Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, and many, many, many bishops who have shown that enormous solidarity to us.

But beyond that assistance, Mr. President, we're convinced that for Honduras to be able to overcome this tragedy, we need support specifically from you so that our trade can expand. We need that opening NAFTA parity. We also need, my dear President, to be able -- we would ask you to stop the deportations of Hondurans. You have already made one gesture that we're very grateful for, but we also need that support. There are so many Hondurans who have left their country to

beable to achieve better money conditions for their families. They want to live and work honestly.

And third, Mr. President, it is very important, and I ask this as well on behalf of the entire Catholic community of the world -- our Holy Father John Paul II has asked us to pray for debt relief, which is so staggering for us. I wanted to say that on the very worst day of the tragedy, October 30, Honduras had to disperse \$60 million to service its debt, and without a doubt -- if the United States support us within the G-7, it would be much easier to get relief from the multilateral debt, which is the one that torments us the most.

I think that this will provide an enormous opportunity for our country to develop in democracy. And in conclusion, I would also like to do something with great freedom and with great sincerity. I want to thank you, Mr. President, for one American Honduran citizen, the one we love the most here, our First Lady. You should be extremely pleased that we have an exemplary U.S. citizen in this country. The Honduran people love her precisely because of their deep affection, especially to the poor and children. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: And this is the Mayor of Tegucigalpa. I think you know about the accident she had in the helicopter. And after that, she took his job and here, we have her now.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President and President Flores. Thank you very much for this opportunity to be with you this afternoon and convey a message from the 1 million inhabitants that I represent in this city. This is the city that has suffered the most with this hurricane. Thirty percent of our city was destroyed, and it's very difficult for me in just two minutes to explain to President Clinton what the situation in the city is. I know you've had the opportunity to see this personally. Right now, our city has been cleaned, the vast majority of it, at least, and although the destruction in terms of lives and in terms of our economic and social infrastructure is concerned, despite that, we have great spirit in moving forward.

The city of Tegucigalpa is very honored to receive the President of the United States today and to have this opportunity to express our appreciation directly for all the support we've received, both from your government as well as from your people. And very specially, I'd like to thank the Cregans (phonetic), who were here from the very beginning. And this is the opportunity the people of Tegucigalpa have to say that we are a grateful people and we are willing to move forward with our city. We have suffered very much, but we are willing to work for the future.

I know that for President Flores, it's very difficult to move forward with our country. But with your help to us, your help to local government, we will be able to do very much, because we know the problems that our citizens are suffering. We are the local authority. Welcome to our city, then, and I would like to take this opportunity to give you the keys to our city so that you feel at home. This is your home, Mr. President. Thank you. MODERATOR: And now, we have Mario Canawati, who is President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of San Perosula (phonetic) and Cortez.

Q President Flores and distinguished guests: Allow me to express our gratitude to you, the government and the people of the United States of America, for the support during the crisis of Hurricane Mitch and the reconstruction of our country. Honduras needs long-term opportunities that are complimentary to our own efforts. Especially those that create employment for our people.

Central America is one of the most important trade partners of the United States. In fact, U.S. exports to the Central American region exceeded exports to all the countries of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe countries combined. Honduras has come a long way in the last 20 years. We have embraced the principle of democracy and open market economies. And the United States of America has been instrumental in this development through the CBI.

This initiative has been mutually

beneficial in many sectors, such as shrimp farming, agricultural products, lumber and wood industries. In turn, U.S. companies have been able to increase their exports. For every dollar Honduras imported in 1997, 61 cents were used to purchase goods and services from the USA.

One of the most dynamic sectors excluded from the CBI is the textile and apparel industry. In less than 10 years, this industry has generated over 110,000 jobs and \$455 million in value-added export revenues. Current trade policies prevent us from increasing employment and aggregate value. The average duty for our country's exports is 17.7 percent, compared to 2.4 percent of Mexico, creating an unfair trade condition.

Recent data shows that Honduras is losing investment to Mexico. If this trend continues, in less than two years, we could start experiencing an actual reduction of economic activity. Furthermore, when garments are made in Honduras using U.S. yarns, duty is calculated on the value added here in Honduras, and also on the yarn made and cut and grown in the United States.

Our only alternative to creating permanent jobs and sustained economic growth is through the implementation of a trade field that we allow our exports to compete under the same conditions that the NAFTA products have. We, the private sector, are committed in the reconstruction of Honduras. We hope that history repeats itself with a new version of CBIs that includes garments and textiles and strengthens education, that will enable us to have sustainable development.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

MODERATOR: And perhaps Jacqueline Foglia from the Honduran American Chamber of Commerce would like to speak.

Q -- and your distinguished guests. Hurricane Mitch affected the agricultural sector in a greater proportion than other sectors of the economy. Our two largest members, Chiquita Brand and Dole, were virtually wiped out. The

hurricane destroyed roads and bridges throughout the country, affecting the movement of goods such as fuel, wood, coffee, etc. The melon, shrimp farms, and small and medium businesses were also hard hit.

Fortunately, both the garment industry and tourism sectors were not highly affected, and these may provide the motor for economic reconstruction. In this sense, the American Chamber of Commerce in Honduras, AmCham Honduras, which is comprised of over 500 members, is carrying out the following action plan.

We coordinated relief efforts of Sister AmCham's directing aid towards diverse social programs. We serve as an information clearinghouse on the hurricane for other chambers of commerce, and U.S. politicians and business people, including your embassy staff, informing about business climate and economic losses. We are communicating with the Association of American Chambers of Commerce of Latin America, ACCLA, in Washington, concerning both your administration and the U.S. Congress's legislative proposal for relief to Honduras.

Our needs in this reconstruction package are the inclusion of the Caribbean Basin Trade Enhancement Measure which, through greater access to U.S. markets will allow for a faster economic recovery, job creation and overall economic benefits for Honduras. We believe that such policy will help minimize long-term immigration, health care, education and law enforcement costs within the U.S.

We participated in the creation of a task force within ACCLA for businesses in the continent to cooperate with each other in natural disasters affecting our nation. One of the greatest problems businesses are encountering in the reconstruction process is the lack of access to soft loans. We are especially aware of the pressing need of credit that small businesses have -- small and micro businesses. We actively seek financial information from Ex-Im Bank, OPIC and other

financial institutions and provide this information to the business community.

The private sector is committed to investing millions of dollars to repair and rebuild our country in close collaboration with the government, prioritizing the recovery of the productive sector, such as industrialized agriculture, which provides a great part of our GNP.

We believe that by helping the private sector in its rebuilding effort, we will guarantee the full and prompt recovery of Honduras. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: And now, Jorge Quinones, Director of the Vida Foundation.

Q Thank you very much, President Flores, and President Clinton. Congressman Becerra, my dear panelists and distinguished audience. As a member of the environmental sector organizations and a representative of the Vida Foundation, I'd like to say the following on the occasion of your historic visit. Thank you, President Clinton, for honoring us with your presence here and affording us this valuable exchange of information on the present situation in our country.

It would also be timely to say how grateful we are to your government and the people of the United States, for the financial and technical support they have provided us through USAID, which has allowed us in the last five years to implement 250 environmental projects to promote environmental education in our people, the conservation of our ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as to promote our hydrographic basins, and this allows us now to contribute to joint management of 300,000 hectares of areas protected in the meso-American biological corridor, which is considered a vital biological space between the Americas.

Notwithstanding everything that's been done, we Hondurans today have painfully realized that sooner or later, nature always sends us a bill. And so the devastation made by Mitch would have been far worse if the work done on our natural resources

had not been at the level it was. Our basins were swept away by this phenomenon. It's going to take us quite a long time to be able to recover, and we cannot fail to underscore their importance for our economy and health. Reforestation, sustainable management of our basins are perhaps the most formidable challenges we have in reconstruction.

The Vida Foundation offers to be a financial intermediary so that with our government and our people, we can carry out all the projects necessary to rehabilitate water resources and to be able to recover our water resources as soon as possible. Environmental education, more than ever, needs to be a central part of our agenda for reconstruction.

President Clinton, we are sure that our enormous tragedy will be reversed. This will be a great opportunity for us because we know that our nation has the firm and capable leadership that can generate the idea of struggle that these circumstances require of us and the environmental sector of civil society and Vida are grateful for your solidarity and your will to support us. And we hope that your visit will reconfirm knowledge of the cruel realities Mitch has left us. And if Honduras -- forest resources. But also, we hope to rebuild it so that it will be less polluted and a better environmental Honduras. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: And Mariano Flores now from Save the Children. Thank you very much, President Flores, President William Clinton and Congressman Becerra.

Q Ladies and gentlemen -- the private NGO movement in the development sector in Honduras is very proud and very happy to have you here with us. It's a privilege for Honduras to have you with us here today. In Honduras, Save the Children has been working for 30 years in more than 800 communities where we've supported the comprehensive development of these communities.

When the hurricane hit, Save the Children supported over 50,000 people with different kinds of financing from

the people and government of the United States, especially from AID. Moreover, we have had the support of human resources from U.S. organizations here in Honduras which go far beyond reconstruction and infrastructure. This provides an exchange between the peoples of Honduras and the United States -- organizations such as Friends of the Americas, organizations like Medico, organizations from Princeton University who have been with us here in Honduras. The city of Missoula, Montana, which gave its support to Honduras. Two thousand homes -- we are now supporting the construction of these homes and the rehabilitation of 55 potable water systems. And 46 schools, as well as kindergartens in Honduras.

Over 12,000 boys and girls are being supported through the donation of educational material and over 50 clinics and hospitals are also being supported with material and equipment through the funds provided by the government and people of the United States. Eight hundred leading producers have also been supported -- these are volunteers, to help reestablish production at the small scale to protect the microbasins in our country.

And activities such as these are also mirrored in the private sector. NGOs like Care International, Catholic Relief Services, and others who have supported this kind of work -- with the help of government and people of the United States. Thank you very much for being here.

MODERATOR: And now, Ricardo Maduro, a businessman.

Q As president of a private educational foundation, I feel especially privileged in being able to address you on the subject of education. Our infrastructure in education was substantially damaged by Mitch. Over 3,300 schools, over 6,000 teachers were left homeless, and in addition to damage to materials, the ministry was completely flooded, and a great majority of the records and files were lost. In spite of this, we feel that the worst effect of Mitch has been to reduce our capacity, public and private, to invest in education.

We must not allow education to fall from its place as a top priority for Honduras. On the contrary, as President Flores has said, our goal is not only to recuperate, but to improve on pre-Mitch conditions, reemphasizing education's role as a main foundation for transformation. Conditions are critical in this sector. The average Honduran has only four and one half years of schooling, and it takes us 10 years, calendar time, to improve that indicator by one year. The quality of education is seriously deficient, ranking us among the lowest of the developing countries. Teacher training and curricular content are some of the reasons for this. Programs in nontraditional methods to reach students through means such as radio and television are urgently needed.

Our curriculum does not effectively address the needs of the market. Serious additional studies and programs must be formulated. The incorporation of modern technology with computers and we feel, as well as the general requirement of a second language, are two of the necessary steps, English being the second language.

Although private schools are and should continue to grow under participation in the sector, there's no doubt that the principal actor will continue being the government for many decades. The public sector must be strengthened in their institutional capacity to face the challenges in the sector.

Direct involvement of Honduran citizens and non-public institutions we feel is a necessity for successful educational reform. Private foundations such as ours and other NGOs need support for scholarship funding, research, and project design and implementation.

Honduras is especially grateful to USAID for their support in effective programs that have helped children in and out of schools to improve not only their scholastic level, but also the quality of their instruction.

Mr. President, -- from Mitch, as well as long-term social sustainability, based on adequate material well-being and the quality of life based on values can only be attained with equitable quality education. I

sadly share with all Honduran the consequences of this unmet need. The United States emphasizes helping their friends to help themselves. I believe that the best way to do this is to help us to educate ourselves.

Thank you very much.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President. On behalf of the Flores administration, we have devoted ourselves more than anything to try to find several parallel activities which will lead us to find a solution to the tragic problem provoked by Hurricane Mitch. We are now attempting to reach an agreement as soon as possible with the IMF, more than anything to be able to have some kind of debt relief, both bilateral within the -- as well as multilateral, with the qualification of highly indebted poor country.

And the magnitude of the tragedy that hit Central America, and in particular our country, has meant that with our scarce resources in the short-term we cannot deal with a reconstruction project. We need this debt relief, therefore, and we need fresh resources from the multilateral organizations. And furthermore, with need international cooperation.

So we are working very actively on our reconstruction master plan to present at the consultative group in Stockholm. Aside from our master plan for reconstruction, we're working on consultations with civil society, because we feel that the tragedy is so enormous that we need the concerted efforts of the government and civil society, and we are strengthening our mechanisms of transparency through international auditing in which USAID has been a very important contributing factor to provide us with the resources to be able to hire an international auditing firm.

And we have also strengthened the internal auditing organizations within the country. Thanks to the AID, we're now updating our government procurement system, and we're also working on creating a general project inspection office, where with the

participation of international auditors we'll be able to supervise all the work carried out to make sure that we make optimum use of the resources the country receives through international cooperation.

Our reconstruction plan is aimed at comprehensive human development, sustainable use of our natural resources, promoting the participation of our resources, and naturally, our national reconstruction. Thank you.

Q Mr. President, first let me thank you for giving me the opportunity to sit here with you. Thank you for this opportunity to be with all the members of your government, all the people of Honduras and of Central America. In Spanish, I would like to first thank my President, Mr. Bill Clinton. Not only he, but also the First Lady, Mrs. Clinton, took the time to come here. I don't know if you know this in Honduras, but in the United States, to have the President visit one of our cities is extremely difficult. Now, to have both of them visit the same place is incredible.

So what both the President and the First Lady have demonstrated in coming to visit Honduras and Central America is that they are here with you. I want to make sure that I do thank President Flores because I know that he and Mrs. Flores have also been not just in the office in the Palace, but also on the streets. And to me, that is a sign of true leadership, when the leaders of our countries are out on the street as well.

I applaud the accomplishments that I've seen since I was here back in early November. Much has been done, much still needs to be done. A message from the people of the United States of America: Our spirit is with you. Some of us are here physically with you. Our resources are with you. And I say not just figuratively, but these days, literally, you have brothers and sisters in the United States of America who are with you in every respect. The tragedy of Hurricane Mitch certainly tested your human spirit and you have come out and excelled. The tragedy of Hurricane Mitch also tested your new democracy and again you have excelled.

Our President has boldly come forward with the plan of assistance to this country and the rest of Central America. The American people, as you've seen through the many donations, have come forward to provide assistance. Now, quite honestly, the test is with the Congress of the United States. We must now move forward boldly as the President has and approve his request for assistance to this region.

I pledge, along with all my colleagues including Congressman Sylvester Reyes from Texas, to work as hard and the Honduran people have labored to rebuild this country. And in that respect, Mr. President, I should mention there is an effort, a real effort underway with the people in the city of Fillmore who are working with the people in San Perosula (phonetic). I think Jose Domino (phonetic) -- has approached us trying to see if we can help them obtain some bridges that the city of Fillmore is willing to donate. Transportation is already secured -- all they need now is the ability to break down these -- from an old bridge so they can be transported and be used here in San Perosula. So we're all working forward. And I'm very pleased that I'm able to be here with President, joined with him, and see if we can do just a little bit more. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: First of all, I would like to thank you all for your presentations and for making them quite specific and to the point. I would like to respond to a number of the points that were made. First of all, I have sent legislation to the Congress, just last week before I came here, asking for greater liberalization of trade for the Central America and Caribbean nations to move closer toward parity with NAFTA in Mexico. I have -- it does not go as far in everything that I'm sure a lot of you would do, but it does as much as we believe we can pass in the Congress.

I was profoundly disappointed last year that we did not pass the trade opening initiative. And, of course, after the hurricane struck I was even more disappointed. I think now, ironically because of the hurricane, we may have a

better chance to pass a bill. And I will do everything I can to that end.

With regard to debt relief, part of the package that I have proposed to the Congress in aid as opposed to trade -- about a \$965 million package -- a part of it involves the debt deferral and outright debt forgiveness, both of which would give very much needed debt relief not only to Honduras, but to the other Central American nations. If the Congress will go along with me and pass this, it will give me the standing to argue more forcefully to the other nations and to the international organizations that they must follow suit.

I think clearly Honduras should be given relief under the highly-indebted countries initiative that the United States has done a lot to create. I believe we should do more. I think the fact that the Holy Father has made this a year in which he's calling for people to do more debt relief will, frankly, be enormously helpful, and I told him that when I was in St. Louis recently. And I would urge you to communicate to the Vatican that -- if there could be more of this, like sort of a constant reminder, it would be a highly effective, even perhaps establishing some sort of priority saying you ought to do at least Central America and then something in Africa and something in Asia to give hope to the people on those continents, something like that.

But I think on a thing like this it's not enough to say it one time. We have to keep working. But I think Central America has a special claim here -- Honduras, Nicaragua, the other countries as well because -- one of the arguments I always hear even in my own country about debt forgiveness is, well, look you know if you -- and the former banker here understands this -- if you forgive it all, well, then, nobody will want to loan any money tomorrow because they'll think all of that will be forgiven, too.

Well, in the aftermath of the worst natural disaster in centuries here, it seems to me that argument just doesn't hold water here. It might be true in the case of an Asian country that had a bad banking system and

got in an economic problem for local reasons, but it seems to me insofar as the present predicament of Central America is a direct result of the hurricane, that argument has no standing.

So I will do the best I can. But again, I would urge all of you to stay on that because relieving the government of the financial burden of the payments will free up a lot of money for education and other things as well.

On the deportation, I think you know, Archbishop Rodriguez, because you spoke in a way that indicated you did -- I have done what I could to minimize the impact of some of our immigration laws not only on Hondurans, but on all the people of Central America. I, frankly, believe I have done all I can under the law. Now, because there was such hardship here, so much devastation, I was able to provide some greater consideration for the Hondurans that have come to the United States.

But I think it would be a mistake to sort of openly encourage more people to come, in violation of our laws and quotas, because there is -- I have gone to the limit of what I can now do. And I think it is far more important for us to concentrate on getting this aid package passed, getting the debt relief, getting the trade relief, getting the renewal of the economy here going.

Let me just mention three other issues very quickly. One of you mentioned the need for more loans for small business and micro-businesses. We have our USAID director here with me, Mr. Atwood. I think the United States funded 2 million microenterprise loans last year, through AID around the world. My wife is -- probably talked about that when she was here. This is a passion of hers, and has been for about 15 years now.

And we have found, in our own country, when we have a natural disaster -- you know, we had a flood, a 500-year flood in the Mississippi River five years ago. And one of the most important funds that we have is the fund that provides for special credit for small businesses who otherwise could not get it.

So I don't know whether there's anything special, Mr. President, we could do to help for the small and micro-enterprises, or to try to establish even a broader and more adequate international fund for such things in the face of disasters. But we always find -- even in America, which has a very sophisticated banking system -- that they are the first casualties of natural disasters that wreck the economies of whole communities. So if we could help you in that, I would be happy to.

There are just two other things that were mentioned. With regard to the environment, I think that -- you said, sir, that you felt that the disaster would have been even worse had it not been for some of the environmental practices here in Honduras. Yesterday, when I was in Nicaragua, there was no question that it was worse in the places where there had been vast deforestation, and nothing to protect the people from the mudslides. And you have a lot of serious -- the President was telling me today, you have a lot of serious decisions to make about, you know, how to replenish the soil which has been destroyed, where the topsoil has been carried away, or perhaps the nutrients have been washed away and the crops won't grow anymore.

I will do whatever I can. In this aid package, we have some significant amount of money for environmental investments. But I will do whatever I can to be particularly helpful there. I think it would be -- not only with the United States but with others as well -- I think the more we know about the specific plans and strategies, the better off we will be.

But if you look at our hemisphere, our region here, it's perfectly obvious that the countries that have done the best job of preserving their natural environment are going to be the strongest economically also, over the long run. And yet, one of the greatest battles we face in the world today, in this larger

struggle over climate change -- which may or may not have had anything to do with Hurricane Mitch; we don't know. No one knows for sure.

But the larger battle is that in most countries, most decision makers do not believe you can grow an economy unless you continue to use its resources at an unsustainable rate -- that is, at a greater rate than they can be replaced. And do not believe you can grow an economy unless you increase, year-in and year-out, the amount of fuel and energy you are using that contributes to greenhouse gases -- coal and oil, for example.

Now, all the evidence is against that proposition. But old ideas die hard. And I do believe that because economies have -- if for no other reason, and because of some of the stunning examples already set by the preservation of the biosphere or by the energy patterns adopted in Costa Rica, for example, that Central America may be in a unique position to get lots of investment to prove to the rest of the world that we don't have to destroy the environment to grow the economy. And so I would be happy to exert some extra efforts to help you get some investments in that regard, but again, I think the specifics are important.

For example, I'll just say one thing. The last time I was in Costa Rica, I noticed they were driving -- the buses they were using, the school buses they were using, the transportation buses they were using -- were powered by electricity or natural gas, and they were all made by a company in Vice President Gore's home state. And there are lots of things -- if we knew what the strategy was here and what the priorities were, there might be a lot of things we could do to be helpful.

The last thing I'd like to say is, I want to endorse what was said earlier by you, Mr. Maduro (phonetic), about education. And I would be happy for us to have a long-term partnership on that, but again, I don't feel that I know enough to know what your immediate priorities are. The United States has had some success in working with countries in various parts of the world in helping to increase more rapidly the number of children going to school.

And, of course, as you pointed out, there's no point in increasing the number of children going to school unless you have a

place for them to go to school, a teacher to teach them and materials with which they learn. But I do not believe that you can come anywhere close to doing what you want to do in Honduras if it takes you a decade to add one more year to the average school. And there may be a way -- I'm going to talk about this a little bit tomorrow, but this is a year in which a lot of countries are trying to pass this international convention against child labor, which the church has been solemnly supportive of, and which I strongly support.

But I think it would be interesting to see whether we could marry the commitment of countries to support the convention against child labor with a commitment of the advanced countries that are pushing to help to dramatically increase investment in those countries in education, so that you're saying not just that you don't want the children in the factory, but you do want them in the school.

And there may be a way that we could dramatically accelerate the rate, the average schooling here. Now, I have all these people from my administration here; plus Lieutenant Governor McKay, former lieutenant governor of Florida, who now will be my new Special Envoy to Latin America, and Mr. Atwood and the others are all here, so -- and your ambassadors. He's our ambassador, but I think he's really your ambassador. (Laughter.) But we will follow up on this.

On the environment and on education, the more specific you can be about what you want us to do, the more we can be helpful, I think. On all these areas, I will do my best.

The last thing I'd like to say is I'd like to thank the gentleman from Save the Children. My wife and I have been involved with Save the Children for more than 20 years, long before we ever thought we would be in national political life. And as soon as this hurricane occurred, she gave some money from her foundation to Save the Children through operations here. So I thank you for what you're doing. The organization has done great work in our home area as well,

and I thank all of you.

This was a very good set of presentations, and you gave me a lot to go home and work on.

PRESIDENT FLORES: Just maybe the closing words that you may say, Mr. President. First, our appreciation. I want to-- part of the audience is an ample representation of our leadership here in this country, of non-governmental institutions, labor unions, of private enterprise, of religious groups, and of people that represent different sectors of our society. We're trying to work together in terms of what we have talked here today.

Maybe briefly, in terms of the immigration factor that is very sensible for us and one that Monsignor Oscar Rodriguez touched, we understand the position -- your position and the position of the United States that we don't want to promote migration to the United States. We want our people and we want them to stay here. In terms of the people that went in the earlier days -- the only thing that we are asking is for the same treatment that the other Central American countries have --

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, I think you know that I strongly believe in that. I think that the present American immigration law and how it treats people that were in our country as of some time ago is an inexcusable remnant of the cold war and wrong. I haven't said anything to you I haven't said at home. I think that -- people came to the United States because they felt oppressed and are entitled to stay in our country because they came here, it shouldn't matter whether they felt the oppression from the left or the right. I mean, if it's a rational category people should be treated the same regardless of what the facts are. But the real issue is that all the countries in Central America should be treated the same insofar as whatever the objective facts were that brought the people to our country. So if people should come home, then they should be treated the same; if people should be able to stay, they should be treated the same. That's what I believe.

PRESIDENT FLORES: We coincide in terms of that, and the other factor is, then -- we are completely sure that with everything that we have going, in terms of the advancements on what we have done with the financial institutions, the leadership-- your leadership, and that of the United States, in terms of getting these things into the process of crystallizing. Even though we have had such a terrible blow, we will do good, we are sure we will do good, and that we will recuperate soon.

But there's a bridge that we have to cross, because people are becoming very uneasy. One thing that we have for us is the will of the people, but also the hope. And that's the thing that we don't want to lose. And bad timing -- from this moment, when people are starting to get uneasy. That's what I say, we don't want to regress in terms of what has cost us so hard to get, that's the democracy that we have fought for, which is, as a matter of fact, the great legacy of this century to the next century.

We have said that then, in America, there is all but one country, then, that has a democratic system, freely elected governments. That is a great legacy. In the worst that we would want to see as a scenario that we saw so many years before, when we were conflicted and that we were confronting, we don't want to go back to those years because of uneasiness in times of the people. We have to show the people that democracy works. That's the challenge that we have for the next century. We already won in terms of liberty and democracy. But the challenge is to show our people that the system works for them.

And when we have had a great catastrophe, it's even harder for us. How to cross the bridge? How to maintain the unity? How to maintain the hope of those people? So many out of jobs; so many that, every day because they don't have what they require to maintain themselves and their family, they might go into this frustration -- and here in Honduras, it's such high numbers.

And like we were talking today, every time that somebody comes here, and that they want to do good because they want to

announce their solidarity, we get big titles of how much money we're receiving, in terms of commitments. And everybody that comes, the same figures get put in the newspapers, and people think that we have bundles of money ready. And we don't; we have received very little, as far as today. We have done a lot with our own resources. Of course, with the solidarity in the emergency, we're sure that the resources are going to be there for the reconstruction period.

But we need to cross a bridge. Next year, I think it's going to be much better, but this is a very hard year. And this is when we need the things that can be done more easily and quickly so that people won't lose hope. The Caribbean Basin Initiative is one of those things. That's why we highly abide and support, because that can generate quickly the jobs that we need so much. Afterwards, well, construction will take care of providing those jobs. The growth of the economy, because of the resources that we receive will provide for the added force that we need in terms of the benefit of the people.

But we need to cross that bridge. It's so that people don't end in this inspiration and that we don't request that they maintain their confidence and that we maintain our unity. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for being here. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Thank you. Let me just say one thing. As we break up, I have heard this, and one of the reasons I am grateful that we have members of our Congress here is that we have these bills up there, they can be addressed now. I think there is an overwhelming understanding in both parties in the Congress that we have to pass the aid bill, and I think the only thing that we have to do is to make sure that political considerations in America that have nothing to do with Central America, things that back home don't in any way hold up the consideration of either piece of legislation, and so we will work hard on it. Thank you.

Oh, I have to get my key to the city. If I wear this to dinner tonight, I'll get a discount. (Laughter.) Thank you. (Applause.)

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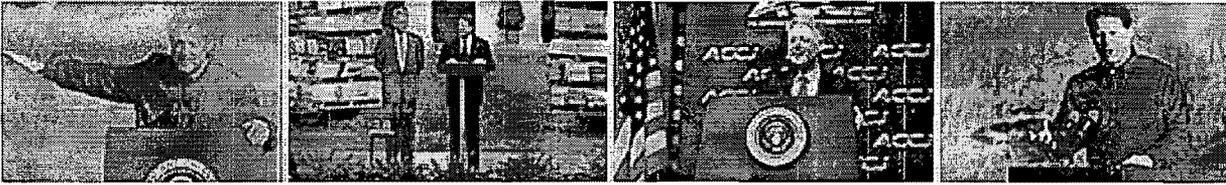
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March 10,
1999

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Legislative Assembly
San Salvador, El Salvador

11:55 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: To the President of the Legislative Assembly, thank you very much for your welcome and your fine comments. To the President of the Supreme Court, leaders and members of the Assembly; to the other leaders from Central America who are here; members of the Diplomatic Corps; other distinguished public officials from El Salvador; members of the American delegation. Mr. President, I noticed you said you would officially certify the results of the recent presidential elections today, so I don't want to jump the gun, but apparently, the President-Elect is here. And I'm delighted to see him as well. (Applause.)

I have come to Central America with gratitude for our partnership, gratitude for the warm reception that my wife received when she came here recently, and later the wife of our Vice President; with a distinguished delegation of members of Congress, heads of our federal agencies, members of the White House staff, my new Special Envoy to Latin America, former Lt. Governor of Florida, Buddy McKay, and others.

For two days now, we have been seeing and speaking

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with many different kinds of people in Nicaragua and Honduras, now in El Salvador, about efforts to recover and rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Mitch. We have met people who have lost everything but hope. I have been moved and humbled by their refusal to be defeated in the face of the deaths of their children, their husbands, their wives, their parents, the loss of all source of income.

I am very proud and grateful that the United States, through our soldiers, our aid workers and our Peace Corps volunteers, our private donations, have had the opportunity to work alongside the people of Central America in the rebuilding process.

The message I have heard from all kinds of people is that it is not enough now simply to fix things which were destroyed and move on; that, together we must build a better life for future generations, restoring people's lives and livelihoods as soon as possible, in a way that strengthens freedom and peace and the rule of law over the long run.

No one can forget that just a few years ago, the people of Central America were suffering from a legion of manmade disasters far more cruel than anything nature can bestow on us. There was a time not long ago when many in this region believed they could only defend their point of view at the point of a gun. A time when civil war and repression claimed tens of thousands of lives and cast many thousands more into exile. A time when farmers were pushed off their land and children were torn from their parents. A time which provoked, in the United States, bitter divisions about our role in your region.

You have worked hard here in El Salvador to shed light on that dark and painful period. Now, all of us as friends and partners, can and must join in building a common future, determined to remember the past, but never to repeat it.

I hope the people of Central America now see the United States in a new way, as a partner, a friend, a colleague in the process of strengthening democracy and reconstruction and reclaiming your rightful future.

The wars are over. Every country in Central America now is governed by elected leaders accountable to their people. What once was a no-win contest for power has turned into a win-win contest, for better schools, safer streets and economic opportunity. A battlefield of ideology has been transformed into a marketplace of ideas. Decades of struggle have brought a victory for democracy -- the only revolution of our time that has not betrayed its principles.

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In so many other parts of the world things are different. Nations still short-change schools and hospitals to pay for arms in the vain pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. Not in Central America. And certainly not in El Salvador. In so many other places in the world financial turmoil has undermined confidence in open markets and societies. Not in Central America, and certainly not in El Salvador. In so many other places people still try to resolve ethnic, religious and political tensions by the force of arms rather than the force of argument. Not in Central America. And no nation has traveled a greater distance to overcome deeper wounds in shorter time than El Salvador. You reached another plateau through your elections on Sunday.

A hurricane can transform villages full of life into valleys of rubble and death. But it will not wash away the foundations of good government and goodwill this people of Central America have laid. It cannot, it will not, take away from you the power to shape your own destiny.

All the Central American leaders which whom I have visited have told me that if reconstruction is managed in the right way, if it clearly benefits all segments of society in a transparent way, if it carves out new roles for local government and voluntary organizations, if it reflects the necessity of protecting the environment then this region will emerge in stronger shape than before the storm.

You are striving to build true democracies in which all people have a stake and human rights are respected; to build more equitable societies that have conquered not only the bitter divide between right and left, but the embittering divide between poverty and wealth; to build safer communities in which people can live in peace and have faith in police and judicial institutions; to build a more integrated community of the Americas in which borders are open to travel and trade, but closed to deadly traffic in drugs and guns and human beings.

The United States will work with you to realize that vision from relief to reconstruction to renewal. It is the right thing to do; clearly, it is in America's interest. Years ago, we learned that when Central America suffers, we suffer, too. In the last 10 years, we have learned how very much we benefit when Central America prospers in peace. Our exports to Central America and trade between us have more than tripled in this decade of reconciliation and hope. But to keep rising together, we have much more to do.

First, we need to keep in mind the extent of the challenge just before us -- the hurricane-damaged infrastructure that will cost \$8.5 billion to repairs.

Hope cannot be restored by aid alone. We also must expand trade and investment to restore growth. I have asked our Congress for funds totaling over \$950 million to help restore Central America.

On Friday, I sent to Congress a new proposal for an enhance Caribbean Basin Initiative that would provide for Central America and the Caribbean even greater benefits than the proposal I made last year before the hurricane. It would eliminate our tariffs on all textiles assembled here from U.S. fabric, as well as on all textile handicrafts. It would allow us also to treat all non-textile imports from Central America exactly as we treat such imports from Mexico under NAFTA. (Applause.) The only requirement is that all nations must meet their obligations under the World Trade Organization and participate in the effort to create a free trade area of the Americas.

Now, if our Congress agrees, clearly this will help people in Central America find jobs, market their exports, stand on their feet. It will bring us closer to a day when goods move freely from Alaska to the tip of South America with benefits to all nations.

In every country, including the United States, the progress of open markets is met by some skepticism and resentment. But look at the facts. Hundreds of millions of people on every continent have risen from poverty because finally they had the chance to produce goods and services for buyers beyond the borders of their nation. This will continue if we continue to tear down barriers that shut off countries for their customers. Exports have been the main engine of your country's growth for the last few years. They have helped the United States, too. Our expanding trade with Latin America clearly has lifted our own growth and limited the impact on us of the global financial crisis.

As we build a free trade area of the Americas, however, we must remember that trade has to work for ordinary citizens everywhere, to contribute both to wealth and fairness. We must build a trading system that upholds the rights of workers and consumers, so that competition is a race to the top, not the bottom. We must conclude a treaty to ban abusive child labor everywhere in the world this year.

But I know it is not enough to keep children out of work. We must get them into school in every nation. Today, I am pleased to announce that the United States will provide over \$8 million in new funding to help the children of America start school and stay in school. (Applause.)

I must say, as I drove along the streets of San Salvador today -- first, to see the President and then to

come here -- I was very moved by the friendly faces of people waving to me. But the most touching of all were the children that stood out in front of their schools in their uniforms with their little signs and their smiling faces. And I could only think that our obligation is to give all the children of this region the chance to stand in those lines, in those uniforms, and learn what they need to know to prosper in the century ahead. (Applause.)

We must also protect our environment. It is essential to the wealth of our nations and the health of our people. One of the central lessons of this hurricane is that we have to protect the environment to protect people. It was the deforested hillsides, for example, that experienced the deadliest mudslides. In places that retained their trees lives were saved.

Now, we cannot stop hurricanes or earthquakes or storms, but we can minimize the damage they do so that every act of God is not a disaster of biblical proportions. We can reforest watersheds and preserve wetlands. We can grow crops in a way that preserves instead of spends the fertility of our soil. We can build more safely for the future. We in the United States are providing computer software and aerial imagery to Central America to tell you where flooding and mudslides are most likely to occur during the next storm; where roads and infrastructures must be rebuilt to last.

But we also can do more. We must join together to stop the warming of our planet. Otherwise, there will only be more of the storms, floods, droughts and record-breaking temperatures that have caused so much misery in the last few years -- not only in our own backyard, but throughout the world. We can do this together and we can do this without forgoing economic growth. Each year we are developing cleaner technologies and cleaner sources of energy.

For example, here in Central America you have an abundance of geothermal energy in hot springs just waiting to be tapped. We simply must face the fact -- all of us -- that in this new Information Age, nations need not, indeed nations cannot, continue to grow their economies by clinging to the Industrial Age energy practices and land management practices and water management practices of the past. We can do better. And if we do, we will create more jobs and grow our economies faster, whether it is in Central America or the United States. And it is a critical lesson for the leaders of every nation to teach the people.

Each time -- (applause) -- it's okay if you hesitate on that; my Congress is not sure I'm right, either. (Laughter.) But I am. (Applause.) I can only tell you

this from our own experience. Each time the United States has set higher environmental standards, our businesses have created the technologies to meet them, and we have actually had more jobs and faster growth as a result. Of course, this has to be done in a sensible way. It matters how it is done, but it can be done.

Healthy market economies, in the end, cannot resist change, they must adapt to change. Like protecting the environment, protecting our people from drugs and crime is a challenge we must meet together. We have come far in the last few years in building a common understanding of the drug problem. The United States has recognized that we have a fundamental responsibility to reduce demand for drugs. The nations of Central America have recognized that drugs cannot pass through a society without leaving addiction and crime in their wake. So we are fighting the scourge together today for the sake of all our children.

We also have to join forces to fight the proliferation of small arms to criminal gangs. For all the deadly advanced weapons technology in the world today, the weapons most responsible for the most death and destruction is not a missile or a bomb, but the rifle. In too many parts of the world it is easier and cheaper to buy a gun or a grenade than to buy a schoolbook or a life-saving drug. No country suffered more in Central America's civil wars than El Salvador. Today, no country suffers more from the weapons and gangs left over from the war than El Salvador. This assembly here can help to meet this challenge by expanding our extradition agreement and preventing criminals from escaping punishment by flight across borders.

But America must also do our part to meet this threat to us all. We will continue to help you to train police forces that can fight gangs and gun-runners, while respecting human rights. We have tightened our laws to prevent Americans from making arms deals abroad that would be illegal at home; beefed up controls on our southern border and stepped up prosecution of smugglers. Together we helped to negotiate an OAS Convention that criminalizes the unregulated manufacture and sale of firearms, mandates strong export controls, and requires all firearms to be marked so they can be traced from one end of our hemisphere to the other.

I am determined to try to extend that convention to the entire world by the year 2000, and I hope I can count on your support for that endeavor. Now, if we can do these things -- (applause) -- if we can do these things, if we can create jobs, lift people out of poverty, protect our environment, build safer communities, we also will diminish the pressure that causes so many people in this hemisphere to leave their homes in

search of a better life. Legal migration from Central America has enriched the United States greatly. It has made us a stronger, a more vital, a more enterprising, a more diverse society. But poverty and the yearning for a better future have also brought many illegal migrants to our nation.

As the President said, people do not leave their families and their homes and risk a dangerous journey for the uncertain prospects of life in a strange land willingly. Most illegal immigrants are not, by nature, law-breakers. Most are simply looking for the chance to live in dignity and provide for their children. Nevertheless, we must continue to discourage illegal immigration, for it undermines the control of our borders, which every nation is entitled to pursue. And, even more, it punishes hardworking people who play by the rules and who wait for their turn to come to the United States. Therefore, we must enforce our laws; but we will do so with justice and fairness. I believe fairness means treating people equitably, whatever their country of origin.

Now, during the 1980s, many Central Americans fled oppression by both the right and the left. Some were hurt by soldiers, some harmed by rebels. All whose lives were shattered have a right to sympathy, safety and justice. Many who have been in the United States for a long time have established deep roots in our communities. At my request, following the Central American Summit in Costa Rica two years ago, our Congress passed legislation to help them. But it did so by establishing different treatment among groups of Central Americans, depending upon where they were from. I will do everything I possibly can to overcome that different treatment. (Applause.)

And I will work with our Congress to write laws that are more even-handed. Our treatment of people from Central America should reflect what they suffered, rather than who caused the suffering. This is wrong and we should change it. (Applause.)

Now, it is important for all of us to stop looking backward and start thinking forward about the future we want to build for our children. More than half the people of your nation today are under the age of 20. The same is true in Guatemala and Nicaragua and across Central America. These young people with no adult memories of war will not be defined by the need to take sides in a bitter struggle between two ideological extremes.

Instead, they will come of age in the 21st century with the unquestioned right to choose their leaders and shape their destinies. Now they will use that right, I believe, to demand of their representatives better education, good jobs, fair justice, clean water, safe

streets. They will want the things that will give them the tools to live their own dreams, that can help them to give value and meaning to their lives.

I believe we have a solemn obligation to make democracy deliver for them so they will see a bright future, a future that is their future here in Central America. Juntos para un mejor futuro. (Applause.) Se lo debemos a los fallecidos, se lo debemos a nuestros hijos. We owe it to the fallen, we owe it to the children. (Applause.) Muchas gracias. Thank you very much and God bless you. (Applause.)

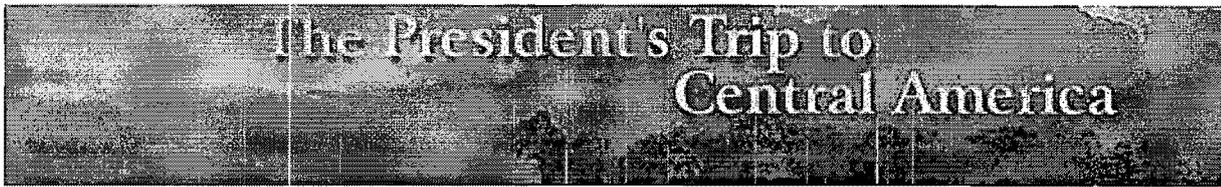
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**THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Guatemala City, Guatemala)**

For
Immediate
Release

March 10,
1999

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
UPON ARRIVAL**

Casa Presidencia
Guatemala City, Guatemala

4:15 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, representatives of the Guatemalagovernment and people, we thank you for your warm welcome. I am honored to havethe chance to be greeted here, in a place that recalls both Guatemala'sculturalheritage and its past of conflicts and pain.

And I am especially grateful for the chance to meet you today, at a timewhen Guatemala is building a future of democracy, reconciliation and peace. Youhave ended a cruel war. You have given your people -- all your people -- achance to shape their destiny and to stand on their own. You have facedthepast with candor and found the courage to move forward. You are teachingtheworld that no conflict is so bitter, no gulf is so wide that it cannot beovercome by the power of the government and by people of good will.

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In a few moments I will have the opportunity to discuss with a broad range of Guatemalan citizens the progress of peace in your country. I will reaffirm America's commitment to shed light on the dark events of the past, so that they are never repeated, and to help you implement the peace accords in a way that ensures that the human rights of the Guatemalan people are always respected.

Tomorrow, I will meet with President Arzu and we will join with the leaders of Central America in a summit in Antigua, to continue our efforts to build in this hemisphere a community of true democracies in which all our nations finally can prosper together. That is our common goal. Lo lograremos como socios y como amigos.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

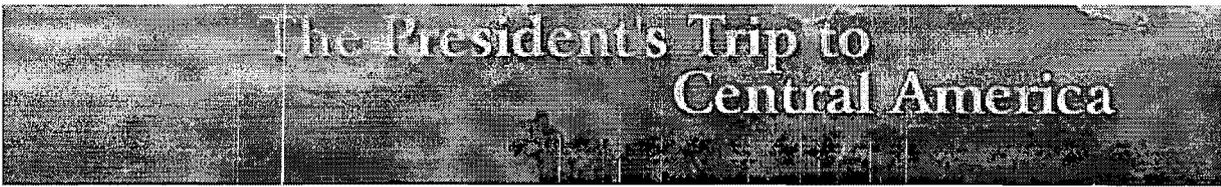
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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Guatemala City, Guatemala)

For Immediate Release

March 10, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON
PEACE EFFORTS

National Palace of Culture
 Guatemala City, Guatemala

4:45 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Mr. President, first, let mesayhow much I appreciate this opportunity that has been provided for me tomeetwith citizens of your country to hear about the progress of the peaceprocessand the challenges ahead. Because of the involvement of the United States, Ithink it is imperative as we begin for me just to say a few words about thereport of the Historical Clarification Commission.

The commission's work and the support it has received from thegovernment shows how far Guatemala has traveled in overcoming that painfulperiod. I have profound respect for the victims and the families who hadthecourage to testify, and for the courage of a nation for coming to termswith itspast and moving forward.

For the United States, it is important that

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I state clearly that support for military forces or intelligence units which engaged in violent and widespread repression of the kind described in the report was wrong, and the United States must not repeat that mistake. We must, and we will, instead, continue to support the peace and reconciliation process in Guatemala.

As many of you know, we provided \$1.5 million in support for the commission. We declassified over 4,000 documents at the commission's request. Now we will encourage the translation of the report into indigenous languages and its wide dissemination. Consistent with the commission's recommendations, we also will continue our support of development programs in those communities which suffered most from violence and repression. This year, we plan to provide an additional \$25 million to support the peace accords through aid to the justice sector, to education, to literary training, to the generation of income and to citizen participation in government.

You have come a long way, as President Arzu just said, in forging a consensus in support of democracy and human rights and in finding a way to discuss your differences openly and peaceably. I applaud the difficult but essential effort you have undertaken.

Beyond the commission issues, I would also hope to discuss other matters critical to peace and to development and reconciliation, including economic liberalization, market opening measures, increased trade and investment, all of which are crucial to the overall well-being of the people of Guatemala. Now that you have chosen democracy and peace, it is imperative that the United States be a good partner in making sure that it works for all your people.

And again, Mr. President, I'd like to thank you and the government and the people of Guatemala for the road you have taken and for making me feel welcome today. Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all I would like to say how very impressed I

was by the presentations: And I would like to say a few things at the end, but for now, I was asked a couple of questions, so I would like to respond.

First, I was asked about possible opportunities, greater opportunities for women and young girls, and children generally. I think that the model which has worked best throughout the world for economic empowerment for women has been the whole -- particularly rural women and indigenous populations -- has been the whole concept of microcredit, as I'm sure my wife talked about quite extensively when she was here.

But I think even more important is getting schooling going and providing -- you know, I'm involved in this effort to try to end child labor that's abusive, worldwide. But it's not as -- it's also important to get the children into schools, all kinds of children, including the children of indigenous people, and girls as well as boys, for a longer period of time.

This is a big problem not just in Latin America, it's a huge problem in Asia, it's a huge problem in Africa. But I think the United States should be heavily involved, particularly in light of our past. We have a heavy responsibility to Guatemala and, indeed, to all of Central America to do more in this area.

I have asked the Congress of the United States to pass an aid package tied to what happened in the hurricane, of something over \$950 million. A lot of it is designed just to support the rebuilding that has to be done, and that is important. But there is quite a lot of money for education and economic development and, to go to another point you made, for the effort to institutionalize the rule of law, both for commercial and economic reasons and for human rights reasons.

This is an area in which I think those who have and those who haven't, in Guatemala and throughout Central America, have a common interest, because the rule of law is essential to get more investment and more economic opportunity and to protect the investments that exist. It is also essential to establish in an orderly way human rights

and the institutions of justice.

So, Mr. Atwood, our AID Director, is here and he can talk more about that with you. But we have worked quite hard to put together a package that I hope will be helpful. And I will be prepared, over the next couple of years, to try to do more.

On the question of trade, I sent last Friday to the Congress another bill to try to provide more parity between our trading relationships with Mexico and Canada, and our trading relationships with Central America and the Caribbean. And I believe we have a reasonable chance to pass that bill this year. And if we do, it obviously will lead to more opportunities for the sale of Guatemalan products in the United States, and more jobs, therefore, for the people here. I will work very hard to pass it.

I was asked about the immigration issue, and I would like to speak briefly about that. I gave a more extended statement today, to the National Assembly of El Salvador, but I will briefly say what I said there.

I think it's important for every country to enforce its immigration laws and try to protect its borders. We have very generous legal immigration laws, and we have many, many immigrants from Central America making a major contribution, positive contribution to the United States.

On the other hand, most of the illegal immigrants from Guatemala and other Central American countries are not law-breakers by nature; they're people who are seeking a better life. It's hard to leave your family and your home, and take the risks inherent in coming to a strange land without the approval of the law. And people do it because they want a better opportunity for themselves and their families.

I think there are two things that should be noted as we do try to enforce our immigration laws. The first is that we have to be sensitive and act with justice and understand the impact of recent events. The second is that the present American law is completely unfair in that

it treats different -- people from different countries in Central America differently. And it is a vestige of our, sort of, kind of our Cold War mentality, and how we were involved here.

I can do two things about that. The first is to try to change the law. And we will aggressively work to try to change the law to get parity, equal treatment for all people from Central America without regard to the political past, and whether the difficulties of the past were seen as coming from the right or the left. I think that's irrelevant. We should treat all countries the same.

The second is to use, to the maximum extent possible, whatever flexibility I have under present law to achieve the same goal. I will do that. But in the end, the problem cannot be fixed -- the immigration problem cannot be completely fixed until there is a change in the law so that all countries would be treated the same under the law. And I will actively seek that this year.

Anyway, I think that responds to the questions that were asked of me. If I were to ask a question -- if I could ask one question, I would like to say that -- one of you said that we needed a dignification program, with priority given to the widows and orphans. And I would like to know whether you have specific suggestions over and above the programs I have already mentioned for what the United States could do to be helpful to deal with the large number of orphan children and widows you have -- what else could we do, what specific suggestions do you have for me over and above what has been mentioned?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think it is in the nature of such meetings that you only scratch the surface of what needs to be done and what the possibilities are. I will say again, I intend to go back home and do my best to pass the aid package, to pass the trade parity bill, and to get improvements in the immigration difficulties. Within the aid package, we will be able to support education initiatives, and economic power initiatives like the Women's Credit Program, that President

Arzu mentioned.

I think it is important that, after I leave Central America, the United States develop with every country the most specific possible plan for what it is you want to achieve that we can help you achieve -- whether it is in dealing with the specific problems of the widows and orphans; the need for the education of the children; the need for the economic empowerment of women; the need for greater efforts with indigenous groups; the need to go further in the search for human rights, the rule of law; how to come to terms with the issues related in the commission report.

And I guess what I would like to leave you with is my commitment that I am willing to continue to push, Mr. President, to have these sorts of specific commitments on the part of the United States so we know we have a good road map for where we're going into the future, and you know what you can expect of our partnership. And, of course, tomorrow, we'll have a greater chance to talk about what we can do regionally when you get all the Presidents together.

I would like to just leave you with this one thought. For all of your terrible suffering and the continuing difficulties you face, please do not underestimate how far you have come and what you have done. It is my responsibility as President of the United States to travel the world to deal with all of these problems that I see cropping up in other places. You know this, but I would like to just say, the last few years have brought a flood tide of changes in the way people work and live, and in the political and social and economic relationships of people -- the end of the Cold War, the growth of the global markets, the explosion in information technology -- it has changed everything. And all over the world, people are searching for a new balance.

Most of these changes are good, but there are -- not all of them are good. And they all present people everywhere with dilemmas. There is the question of integration versus disintegration. And I'll give you -- you have it in Guatemala. You want -- how do you balance the need for the nation to be sovereign with the

legitimate rights of individuals and groups? How do you balance the need for the nation to be sovereign with the need to have greater cooperation with other countries? How do you balance the need to develop your economy with the imperative of preserving your natural resources? How do you balance the need for security and order with the imperative of individual rights to privacy and liberty, and the rule of law, for both commercial and human reasons?

All of these challenges you face are being faced by other people elsewhere. In South Africa, for example, to go back to what many of you talked about, they had this Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which perhaps went a little further than your report. And I thought that they -- we think they're making real progress there.

But in the last week four different political leaders have been killed. In Central Africa, where there was tribal slaughter in Rwanda and Burundi, I met with indigenous peoples. I met a woman whose husband and six children were all killed, and she woke up and for some miracle reason she didn't die from the wounds she sustained. And she, like the woman here, is devoting her life to this reconciliation. And I thought we were making progress. And just last week the majority tribe killed a bunch of Americans and other people.

So I say, as awful as this is for you, and as frustrating as it is, it is astonishing how much has been done in Guatemala and in the other countries of Central America, and the direction you have taken. For all the economic frustrations you face, you're doing better than many much larger countries in Asia and in Latin America, because you've shown greater discipline and innovation.

So I urge you to not get discouraged and I urge you to -- I have tried very hard to change the historic relationship between the United States and Central America, to be a genuine partner and to think about the future in different terms.

And we won't solve all the problems today or tomorrow, but I think we have to say we are on a different track, we have

turned a real corner. And I came here as much as anything else just to express my respect for you and to ask you not to get too discouraged. You think about Europe as being a very rich continent, but look at these problems we're having in Kosovo and Bosnia where they haven't been able to, in Kosovo, do what you have decided to do. They still think they can shoot their way out of their difficulties. And we're hoping and praying they will take a different decision in the next few days.

So I thank you for talking to me, and, before me, to my wife when she came here, and for all the work you are doing. But I just want you to know that I am committed to changing our relationship over the long run in all these areas we have mentioned. And I will do my best to make sure that we have the kind of partnership that will make both our countries stronger and address the specific concerns you have outlined today.

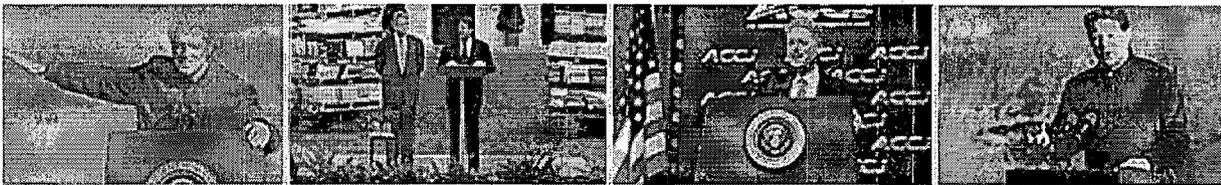
Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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THE WHITE HOUSE **President Clinton Addresses the Opening of
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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Guatemala City, Guatemala)

For
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March 11,
1999

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN OPENING REMARKS**

Casa Santo Domingo
Antigua, Guatemala

10:36 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: President Arzu, President Aleman, President Flores,

President Calderon Sol, President Rodriguez; President Fernandez, Prime Minister Musa. First, President Arzu, let me thank you, your government, and the people of Guatemala and especially the people of Antigua for the wonderful welcome and hospitality I have received here.

When Hillary came back from her trip to Central America last November, she told me about the devastation she had seen in four nations, but she also said, at the end of the trip you have to go to Antigua.

You know, this is the first time the President of the United States has been anywhere in Guatemala outside of the airport in Guatemala City. President Johnson visited there 30 years ago. This visit is long overdue. More importantly, this moment in history is long overdue.

I came to the presidency in 1993 determined to establish a new partnership with the peoples of Latin America and especially to reach out to our neighbors

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in Central America. At long last, Guatemala and all its neighbors have a chance to prosper in freedom and peace, in a hemisphere united by shared values.

We have come together in this old capital to find new solutions. The damage the hurricanes left, some of which I have seen, of course, has increased the urgency of our deliberations and our action. We are determined to respond to this calamity so that what was destroyed will be built back better than ever. We commit today to build a common future here in Antigua, a city that knows a great deal about rebuilding.

Our challenge is to consolidate the remarkable achievements of Central America in the last decade, to build on them, and to accelerate them. I am committed to lowering trade barriers between us, both to speed recovery and to build a free trade area in this region that will benefit all the citizens of all the countries.

I am committed to a common struggle against violence and drug trafficking and drug abuse; to shared responsibility for the care of our environment, for the education of our children, for the health of our people. I am committed to justice and to institutions which will maintain it. I am committed to fair immigration laws, fairly enforced, and especially to the principle that we should treat people from Central America equitably, whatever their country of origin; and recognize the special circumstance of those nations that Hurricane Mitch hit the hardest.

Our new partnership has made quite a bit of progress since our last summit in Costa Rica. We still face daunting challenges. But now we face them with a unique sense of solidarity and a common commitment to freedom, to democracy, to open markets; and to meeting the demands of our people for better schools, safer streets, wider opportunities.

Even before the United States was created, a North American poet, Ann Bradstreet, complained about the harshness of our weather. But, she added, "if we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant." Well, Central America has had a long and difficult season, aggravated by the recent hurricanes. But we can truly rejoice that the springtime of renewal and rebuilding is here. The sun shines on us today, in Guatemala and throughout this region. For all the problems that people face, we must never forget how far they have traveled. And we must never lose sight of the path that leads to a brighter tomorrow. We must go on that path together, to build a new American century for all the people of the Americas.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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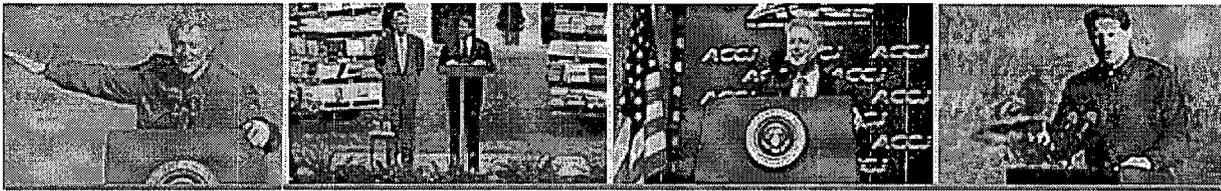
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March 11,
1999

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT SIGNING CEREMONY AND
SUMMIT CLOSING STATEMENTS**

Casa Santo Domingo, Convention Center
Antigua, Guatemala

4:07 P.M. (L)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Good afternoon. President Aleman, thank you for your words and your leadership. President Arzu, thank you so much for bringing us to this magnificent place and for hosting this very valuable meeting. To all my fellow leaders of the Americas, I thank you for the examples you are setting within your countries and by working together.

As we see here in Guatemala and, indeed, in all the nations represented in this extraordinary region, they are blessed with natural and with man-made monuments of ancient grace and spectacular beauty. Now the people have built a new monument -- also spectacular and, hopefully, just as enduring -- the monument of peace.

Because of developments in Washington and in Europe, I hope my fellow leaders will forgive me if I take my only opportunity today to appear before the press to say something about another area in which we are working for peace in Kosovo, where a serious civil conflict has been occurring and where much bloodshed might still occur.

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Today, our House of Representatives in Washington is debating a resolution on the potential deployment of American troops. I hope the House will act in a way that supports our efforts to achieve a strong peace agreement. I have, and will continue, to work closely with the Congress as we seek to bring peace to Kosovo. As I have repeatedly said, a final decision on whether we would send our troops as part of a peace force depends upon the achievement of a genuine agreement, on an immediate cease-fire, on rapid withdrawal of most Serbian security forces and demilitarization of the insurgents.

Both sides must agree to a NATO force. Europe's troops must make up the great majority of the forces. And we must have a NATO strategy that includes a clear plan for bringing our forces home. If, and only if, these conditions are met, I strongly believe United States forces should contribute to securing the peace in Kosovo. We have a strong stake in bringing peace there, just as we have a strong stake in peace in Central America. If we don't end the conflict now, it will spread; and when it does, we will not be able to avoid participating in stopping it; and when we do, it will come at far greater risk and far greater cost.

Now, let me talk a moment about what we have met about today -- how to turn this region of peace and shared values into a region of joint endeavors and common progress. I have made it clear that the United States supports greater debt relief and I outlined my proposal for that; that we support more open trade to create jobs and opportunity through an enhanced initiative of the Caribbean Basin, the countries of Central America and the Caribbean, and eventually through a free trade area of the Americas.

We also discussed other economic issues, what can be done to increase investment in tourism, what can be done in the environment. Our United States Agency for International Development, I am pleased to say, will contribute another \$25 million to support CONCAUSA, the agreement we signed in 1994 in Costa Rica, to promote environmental cooperation among us. This contribution will help the people of Central America to protect their forests and coastlands, to reduce industrial pollution, to fight climate change.

We talked a lot about immigration, as you might imagine. I reaffirmed my intention to support our immigration laws fairly and justly, but to work strongly for the elimination of any disparities in our law so that they treat Central Americans equitably, whatever their country of origin.

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We also spoke today about the danger of gangs and guns and drugs. In many ways, they represent the final stage of Central America's internal conflicts. We talked about what we could do together to combat them.

Let me just say in closing that this has been a very moving trip for me, personally. When my wife came here a few months ago, in the aftermath of the hurricane, she came home and talked to me a lot about what she saw and what people were doing. But no description can adequately replace the personal experiences of what I have seen.

In Honduras and Nicaragua, I met people who were devastated, but undaunted -- determined to rebuild in a way that reinforces the transformation of this region. In El Salvador and today, in Guatemala, I have been privileged to see two nations that have found the courage to face a painful past and move forward to build a truly hopeful future.

At this summit I have seen Central America's leaders working together for the future. And I have tried to demonstrate that for the future, beyond the service of my presidency, America must be a partner and a friend, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it is in our interest to do so.

We have never been closer to realizing the dream of a hemispheric community based on genuine respect and genuine partnership. Something great has happened here in Central America in the last decade. As we move out of the past and away from the damage of the hurricanes, we do so in a way that we are determined to see this area emerge from adversity, in a way that places all of us on higher ground. I am proud to have been given the chance to be a part of it.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q Good afternoon to all the Presidents. My question is for the President of the United States, Mr. Clinton. What do you think of the statement by President Arzu with regard to the need to have a global strategy, a long-term strategy for the Central American region?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: I think he's right about that. One of the things that I pointed out in our morning meeting is that Central America, for all of its economic difficulties, basically is being well managed. And I believe that if there were a way for all these leaders together to demonstrate to the world that they are determined to avoid the kinds of financial problems and economic problems, for example, that have caused such trouble in Asia, and frankly, caused difficulties for all developing economies -- caused the interest rates for funds even in Central America to go

up -- if there were a way for this region to say as a region, look, we know what caused those problems there; we're not going to do that here; this is a good place to invest -- then I believe not just the United States, but people in Europe, people in South America, people in Asia would be far more likely to invest here, to bring Central America not just into a better partnership with the United States, but with all the world in a way that would lift the lives of people here.

So I agree with President Arzu that there should be a global strategy. But I believe that because we're neighbors, for the foreseeable future, for the next 50 years, our major economic relationship should be one with another. And that imposes special responsibilities on the United States, but it also gives us a lot of opportunities.

The President said to me, and I'd like to say to my fellow Americans not only here, but those who might be listening to this press conference or who will hear the reports of it, that our trade with Central America far outstrips our trade with countries that are much, much larger than the combined population of Central America. And it has an enormous potential to benefit not just the people of this region, but the people of the United States, as well.

Q For President Clinton. Mr. President, particularly given that part of your reason for being down here is to express your regret and apologies for what past White Houses have done over the objections of Congress, can you please explain why it is that your administration has been so adamant about Congress not registering its opinion on the situation in Kosovo, and what exactly is your exit strategy if U.S. troops are sent over there?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, first of all, Congress has a right to express its opinion on anything it likes. I have two things to say about it. One is, it's premature. I do not believe that -- until we know that we have maximized the chances for both sides to say yes to the peace agreement -- it's not at all clear that they will -- I do not believe that the Congress should take any action that will, in effect, preempt the peace process or encourage either side to say no to it. So I thought it was premature. I don't object to Congress expressing its opinion on anything. That's their job.

Secondly, every President has reserved the right to both receive the advice and consent and support or endure the opposition of Congress, but not to give up the constitutional responsibility to deploy United States forces in peacetime. And I think that my predecessors were right about that.

It's not that -- what I apologized for has nothing to do with the fact that there was a difference between the policy of the administration and the Congress in previous years, going back for decades, and including administrations of both parties. It is that the policy of the Executive Branch was wrong. And what we're doing here is in the open, it's not a secret.

What was your other question? Oh, the exit strategy. Well, the exit strategy should be defined by the missions. You will be able to see that we have an exit strategy if we define the missions properly -- just as in Bosnia we defined the missions and we have cut, I think reduced our troops strength by more than 70 percent now. And we continue to bring them down.

I'm in sort of a double-bind here, you know. We tried in Bosnia to give a date certain for when we thought we could withdraw, based on what the Pentagon said they believed would happen, in cooperation with our other agencies. We turned out to be wrong. Then people said, well, maybe the President misled us about how long we would stay there.

So we decided in Kosovo the right thing to do was to say what the benchmarks of the mission would be, and the Congress has to approve money every year for such things, so they would be able every year to see whether we were meeting the benchmarks, but we wouldn't mislead them about knowing in advance exactly how long it would take. So when we did it that way, then people said, well, we're making an open-ended commitment. That's not true. I don't intend to make an open-ended commitment; I think that would be wrong.

Q Question for the President of the United States, Bill Clinton. What is your personal opinion of the peace process of Guatemala?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, first of all, I think the fact that you have had elections and that people are free to speak their minds; that I met with an elected Vice President of Guatemala who is a representative of the indigenous population yesterday; that the differences are freely expressed and that, according to President Arzu you have a free and sometimes contentious and critical press -- I'd say that's all healthy.

I also think this commission report was a brave thing to do. And I think you know that the United States supports the peace process, including the effort to find the truth, even if it's not favorable to the United States. We contributed \$1.5 million to the work of the commission; we declassified 4,000 documents at the request of the commission. So I basically support what you are trying to do, strongly.

No nation can tell another exactly how to come to terms with its past and to move into the future. And the answer will necessarily be different from nation to nation. What South Africa did, what Chile did, what El Salvador did will not necessarily work in Guatemala. Neither will what you do necessarily work for some other country. The main thing is, is there an honest effort being made to bring about reconciliation and the rule of law and human rights and genuine freedom. And I don't think there is any question that Guatemala has been moving in the right direction. And for that, all of us who believe in freedom and human rights can be grateful.

Q President Clinton, did your administration ignore evidence of nuclear espionage by the Chinese in order to further your policy of engagement? And what do you have to say to Republicans calling for Sandy Berger's resignation?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, first of all, we did not ignore evidence. Quite the contrary; we acted on it. Let me say for the benefit of all the press, both American and others, looking at this issue -- there are two questions that need to be looked at separately. One is, did we respond in an appropriate, timely, and aggressive way to indications of espionage. The second is, is our policy toward China of engagement the right one.

Now, the answer to the first question is, I believe the record is clear that we did respond in an appropriate way. In 1996, we were notified that there was some indication of a breach of security at one of the energy labs and that the appropriate agencies were investigating. The appropriate congressional committees were notified at the same time. Since then, they have received at least 16 briefings on this issue.

Now, in 1997, in July, we were notified that the scope of the potential espionage might be very broad, and might be directly related to lax security at the energy labs. At that time, we moved quickly and decisively not only with the continuing FBI investigation and with the CIA review, but also with an intense review of the counterintelligence capacities of our energy department labs.

As a result of that, in February of '98, I signed a presidential directive to dramatically improve the counterintelligence capacities of the lab. In April of '98, we set up a counterintelligence office by the energy labs, headed by a 35-year FBI veteran with a record of dealing with espionage. We doubled the counterintelligence budget. We raised the standards for foreign visitors to the labs; we said foreign scientists had to be accompanied to the labs. I think

we began to polygraph DOE employees at some point -- only two agencies, DOE and the CIA, have their employees subject to polygraphs.

Simultaneous with that, in terms of technology controls, we subject China to the tightest restrictions of technology transfer that we have on any country that is not on an embargo list for the United States. So I think the record is that we acted aggressively. I think Mr. Berger acted appropriately and, therefore, I would not release him or ask for his resignation. I just don't think there's any evidence to support that.

Now, let me say, the second question -- and this affects the welfare of everybody else in the world, if you realize how China is growing, both economically and the size of their population; this affects the welfare of every person in Central America -- whether the United States and China are at odds in a conflict or have a constructive relationship that has honest disagreements, where nobody is under any illusions that the facts are different than they are.

I would argue that our efforts to have an honest and open policy with China, so that they don't think that we have made a decision in advance to try to contain and limit them in their economic growth and their development as a nation, has paid dividends. I do not believe that China would have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; I do not believe they would have practiced the restraint they have practiced in the transfer of various dangerous materials to countries like Iran and Pakistan if we had not been constructively engaged with them.

I do not believe that we would have had the level of cooperation in Korea in trying to limit North Korea's ability to develop nuclear capacity that we have had. I do not believe we would have had the cooperation we have had in trying to limit the impact of the Asian financial crisis, which has plunged tens of millions of people from the middle class into poverty in Asia, and represents the biggest short-term threat to democracy and to stability in Asia. I do not believe those things would have occurred if we had not had an open, candid, honest relationship with China, aware of all the facts.

Keep in mind, this is about a case that developed in the mid-'80s. We have known about China's nuclear capacity and their capacity to pose a strategic threat and, more or less, what the dimensions of that were since the 1980s. And this raises the question of whether some espionage in the '80s was somehow related to that capacity. We have investigated it; we continue to investigate it. We have dramatically increased our intelligence. I believe we have taken all

appropriate steps.

I do not believe that that evidence justifies an isolated no-contact relationship with China when we have gotten the benefits not only to ourselves, but to the rest of the world of our engagement policy.

Q I have a question for President Clinton. What are the commitments that the U.S. has acquired with Central America with regard to the migratory problem?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, as you know, for one thing, I stayed all the deportations for all the countries affected by the hurricanes. I had to lift the stay for all the countries, other than Honduras and Nicaragua, because under our law a temporary stay, because of the collapse, in effect, of the national infrastructure of a country due to natural disaster, is very specific in our law.

The fundamental problem with American law is that, essentially, with regard to people who have been in the United States a long time, is that we treat people from different Central American countries differently based on the source of the oppression of human rights, rather than whether people had hardships that caused them to come to the United States.

The commitment I made was twofold: one, that within the law -- and I brought Doris Meissner, our Immigration Commissioner here with me -- that within the law I would do all I could to avoid a disruptive return to people because of the law that I think we all admit is unfair; but that in the end, to fix the problem entirely, we would require legislative change. And I would seek that from the Congress, and I believe there is support from members of both parties for that sort of change.

Now, beyond that, I recognize that most of the people who might still want to come to the United States, particularly in the aftermath of the hurricanes, are not by nature law-breakers, they're people looking for a better life for themselves and for their families. But we have to enforce our immigration laws. And if we don't, it's not fair not only to people in other parts of the world, but to other Central Americans. There are thousands and thousands of Central Americans who have registered to come to our country under the laws that exist now in a lawful way. There is no reason that people who line up like that and try to do it should be deprived of their legal right to come to the United States as a result of a reaction in our country because of a large flow of illegal immigrants.

So I made a commitment to try to be as reasonable as possible under the existing law, but I have to uphold

the law. I made a commitment to try to change the law to treat all people from all Central American countries the same. And, finally, let me say, I believe the most important commitment that I made is the commitment on debt relief, to pass our aid package to help the reconstruction effort -- which is a genuine emergency -- to try to expand trade, and to try to develop the economy.

In the end, economic development at home will stem the flood of illegal immigration -- genuine opportunities for people -- more than anything else we can do. So those were the commitments that I made.

Q President Clinton, you've said often that NATO is prepared to act if the Serbs attacked ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Violence is now on the rise. Why isn't NATO responding, and what are you doing to keep the peace talks from collapsing there?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, as you know, Senator Dole has just come back from Kosovo, also I think quite frustrated. The real problem, of course is -- I don't want this to be misinterpreted -- there is no, in my view, moral equivalence between what has been done by the Serbs, and what has been done by the Kosovar Albanians to try to secure the autonomy which was unlawfully stripped from them a decade ago. But it is clear that in this interim period, when they went home from Rambouillet and they're arguing about whether they should take this peace agreement, there are a lot of tensions and cross-currents.

The consensus among our NATO allies now is that in the next few days we should be doing everything we possibly can to get these people on both sides to realize that this is -- it is crazy for them to go to war, to kill each other, to compromise their children's future, when they have an agreement which, from the point of view of Mr. Milosevic, only requires him to do what the law requires him to do anyway -- to respect the autonomy of the Kosovar Albanians -- which, from the point of view of the Kosovars, avoids a bloody war and gives them a chance to establish the mechanisms of self-government without foreclosing or guaranteeing a future of independence, to see how they do in the next three years.

It seems to me that a present war is the worst of all circumstances. Now, if the prospect of the agreement were totally destroyed by an outright military offensive, I would be the first to argue that our NATO allies have to take action and take action now. But the situation is, frankly -- even though you're absolutely right, there have been some actions by the Serbs -- the situation is sufficiently murky and the present status of the peace agreement and whether either side can bring itself to agree is sufficiently shaky, that all the

NATO allies at this moment on this day believe that we should devote all of our energies to try to get the agreement.

But I can speak for myself, and I believe at least for most of my NATO allies, that if this thing come apart at the seams we still have a commitment. And I'm determined to honor our commitment.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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