

Human Services to launch an all-out effort to heighten public awareness about adoption and to recognize those in the private sector who are committing themselves to this important cause.

Let me also say how grateful I am to those in Congress of both parties who are working so hard to make adoption a reality for America's most vulnerable children. I want to thank especially Senators Rockefeller and DeWine and Representatives Kennelly and Camp for their efforts.

The fact that we are commemorating the birth of a child that began life in a manger and became the Prince of Peace should remind us that the promise of God has been placed in

every child. We must work tirelessly to make sure that every boy and girl of America who is up for adoption has a family waiting out to reach him or her. No child should be in foster care for one day longer than he or she needs to be.

This is a season of miracles, and perhaps there is no greater miracle than finding a loving home for a child who needs one.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. Following the address, the First Lady led a discussion with foster care families which was included in this release.

## Memorandum on Adoption and Alternate Permanent Placement of Children in the Public Child Welfare System

*December 14, 1996*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Commerce, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management*

*Subject: Steps to Increase Adoptions and Alternate Permanent Placement for Waiting Children in the Public Child Welfare System*

During this Holiday Season, as we reflect on the importance of family in our own lives, let us remember the tens of thousands of our Nation's children in the public child welfare system who live without permanent and caring families. Foster care provides temporary shelter and relief for children who have been abused or neglected.

I am committed to giving the children waiting in our Nation's foster care system what every child in America deserves—loving parents and a healthy, stable home. The goal for every child in our Nation's public welfare system is permanency in a safe and stable home, whether it be returning home, adoption, legal guardianship, or another permanent placement. While the great majority of children in foster care will return home, for about one in five, returning home is not an option, and they will need another home, one that is caring and safe. These children wait far too long—typically over 3

years, but for many children much longer—to be placed in permanent homes. Each year, State child welfare agencies secure homes for less than one-third of the children whose goal is adoption or an alternate permanent placement. I know we can do better.

I believe we should increase the number of children who are adopted or permanently placed from the public foster care system each year toward the goal of at least doubling that number by the year 2002. Returning home is not an option for about 100,000 of the over 450,000 children in the Nation's foster care system, yet only approximately 20,000 were adopted last year and approximately 7,000 were permanently placed in legal guardianships. While the number of adoptions each year has been constant for many years, I believe that by working with States to identify and break down barriers to permanent placements, setting annual numerical targets, rewarding successful performance, and raising public awareness, we can meet the target of at least 54,000 children adopted or permanently placed from the public foster care system by the year 2002.

Today, therefore, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with State and civic leaders, to report to me within 60 days on actions to be taken to move

children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes and at least to double, by the year 2002, the number of children in foster care who are adopted or permanently placed out of the public foster care system.

I. To increase the number of children who are adopted or permanently placed each year, this report should include, but should not necessarily be limited to, recommendations in the following areas:

- (a) Plans to work with States on setting and reaching State specific numerical targets, using the technical assistance of the Department of Health and Human Services National Resource Centers to make information on best practices available to States and to engage community leaders, parents, and the business and faith communities;
- (b) Proposals to provide per child financial incentives to States for increases in the number of adoptions from the public welfare system. Options considered should have little to no net costs, as increases in the number of adoptions from the public system will reduce foster care costs, thereby offsetting much if not all of the incentive payments;
- (c) A proposal to ensure continued aggressive implementation of the Multi-ethnic Placement Act, as amended by the Inter-ethnic Adoption Provision of the Small Business Job Protection Act;
- (d) Plans to compile and publish an annual State-by-State report on success in meeting the numerical targets; and
- (e) Plans to recognize successful States.

II. To move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes, the report shall also recommend changes to Federal law and regulations and other actions needed to emphasize the importance of planning for permanency as soon as a child enters the foster care system. The Secretary's report should include, but should not necessarily be limited to, recommendations in the following areas:

- (a) Plans to provide States with funding to identify barriers to permanency and to develop targeted strategies to find permanent homes for children who have been in foster care a particularly long time;

- (b) Proposals to shorten the period of time between a child's placement in foster care and his or her initial hearing at which a permanency determination is made;

- (c) A proposal to clarify that the purpose of "dispositional hearings" is to plan for permanency and, as appropriate, to consider referrals for family mediation, termination of parental rights, adoption, legal guardianship, or other permanent placements;

- (d) A proposal to clarify the "reasonable efforts" requirement and other Federal policy as it relates to permanency and safety;

- (e) Plans to ensure that States give appropriate weight to permanency planning by establishing standards for securing permanency through adoption or guardianship, once a decision has been made that a child cannot be returned home; and

- (f) Plans to examine alternative permanency arrangements, such as guardianship, when adoption is not possible.

Last month, I signed a proclamation designating November as National Adoption Month—a time to increase awareness about the tens of thousands of children waiting for families and to encourage all Americans to consider the rewards and responsibilities of adoption. However, adoption must be a national concern throughout the year. Therefore, I direct:

- (a) The Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop and lead a public awareness effort including use of public service announcements, print materials, and the Internet;

- (b) The Secretaries of Health and Human Services and the Treasury in consultation with State, civic, and private sector leaders to develop and disseminate information about the new adoption tax credits and other adoption benefits;

- (c) The Secretaries of Labor and Commerce, in consultation with State and civic leaders, to identify and recognize companies in the private sector with model policies to encourage and ease adoption among employees; and

- (d) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management to direct all Federal agencies to provide information and support to

Federal employees who are prospective adoptive parents.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: The National Adoption Month proclamation of October 29 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## The President's News Conference With European Union Leaders *December 16, 1996*

*President Clinton.* Thank you very much. Please be seated. It is a pleasure to welcome back to the White House Prime Minister Bruton of Ireland and President Santer of the European Commission.

A year ago in Madrid, the United States and the European Union launched the new transatlantic agenda to fight international crime and terrorism and drug trafficking, to support peace-makers around the world, to bring down barriers to commerce between our two nations. Today I am proud of the concrete progress we have made in that short year.

Our commitment to reducing trade barriers is paying off, clearing the path to greater prosperity. Next month our negotiators will finish work on a set of mutual recognition agreements which will abolish requirements that a broad range of products, including telecommunications and medical equipment, be reinspected and recertified for each other's markets. This will remove barriers on \$40 billion worth of trade between the United States and the European Union, cutting redtape for our businesses and prices for our consumers: one standard; one test; one time.

I want to especially thank the Transatlantic Business Dialogue for their leadership in achieving these agreements, especially the European and American cochairs, Jan Timmer, former chairman of the Phillips Corporation—excuse me—Phillips Electronics Corporation, and Dana Mead, chairman of Tenneco. They are both here today, and I'd like to ask them to stand and be recognized. Thank you very much, gentlemen, for what you did.

I also thank our European partners for helping us to complete the landmark information technology agreement finished last week in Singapore. It will eliminate by the year 2000 all tariffs on computers, semiconductors, telecommunications equipment, and software products. That's a \$5 billion cut in tariffs on Amer-

ican exports which will benefit producers and consumers all over the world.

We have also deepened our work for peace and freedom in Bosnia. Today we agreed the civilian reconstruction effort there must move faster and that we have to have greater progress on projects for which funds have already been pledged. I thank the European Union for the generosity that has made it the largest donor to reconstruction, and we're working together to ensure the success of another donors conference next year.

The U.S. and the EU are also moving to confront new security threats. Our law enforcement officials are now working on a new joint counternarcotics offensive in the Caribbean. We're on the verge of an agreement for the EU to join the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Corporation. The EU's financial contribution and political support for KEDO are essential so that we can keep frozen and eventually dismantle North Korea's dangerous nuclear program.

And I welcome the EU's positive response in our proposal to establish an African crisis response force. This initiative would help African nations respond under the auspices of the U.N. to humanitarian and peacekeeping needs like those we have seen recently in Rwanda and Zaire. We look forward to working with European, African, and other nations to turn this concept into a reality.

I applaud the European Union for the important step forward it has taken by adopting a common position on Cuba, one that puts support for democracy at the heart of the relationship between Europe and Cuba, in keeping with values shared by great democracies on both sides of the Atlantic. And I hope that together we and our allies will continue to increase our support for freedom there.

As we look ahead, the historic strength of the relationship between the United States and