

Statement on Enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization *June 12, 1997*

After careful consideration, I have decided that the United States will support inviting three countries—Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic—to begin accession talks to join NATO when we meet in Madrid next month.

We have said all along that we would judge aspiring members by their ability to add strength to the alliance and their readiness to shoulder the obligations of NATO membership. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic most clearly meet those criteria—and have currently made

the greatest strides in military capacity and political and economic reform.

As I have repeatedly emphasized, the first new members should not and will not be the last. We will continue to work with other interested nations, such as Slovenia and Romania, to help them prepare for membership. Other nations are making good progress—and none will be excluded from consideration.

We look forward to working with our NATO Allies to reach agreement on this important issue.

Statement on Congressional Action on Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Legislation *June 12, 1997*

I applaud the United States Congress for passing the disaster relief bill that the families of the Midwest and other parts of the country desperately need. I am especially pleased that the congressional majority heeded the call of common sense by ensuring that the people who need this assistance will get it and by ensuring that the controversial and extraneous provisions of the bill were dropped. Anyone who has toured the flood-ravaged areas of the Midwest,

as I have, knows that these needed funds will help put America's families and communities on the road to recovery. Above all, today's vote shows that while we may not agree on everything, we can still work together and move forward on those crucial priorities that are beyond dispute. I thank the Congress for its willingness to do so, and I hope we can continue to work together in that spirit in the weeks and months to come.

Statement on Signing Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Legislation *June 12, 1997*

I am pleased to sign into law tonight the disaster relief bill that Congress has just sent to me.

This bill provides the desperately needed resources for hundreds of thousands of people who have suffered terribly from the flooding and other natural disasters in the Dakotas, Minnesota, California, and 29 other States. It also includes the necessary funds for the Department of Defense in connection with our peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia and Southwest Asia. It does not include the unacceptable political provisions

of the bill I vetoed that had nothing to do with the goal of providing disaster relief.

When our people are in need, we Americans come to their assistance as one nation. I applaud the Congress for heeding my call to remember that fundamental principle.

NOTE: H.R. 1871, 1997 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from Natural Disasters, and for Overseas Peacekeeping Efforts, Including Those in Bosnia, approved June 12, was assigned Public Law No. 105–18.

Remarks to the Business Roundtable June 12, 1997

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Don, for your introduction and for the good work that you do and that we have tried to do together. I'm delighted to be joined here today by several members of the administration. I see Secretary Daley; Secretary Herman; our NEC Chair, Gene Sperling; my Presidential Adviser for Public Liaison, Maria Echaveste; and Mack McLarty, who is known to many of you for the many hats he has worn and now, among other things, is my special envoy to Latin America.

I wanted to come today to talk to you, at what we all know is a very hopeful time, about what we have to do together to keep our economy growing and to prepare America for the 21st century, with the lowest unemployment in 24 years, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the highest corporate profit in more than two decades, the biggest drop in inequality of incomes among working people last year since the 1960's, and a stock market that has done reasonably well. *[Laughter]* We also have had the biggest drop in crime last year in 35 years and now 5 years in a row of crime going down, by far the largest drop in the welfare rolls ever since 1994 when it reached its all time peak. Our country is also leading the world again in exports and cutting edge technologies. And we can be forgiven if we now hope that we can make the 21st century, like the 20th century, another American century.

The great credit for this remarkable economic turnaround goes primarily to American businesses and workers, to small businesses and entrepreneurs, to those on the cutting edge of research and development, to the responsible policies of the Federal Reserve. But I also like to think that our new economic policy had a little something to do with it as well.

In 1993, we replaced trickle-down economics, which had quadrupled the Nation's debt, with invest-and-grow economics, starting with cutting the deficit. We cut it from \$290 billion a year to what is estimated to be about \$67 billion this year. That is a 77 percent reduction based on the 1993 plan. Now, with the balanced budget agreement that the administration has reached with the Congress, it will go to zero.

Second, we have invested in the skills and education of our people, beginning to put in place a system of lifelong learning for all Americans, which starts with expanding Head Start and includes raising academic standards, opening wider the doors of college, improving job training for employees, and developing with the business community, in every State, school-to-work partnerships for those who don't go on to 4-year colleges or universities.

Third, we have vigorously worked to open markets for American products. With NAFTA, GATT, and over 200 other hard-won trade agreements, our exports are at an all-time high and will be further advanced by the agreements recently reached in telecommunications and information technology. Fiscal responsibility, investing in people, free and fair trade, that has been our economic strategy.

We have also tried to modernize and improve the way the Government works with the private sector. The Federal Government now has 300,000 fewer people working for it than it did the day I became President in 1993, some 16,000 fewer pages of regulations, hundreds of fewer Government programs but, more importantly, genuine partnerships with all different kinds of industries to grow the economy and preserve the environment and to reach other genuine and legitimate aims of the American people, including moving people from welfare to work and giving our children a greater future, things to which Don alluded.

The results of your efforts and ours and our partnership have made the United States once again the envy of the world. I read the business magazines when they come out, and they're a long way from where they were in 1993, when I didn't enjoy reading them so much. Now there is a hyperbole contest. One says this is the best economy in 30 years; another says it's the best it's ever been. I don't feel the need to resolve that debate. *[Laughter]* Regardless, that's a high-class problem.

But we know that underneath that there are other challenges facing us, so I came here to say I think we can keep this going. I believe we can do better. But it will require us to make some critical choices in the coming months that