

Mr. President, your visit underscores the debt all Americans owe to Ghana and to Africa for the brilliant contributions that African-Americans have made and continue to make to the United States.

The writer and crusader W.E.B. Du Bois was a citizen of both Ghana and the United States. Near the end of his life, he wrote his great-grandson that his very long life had taught him two things: first, that progress sometimes will be painfully slow, and second, that we must forge ahead anyway because, and I quote, "the difference between 100 and 1,000 years is less than you now think." He concluded, "doing what must be done, that is eternal."

Mr. President, you have done so much of what must be done. It will live eternally, and

we will be eternally grateful for the friendship between our two nations. Let us extend it in the new century for the new millennium.

Mr. President, Mrs. Rawlings, welcome to the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where President Rawlings was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, President Rawlings' wife. The President also referred to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Rawlings.

The President's News Conference With President Jerry John Rawlings of Ghana

February 24, 1999

President Clinton. Mr. President, distinguished members of the Ghanaian delegation, it's been a real pleasure for me to welcome President Rawlings back to Washington to advance the partnership between the United States and Ghana.

On my visit to Africa last spring, I said the United States wanted and very much needed a new partnership with Africa. We face stiff challenges: a border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea; civil wars in the Congo, Angola, Sierra Leone; famine and disease causing heartbreaking human loss. But it is important not to forget how far Africa has come since the days of apartheid and authoritarianism.

In a few days, we'll have an election in Nigeria to elect a President and to give the largest, most populous country in Africa a chance to chart a new course. Over half the countries of sub-Saharan Africa already have democratically elected governments. It is clearly in our interest to have a broad and constructive partnership.

Since Kwame Nkrumah led Ghana to independence in 1957, Ghana's example has inspired other nations to take control of their destinies. Over the past decade, Ghana has continued to lead the way, with a growing economy, with

peacekeeping forces in west Africa and around the world, with its efforts to strengthen democracy at home.

Today President Rawlings and I are broadening our partnership. We're encouraging multi-lateral African forces to respond quickly to outbreaks of violence. We're providing more training for Ghana's battalion in the new African peacekeeping enterprise, the African Crisis Response Initiative. We're supporting Ghana's active role in stemming violence in west Africa through ECOMOG's regional peacekeeping force, as it seeks to stop the carnage that has racked Sierra Leone.

For our part, we have contributed logistical and medical support for peacekeeping troops there, and we will continue to do so. In fact, I want to increase our support for ECOMOG, and I hope Congress will support my proposal to do so. In the last 18 months, we have also provided over \$75 million in humanitarian assistance to refugees and victims of violence.

President Rawlings and I also agreed on a number of steps to increase trade and investment between our nations. Tomorrow our U.S.

Trade Representative will sign a trade and investment framework agreement with her Ghanaian counterpart. It will be only our second such agreement in Africa. Next month, here in Washington, 9 members of my Cabinet will meet with ministers representing more than 40 African nations to discuss ways that we can work together to expand development. I also hope Congress will soon take the next step by passing the "African Growth and Opportunity Act."

Finally, the President and I will continue to work together to fulfill the promise of democracy in Africa. Ghana already invests a phenomenal 40 percent of its budget in education. Today we announced that we will be sending new Peace Corps volunteers to help link Ghana's classrooms to the Internet. We're also working with Ghana to crack down on child labor, to train judges and lawyers mediating disputes, to fight HIV and AIDS while infection rates are still low there, to build a reliable power supply for the future, to study and preserve Ghana's elephant population and their environment, and to prepare for fair elections in the year 2000.

This partnership, indeed, covers a lot of ground. Our investment in Ghana and Africa is one of the most important we can make for the new century. This year we will offer over \$800 million in economic support to Africa. We will augment this with a healthy program of bilateral debt forgiveness for Africa's strongest performing economies. Over a 2-year period, counting what we did last year, that bilateral debt forgiveness will be almost \$500 million.

Africa cannot overcome all its challenges overnight. But make no mistake about it, there is a new Africa, growing proudly alongside its ancient traditions. Ghana is not the largest country in Africa, but it continues to lead toward tomorrow by the force of its example, by its commitment to democracy, by its steady economic progress, by its cooperation with its neighbors, by its willingness to take risks and make contributions for peace. Ghana is lighting the way forward, and we are proud to be here working to strengthen our partnership.

Mr. President.

President Rawlings. Thank you very much. Thanks for some parts of the good news. I wish you had told me about it earlier on. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen of the press, this morning, at the ceremony on the White House lawn, I set out a rather modest

agenda for my visit to the U.S. I'm happy to note that the discussions that we've had so far have been instructive from both sides. President Clinton has shown to us his sincerity and determination to forge ahead with a new era of cooperation with Africa.

We all agree that his trip to Africa last year represented the high point of official U.S. attention to and recognition of our continent. And I hope that Africa will continue to feature prominently on the foreign policy agenda of the U.S.

It is rather unfortunate that the stereotype image of Africa as a continent full of conflict, lack of democracy, et cetera, et cetera, continues to dominate the international media. And yet, there are many positive developments taking place on our continent. For example, in the past 5 years, some 21 African countries have achieved positive GDP growth rates, with 12 of them—including Ghana—reaching 45 percent a year. Democracy has taken root in many African countries, with emphasis on good governance.

And many of our countries have done the right things to create a favorable climate for foreign investment. In fact, Africa has demonstrated real promise as a destination for investment. Ladies and gentlemen, listen. The statistics show that between 1990 and '94, the average annual return on U.S. direct investment to Africa was 28—28—percent. This, compared with 11 percent in Europe, 12 percent in Latin America, and 14 percent in Asia—the Pacific areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude my very brief and introductory remarks by saying that Africa is a continent in transition. It is a continent facing challenges, and some of these have their roots in the bipolar politics of the cold war. But Africa could very well be the continent of the future. As you know, the Secretary-General of the U.N., Mr. Kofi Annan, put it succinctly the other day when he said that the conflicts and problems of Africa were caused by human action and can, therefore, be ended by human action.

We're here, ladies and gentlemen, as I said earlier on, to invite the United States of America to be part and parcel of that human action, to address the problem of hunger, poverty, debt, and conflict. Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, what we will do is, we'll take alternating

questions, one from the American press, one from the African press, and we'll begin with Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

Independent Counsel Statute/Allegations of Misconduct

Q. Mr. President, would you like to see the independent counsel statute expire in June? And what is your reaction to recent allegations by an Arkansas woman, apparently of something she claims happened many years ago?

President Clinton. Well, my counsel has made a statement about the first issue, and I have nothing to add to it.

On the independent counsel law, I think that, as you know, we've been—I think you know, I think it's been public that we've been asked to testify, the White House Counsel has been invited to testify next week. And I presume sometime between now and then I'll have a chance to talk to them about what they intend to say.

I think for right now what I would like to say, because I have been, to put it mildly, closely involved with the operation of the statute, that I think I would like to leave the maximum amount of time for others to make their opinions known and to feel free, without any reference to anything we might say, to do that. I would encourage people who have views to make them known. And I was particularly struck by the change in position of the American Bar Association and by the size of the vote in favor of that different position. And I think it's just something that Congress should look at.

Q. Excuse me, but you do have some ideas about—

President Clinton. I do; I do have some—

Q. —the loss of confidentiality.

President Clinton. I do. I have some ideas about it. But I think it would be better for me at this time to say less so that others can say more. The Counsel will be testifying at some point next week. But now I think the important thing is that everyone feel free to express their opinion, and I don't think mine should, in effect, cast a shadow or illuminate what others might wish to say between now and the time we make our statement.

Peacekeeping Force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Q. My question is for both Presidents. There is a conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo—[inaudible]—is trying to negotiate a peaceful settlement. In the case that it reaches the point where it needed the contribution of troops for a peacekeeping force in the Congo, is, first, Ghana going to contribute troops to bring peace to the Congo? And also, is the United States going to contribute money and logistics for the peacekeeping in the Congo?

President Rawlings. If I may—do you mind, sir? You are no doubt aware that we have more than enough problems on our hands on the West Coast of Africa, and for the past—what—10 to 15 years or so, we've been involved in the conflict issues in west Africa, mainly between Nigeria, Guinea, and Ghana. We've managed to find the appropriate solution to the problem in Liberia, and today we find ourselves also in Sierra Leone.

I must admit, though, that much as we've enjoyed some form of assistance from some of our Western allies, I don't think the assistance that has been provided has been adequate, and it's something we've always brought to their notice. But in our recent discussions with the Cabinet, under his leadership, they've made it quite clear that they'll do everything possible to assist us to be able to deal with some of the problems in west Africa.

As far as the issues to do with the Congo is concerned, I believe the U.S. is doing what you can by way of providing the necessary assistance to South Africa and a few other countries to find a solution to the problem in that part of Africa.

Should they be asking for troops from Ghana to serve in, what do you call it—Congo-Brazzaville—

Q. The Democratic Republic of Congo.

President Rawlings. Thank you very much. I have to say that our resources are stretched to the very limit. We have problems back at home. And if the U.N. or the international organizations and countries would want to assist us, we have a number of troops who would be prepared to assist, to provide a peacemaking as well as the peace—what do you call it—peacekeeping effort in that part of the country. Okay?

President Clinton. My answer to you sir is, first of all, I think we all have a stake in a resolution of the problems of the Congo. And if there were an appropriate peace signed that we felt to be consistent with the rules of the international community and the long-term stability and welfare of the people of the Congo, as well as its neighbors, I would certainly do my best to support any necessary force to maintain the peace for a period of transition, including logistical and other support.

I'm sure you know this, I mentioned it in my remarks, but for some years now, we've been trying to help establish an Africa Crisis Response Initiative, and help to support it financially, that would, in effect, go beyond the efforts of ECOMOG in west Africa, to deal with the whole continent. And when I was in Senegal last year, I actually went out to a training operation of the Africa Crisis Response Initiative, and I met with some of the soldiers, and I talked with our people about what we were doing together.

So I would be pleased. I also went to Rwanda last year and met with the leaders of the surrounding countries, the Great Lake countries, including Mr. Kabila. At that time, we were trying to—I was hoping we could avoid the bad year we've had in the Congo.

So if there could be an internationally recognized agreement, consistent with international law, that required a peacekeeping force, and we were asked to provide some sort of support, logistical and otherwise, I would be inclined to do so.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Kosovo Peace Negotiations/U.S. Foreign Policy Interests

Q. Mr. President, two questions. Last Friday you said it would be a mistake to extend the negotiating deadline for Kosovo. What made you change your mind in less than 24 hours? And how do you respond to former Secretary of State Kissinger, who says that Kosovo should be protected by European troops and not American troops? He wrote this week, "Kosovo is no more a threat to America than Haiti was to Europe, and we never asked for NATO support there."

President Clinton. Well, this is a good way to have a six-question, instead of a three-question press conference. [Laughter] Let me try to disaggregate those things.

First of all, what they did in the peace talks was to reach an agreement that they had gone as far as they could, but they did not want to give up and disintegrate into violence. So when we agreed to extend, we were basically agreeing to what both parties wished to do. It seems to me that if your objective is to get people to get together to make peace and they say, "We think this is what we need," I think that's the right thing to do.

Now, the Kosovars have agreed in principle to the agreement. They want to go home and have time to sell it between now and the middle of March. The Serbs have agreed, except they don't agree to having a multinational, NATO-led peacekeeping force because they say there's a big difference between Kosovo and Bosnia. Bosnia was an independent country in which the Serbs had interests; Kosovo, they say, is a part of their country, so this erodes their sovereignty. The problem is that we believe, and all others, including the Europeans, who have been involved in this process, believe that unless there is some sort of multinational force, we cannot keep the peace.

So they've agreed to work on this between now and March 15th, and they're giving us some time to work on it to try to make it work, and I'm committed to do that.

Now, second point: I would say there is a difference between the interests of Europe in Haiti and the interest of the United States in Kosovo. And I don't mean—this does not diminish the importance of Haiti. We've worked very hard to save democracy in Haiti, and to support that country. But our country, for 50 years, has recognized that what we wanted in Europe was a Europe that was democratic, peaceful, and undivided. At the end of the cold war, we finally had a chance to achieve all three. But with the disappearance of repressive regimes and the threat of the cold war conflict, a lot of old ethnic, religious conflicts reasserted themselves.

Does the United States have an immediate, selfish interest in what happens on some lonely road in Kosovo to some poor farm family driving a wagon, with horses that are underfed because they haven't been able to get food? No. We have—I would argue we have a humanitarian interest. One of our major papers yesterday ran a gripping picture on the front page of a whole line of refugees moving out.

But the United States does have a direct interest in whether there is instability in the Balkans. And I would say to Dr. Kissinger, I think we're moving in the right direction. We want Europe to assume more of its own defense. And if you compare where we were in Bosnia—how long it took to get there, what our role was, our contribution in the beginning of the Bosnia operation—to where we are in Kosovo on this military proposal—how much more quickly it materialized, and our contribution, only about 14 percent, I think, of the total—I think we're moving toward more of an independent European force, but supported by the United States, because we have a very large stake in anything that upsets the stability of central Europe.

Support for the President's Africa Initiative

Q. It's obvious that Africa does not play a major role in terms of the minds of the people of the United States, as we can gather now that no questions have been asked about Africa.

President Clinton. You shouldn't take it—it often happens with Asians and Latin Americans and—[laughter]—and it's really my fault because I don't let them ask me enough questions on other occasions, so I'm forcing them to use this opportunity to pepper me. I apologize. [Laughter] So go ahead.

Q. It's obvious that you and your Government have very good intentions towards Africa. But how are you going to "conscientize" Congress and the American people to be able to support your efforts in Africa?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, that's a very good question. We talked about that at great length in our meeting today. We spent as much time on that as anything.

Let me say, I see this as a multiyear effort, long-term effort. It started when we had the first-ever White House conference on Africa here. And we're about to have this ministerial, as I said, next month, with at least 40 African nations represented—very high levels. I was the first President ever to take a really long trip to sub-Saharan Africa and to go to six countries.

We're trying to increase both—not both, all three—aid, trade, and investment and bilateral debt relief. We are working on demining activities, which is very sensitive and important in many parts of Africa. We're working especially hard on health-related issues and particularly HIV and AIDS, where that's a big problem.

And meanwhile, we're trying to lift the profile of Africa in the United States. There is actually quite a lot of interest among ordinary citizens here. The Africa trip I took last year, particularly since it got off to such a good start, when a half million people showed up in Accra—[laughter]—and most of our people—Presidents are not used to having half a million people. [Laughter] If I get 10,000 or 20,000 here, it's a big show. [Laughter].

But the point is, it captured the imagination of the American people. And we also had a good delegation from Congress there. And tonight, at the state dinner, we will have a delegation from Congress, a sizable delegation, which will include both African-Americans and non-African-Americans. It will include both Democrats and Republicans.

This is not going to be—we were isolated from Africa for a long time, except for cold war concerns, as you know. And we are trying to have a broad, deep, full relationship now. And it is simply not going to happen overnight; we're going to have to work at building it.

But I want you to be encouraged. I think we're moving in the right direction. And I have been very heartened by the genuine interest I have gotten from Members of Congress, from both parties and all kinds of backgrounds. I have been trying to tell them that this is a phenomenal opportunity, as well as obligation, for the United States; we've been missing it, and we don't need to miss it anymore. And I think that we're moving in that direction.

President Rawlings. It is true that when this issue came up I did a lot of talking about, engaging about this issue, almost sounding like a priest. [Laughter] And at the end of it, the response I got was that there are other ones that you should be talking to this way. I mean, those who you should be talking to this way were outside of this room, outside of this Cabinet. And in other words, they are very much in agreement with our perceptions about Africa's problems, what the problems are and what the solutions ought to be. So in effect, it's hard to take this message outside of that Cabinet, to the broader American public, to Members of Congress, et cetera, on both sides of the aisle.

President Clinton. To be fair, what the President said here in his opening statement in some ways is the most important thing you can say to Americans who are not involved in Africa.

This is not simply a continent with problems; it's a continent with promise. Our investments in Africa, American investments in Africa, have earned a rate of return more than twice the rate of return earned by American investments the last 5 years in Europe, Asia, or Latin America. That is quite a stunning statistic.

And you can say, "Oh, well, it's because it's just the beginning of investment;" or, "Oh, well, the best opportunities are there." You can make all the excuses you want; 30 percent is 30 percent. [Laughter] And that's real money, you know? Even by the standards of the last 5 years, that's a hefty rate of return.

I did tell—after the President was pounding on me to do better by Africa, I did say, I said, "Reverend Rawlings, you're preaching to the saved." [Laughter] "You should just pass the plate, you know." He was preaching to the saved. [Laughter] But it's a very important point. I don't blame him, or you, for asking this question.

But you have to understand, too—I know the cold war has been over 10 years now; I know that. But I also would call your—I would like to say one other thing, briefly, I said to the delegation earlier. The end of the cold war presented the United States with a new circumstance that required us to take an approach different from the approach we had taken for 200 years. For 200 years, our principal involvement with other countries was commercial or cultural, unless attacked. Then in the 20th century, we got into World War I because our ideals were offended and because our allies were in trouble in Europe. We immediately withdrew from the world, with disastrous consequences. One of the reasons that we had the Great Depression and we had World War II is that the United States in its idealism walked away from the world.

So then we had World War II, and then we had the cold war, a reason for America to stay in the world. For the last 10 years, it is the first time in the history of the United States that we have had a sustained, comprehensive commitment, bipartisan, to have a larger role in the world—in peacetime, without our existence being threatened—which means we learned something from what happened between World War I and World War II, and we understand that America is a country where people here come from everywhere, and we know we have unique responsibilities because of the

blessings we enjoy at this moment in history. But it is a new moment for us, and we are still learning how to do it.

That is not an excuse. I know when you see a child die of AIDS, or you see a child step on a mine in Angola, or you see an economic opportunity going unfulfilled, or you think that we could help you to end a war more quickly, I know it's frustrating. But our friends in Africa have to understand what we have been doing for the last 10 years is unique in more than 200 years of history for us. And I think we'll get it right and do the right thing, but it requires a certain departure that I think most people who don't know the history of our country have difficulty accepting.

Go ahead, Larry [Larry McQuillan, Reuters].

President Rawlings' Budget/Iraq

Q. President Rawlings, your domestic critics say that your budget proposal for the coming year has been unrealistically optimistic, and I'm just wondering if you might like to take this opportunity to respond to that.

And President Clinton, on Iraq—[laughter].

President Clinton. I thought you were going to ask me the first question. [Laughter] Go ahead.

Q. There's been another incident again today. And this certainly seems to be an ongoing recurrence. And I'm just wondering if, perhaps, you can clarify for us what the U.S. policy objective is on Iraq? And have we given up all hope of any kind of arms inspections again?

President Rawlings. Please. I don't think there's anything unrealistic about what the Minister of Finance—and it's not just the Minister of Finance, but it's the whole Cabinet, under the chairmanship of the Presidency, myself, as well as the Vice President, do a very thorough examination of the pros and cons of what's coming in and what's going out, et cetera, and on the basis of which, we do a very thorough examination of what will come and what will not. And it's on the basis of this that we come out with the budget statement for the country.

And please accept it when I say that we've gone through an experience where, unlike governments of the past, we did not make the mistake of—what do you call it—taking politically expedient moves just to deal with some economic problem. Because ultimately it's going to catch up with us, and this is what has happened

in the past. And this is a lesson we learned more than 10, 15 years ago.

I mean, it's been very difficult for us in the past, every time we've had to read the budget, but then we take the trouble to educate our people about what it entails, what it means, what the difficulties are going to be, et cetera.

But you've got to keep in mind that the minute our people under—very often—I think I understand where you're coming from—very often, whenever people do not understand or appreciate what is being churned out in a broadcast, then of course, I mean, they wonder what you're talking about. But if you can reduce it to the lowest denominator and then they understand what it all entails, they are all for you. That's half the problem; that's half the solution that's solved. And that's what we do, not just with our civilian counterparts, the workers in the factories, but soldiers, officers, et cetera, in the barracks, et cetera. The minute they understand it, that's half the problem.

Now, if you're telling me this on account of what you are reading on the Internet, it's unfortunate that we're not as quick, as efficient to correct misimpressions—is that the word?—or distortions on the Internet, as others do ahead of us. I wish we were just as efficient as they are on the Internet—[laughter]—then you wouldn't be asking me this question. [Laughter]

We have a Finance Minister—wait a minute—who started off as the Energy—he made a success of it—no, before the Energy—Transport and Communication; he made a success of it. From there we moved him to Lands and Forestry; he made a success of it; from there to Energy—no, Energy and to do with the gold mine—Mines and Energy; he made a fantastic success of that one. And that's how he ended up as the Minister of Finance. A man of integrity, earnestness, he sits with a cross-section of the people, from the top right down to the bottom—workers, union leaders, et cetera—and lays everything on the table.

And that is what we need in Africa. That's what we've been doing in Ghana. That's how come we've survived this long, because we don't hide anything from anybody. We lay everything on the table.

So if you're putting this question across to me, please, attribute it to those who just cannot accept the earnestness, the sincerity of this government. Is that okay? [Laughter] No, if I

haven't finished, please feel free, you can come back.

President Clinton. On Iraq, you asked two questions. Let me take the second question first.

No, we have not given up on the prospect of restoring inspections. But since Saddam Hussein terminated his cooperation with UNSCOM and then the military action was taken by the United States, Great Britain, with the support of our allies, they have continued to defy the U.N., and that's where we are now. That brings us back to your first question.

What's going on with these incidents is that under the United Nations resolutions, which are still in place, the no-fly zone still exists. The no-fly zone has to be patrolled. When it is patrolled by American and British pilots, from time to time, as you pointed out, there have now been several instances when Israeli air defense—excuse me, Iraqi air defense weapons have been fired at our airplanes. And they're trying, obviously, for the symbolic victory of shooting one of these planes down, and perhaps trying to intimidate us from enforcing the no-fly zone, which we're still bound to do under the United Nations resolution.

Now, in response to that, we have certain rules of engagement which permit us to take out the air defense. And we have done quite a lot of it. I noticed there was one column in the press in the last week—I think it was Mr. Seib's [Jerry Seib, Wall Street Journal] column—but anyway, it was a column which pointed out that a significant amount of damage, perhaps as much damage or more, has been done to the air defense network since the end of the last military action than was done during the military action, where we had a lot broader range of targets we were going after.

And I regret this, you know. I regret this. I wish he would stop doing that. I wish he would make an agreement with the United Nations to let the inspections go back. We have shown that we are not interested in hurting the Iraqi people. We have been for broader rules for meeting the nonmilitary needs of the people of Iraq, and we will continue to work at that.

But these little encounters—each of them so far has been relatively small—are as a result of the fact that we are still, notwithstanding the fact that the inspectors aren't there, bound to enforce a no-fly zone which still exists under the U.N. resolutions.

Debt Relief for African Nations

Q. This question is to President Clinton. In recent years, there's been much talk about the need for debt cancellation, and the general feeling among African countries is that this is one surest escape route towards economic development. I would like to hear your comments on it.

President Clinton. I'm sorry. I'm hard of hearing. Could you repeat—the debt cancellation issue?

Q. Yes.

President Clinton. Well, I believe that debt relief is appropriate, in Africa and in certain other places, particularly in view of the countries in—some of the countries in Asia that have been so hard hit by the financial crisis. I think that debt relief, frankly, though, only works if it is accompanied by a longer term commitment to a sound economic policy.

If you look at the astonishing results that Ghana has produced over a period of years—steady growth, good years and bad years; some years are better than others—but you've enjoyed steady growth. You've had a steady political environment that has also become steadily more democratic, not steadily more repressive, moving in the right direction.

I think that it is unlikely that a lot of these countries can really resume significant growth without debt relief. But I do not believe debt relief alone will bring them their growth. That's my position. I'm for more debt relief. The United States is sponsoring—as I said, we will have, in Africa alone, almost \$500 million in debt relief this year and last year, if Congress approves my proposal. We also have contributed another \$50 million in this budget as our contribution to a larger international debt relief effort.

And I think we can do more. But it is essential for some countries, but it is not enough. So we need debt relief plus trade and investment, plus aid, plus good economic policies within the country. You have to have all of them, I think, to maximize African growth.

Let's take one more. John [John King, Cable News Network].

Cooperation With Congress

Q. Sir, both the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader left their meeting with you yesterday and refused to answer directly when we asked them outside if they could

trust you after the events of the past few months. Was that your sense in the meeting? And if that is the case, how do you hope to accomplish anything in your final 22 months?

President Clinton. Well, the answer is, that was not my sense. I thought it was a good meeting. Because of what they went through with their own Members, that's a difficult question for you to ask them. And no matter what answer they give, it causes them more problems than it solves. You guys are great at asking me those questions, too.

But I mean, keep in mind, they're the leader of—they have to lead their caucuses in the House and the Senate. So that sort of question, at the time when some of the nerves are still raw, any answer they give makes it more difficult for them, potentially, at least, within their caucus or within the country, depending on what answer they give.

So I think the answer ought to be, the answer they ought to give and the answer they ought to have deeply imbedded in their minds and hearts is that their feelings are not important here—just like my feelings are not important. We have an oath to fulfill, a responsibility to fulfill. We were hired to do the public's business, and they expect us to do it.

You know, it would be hard to imagine a year that was more strained than last year, and we got a lot done. It was a good year, legislatively. We continued—we passed our second balanced budget; we passed the legislation to provide for 100,000 teachers, with almost a third of them paid for in the downpayment, and lots of other things.

So I think we're now in a period—this is early in the legislative calendar; they have a new leader in the House; they have a lot of work to do; they have to get a budget resolution through. And then we have probably, oh, I don't know, 8 or 10 bills that I can conceive of us getting agreement on—I mean, really significant bills, a lot of them—between the two parties.

And then we've got these big questions of what to do about Social Security, Medicare; whether I'm right, they're right, something else is right on the tax cut issue. There are big questions out here. And I believe that we will all do our duty in the end; that's what I think. And I just think we need to—if we focus on the American people and doing our duty, and not on whether we're mad or happy, disappointed or elated about the events of the last

year, then all this in the course of time will work itself out. And the American system will be validated.

We—if you take a position like the ones we’ve taken, it is simply wrong for you to think about what your feelings are. Your responsibility is to fulfill your oath and do what the public needs. And if we focus on that, we’ll be just fine.

Dual Citizenship

Q. President Rawlings, I think I’m on the wrong side of the room. I apologize, but I have a question for you.

President Rawlings. I understand. Actually, I was actually briefed that most of the questions would be directed at the President. [Laughter] I was made to understand that, don’t be surprised if most of the questions are related to American domestic situations and not the fact that I’m here from Africa. Thank you. Carry on, please. [Laughter]

Q. Well, I’ve heard that Ghana is offering some sort of dual citizenship to African-Americans. Is that true? What does it mean, and what’s the reasoning behind it?

President Rawlings. It’s very true. Sorry, do you mind if I—is it something connected to the question?

President Clinton. Answer this one, and then if you want to call on him, it’s fine.

President Rawlings. Very soon, our Parliament will be passing the bill to grant black Americans their dual citizenship, as far as Ghana is concerned, and you’ll have the right of dual abode.

Q. What does it mean?

President Rawlings. What does it mean?

Q. Yes.

President Rawlings. You wouldn’t need a visa; you wouldn’t need whatever it is to enter my country. You will have the freedom to move around as any fellow Ghanaian, and that will not deny you your American citizenship, either.

Q. What’s the reasoning behind it?

President Rawlings. What’s the reason behind it?

Q. Yes.

President Rawlings. Do German-Americans, do Israeli-Americans—are they denied the right of their citizenship back at home? No, no, please, if I’m wrong, can you correct me?

Q. I don’t know. [Laughter]

President Rawlings. Quite frankly, I mean, I could go on and on. But the point is that, I mean, you’re our kith and kin. If others can

refer to themselves as Jewish Americans or German-Americans or Irish-Americans, whatever it is, Italian-Americans, and you’re calling yourself African——

Q. Americans.

President Rawlings. ——whatever it is. [Laughter] I mean, where do you come from? After all, I mean, my continent is the mother of——what do you call it?——not all continents but humanity and civilization as we’ve come to know today. I mean, is there any reason why you should not have the right to enjoy the citizenship of where you come from?

President Clinton. I’m just sorry I can’t do it. [Laughter] I don’t qualify. [Laughter]

President Rawlings. No, no, wait a minute, sir. Hold on, Mr. President. [Laughter] No, no. You’re not going to explain this for me. [Laughter]

Let’s put it this way. I’m rather surprised that you’re asking me this question. I should be asking you, I mean, how on God’s possible——whatever it is——could you be asking me a question like this? [Laughter] Because, I mean——

Q. Would it be dual loyalty?

President Rawlings. Well, I guess that’s what we have a bit of—we don’t have any problem with that. I think—when I look into that issue, I have a problem with you, because you’re demanding loyalty to the American Constitution, and yet I cannot demand the same kind of loyalty to my country. And this is where I’m beginning to have a problem. But nonetheless, there’s no reason why I will deny my fellow black African the right to enjoy the citizenship as I enjoy as an African.

President Clinton. Let me just try to—the general rule is that dual citizenship laws are, by definition, controlled by the citizenship conditions of both countries. And it’s not unheard of for Americans to have dual citizenship.

Interestingly enough, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, we’ve had American citizens who had roots, for example, in the Baltic States. One went home to his country and became the Ambassador. I don’t know if he had to give up his American citizenship, or not. It would be a function of the law. But there are—and the laws operate differently in different countries. But almost all countries allow some form of dual citizenship.

Now, second thing is, the President didn’t mention this, but if Ghana does this, it certainly

won't hurt in trying to get more Americans interested in Ghana, going to Ghana, and contributing to Ghana's future. I thought it was quite a clever idea myself. [Laughter]

Thank you very much.

President Rawlings. No, no, no. Hold on, Mr. President. [Laughter] On one condition—that if you fall foul of the laws and regulations of my country, the—what do you call it?—the judiciary, the police, and the laws of my country will take their course without the American Government attempting to intervene, to say, this is a citizen of my country.

President Clinton. I think that's what the rule is.

President Rawlings. Thank you, sir.

President Clinton. There's a whole lot of law on that. I think that's the rule.

Thank you.

Q. I want to say to you something.

President Rawlings. Yes, sir.

Q. You know, we the people—

President Rawlings. Yes sir.

Q. —of African descent that are Latino, are ready, willing, and able to cooperate with

Africa—[inaudible]—and our experience, the President of the Dominican Republic, and I, as a Cuban-American, reside here for—[inaudible]—are ready and willing to help you in the African initiative. And I guarantee you with my friend of the Republican Party is going to give me 100 percent support for the initiatives of the President of Africa—[inaudible]. So you have the cooperation of the Latinos, like the Jewish have for their people in Israel.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 169th news conference began at 2:35 p.m. in the Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to David E. Kendall, the President's personal attorney; President Laurent Desire Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. President Rawlings referred to Minister of Finance and Economic Planning Richard Kwame Peprah of Ghana.

Radio Remarks on Fighting Medicare Fraud

February 24, 1999

We need your help to fight Medicare fraud. Most health care providers are honest, but a few bad apples threaten the system. You can help us spot those bad apples by checking your Medicare records carefully. If you see questionable charges or services, call your doctor's office first, then call your Medicare representative. If

you still have questions, call us at 1-800-HHS-TIPS. Fighting Medicare fraud is everybody's responsibility.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 3:45 p.m. in the Oval Office for later broadcast as a public service announcement.

Statement on Fighting Medicare Fraud

February 24, 1999

I am pleased to join the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, and the AARP in launching the new "Who Pays? You Pay" campaign, a new initiative to combat fraud and abuse in the Medicare program.

This new campaign is another step towards ending the fraudulent practices that rob taxpayers and threaten the future of the Medicare Trust Fund. Today we are partnering with beneficiaries to teach them how to detect Medicare