

discussed concrete ways to accelerate Africa's integration into the global economy. African Ministers expressed strong support for the immediate passage by Congress of the African Growth and Opportunity Act and for continued implementation of the President's Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity.

U.S. and African Ministers engaged in an active exchange on a broad range of economic, political, and social issues. They shared the view that high indebtedness constitutes a serious constraint to sustainable development in many African countries. In response to African requests for more effective debt relief, President Clinton proposed a six-point expanded debt relief program for highly indebted poor countries, which was warmly welcomed by the African ministers.

African and American officials discussed trade finance, market access, and access to private investment capital for ventures in Africa. Initiatives to enhance trade and investment links and economic policy dialogue were discussed as well as efforts to improve transportation and communications infrastructure and cooperation in agribusiness and energy. Ministers also reaffirmed the importance of addressing environmental issues. They noted that early ratification by the U.S. Senate of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification will help to mobilize community and international efforts to better manage land and water resources.

African Ministers and their U.S. counterparts exchanged ideas on how to enhance Africa's ability to compete in the global market through

the development of its greatest resource—its people. Emphasizing the need for accelerating reform and continued development assistance as well as trade and investment, participants examined ways to bolster human capacity through investment in education, skills training, gender equity, micro-enterprises and health, particularly the prevention of HIV/AIDS. All agreed that these steps will accelerate the ability of Africa to sustain socio-economic development and reduce poverty. They also recognized the crucial role of regional cooperation in the overall development process and in the integration of African states into the global economy.

Recognizing that sub-Saharan Africa is a vast and diverse region marked by serious problems as well as significant successes, Ministers examined ways to enhance U.S.-Africa cooperation to prevent and resolve conflicts. They also agreed on the importance of strengthening democratic institutions and respect for worker and human rights, accelerating economic reform, and creating a positive climate for business through political and social reforms. Ministers noted that the Ministerial illuminated the breadth and depth of the U.S.-Africa partnership, and set it on a firm foundation for future mutual advancement in the 21st century. All recognized the need for continuing dialogue and agreed to work out the means of ensuring regular and timely follow-up.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process by United States President Bill Clinton, the Irish *Taoiseach* Bertie Ahern, and the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair

March 18, 1999

As we approach the first anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, we can all take heart at how far we have come in a year.

The Agreement has provided the basis for the two traditions to work together, both in Northern Ireland and on the island as a whole, for the first time in 200 years. Democratically endorsed by an emphatic majority of people in both the North and the South, it gives a unique opportunity for peace and reconciliation in

which all the signatories can take pride. It has rightly been acknowledged as an example to the rest of the world of how dialogue can bring an end to conflict.

Much progress has been made in implementing the Agreement. The basis for a new partnership government in Northern Ireland has been agreed. Elections have been held. Last week, the Irish and British Governments signed treaties providing for the establishment of

North/South implementation bodies, a North/South Ministerial council, a British-Irish Council and a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. With these treaties, arrangements have been finalized for institutions which will provide for a new level of cooperation and partnership. This will bring real, practical benefits to everyone concerned.

Implementation of the provisions of the Agreement, ensuring that the future is based on full respect for equality and freedom from discrimination for all, is also well advanced. The review of the criminal justice system is well under way, as is the work of the commission examining the key area of policing.

The balanced constitutional accommodation set out in the Agreement, based on consent, is ready to become operational. The solemn commitment that the future will be shaped by exclusively democratic and peaceful means, provides the framework within which the new institutions can work and enjoy the confidence of all sides.

Large numbers of prisoners have been released on both sides of the border. That is an essential part of the Agreement, although one that has caused undoubted pain to those who have lost loved ones during the years of conflict. The ceasefires remain solid. General de Chastelain continues his vital work to achieve progress on decommissioning.

There is much work still to be done to implement all aspects of the Agreement. But the substantial progress already achieved gives us hope for the future.

Despite the progress, Omagh demonstrated that the peace has not been a perfect peace.

The cruel and senseless murder of Rosemary Nelson is a further reminder. But the response to Omagh showed that, despite the pain, there is deep determination in both the North and the South that peace is the only path. We call for an end to all the killings and punishment beatings. Violence of the kind we have seen again this week must not be allowed to unsettle the peace process.

The Agreement endorsed by the people last May must be implemented in all its aspects and the remaining difficulties must be resolved.

We, as leaders, bear that responsibility and that means all of us, whether we live in Northern Ireland, the Republic, Britain, or the United States.

This is what the people want and we must not fail them.

A year ago, people said it was hopeless, that the sides were too far apart. But the people and political parties in Northern Ireland proved them wrong. We all persevered. People compromised. People showed courage.

One year on, we can meet the deadline that has been set. More courage will be needed. But we are nearly there.

The prize is very great indeed and it is now in sight. We have come too far to go back now. Let us finish the task between now and Good Friday.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gen. John de Chastelain, Canadian Defense Forces (Ret.), Chair, Independent International Commission on Decommissioning. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement Announcing a Review of Security at the Department of Energy Weapons Labs

March 18, 1999

Today I have asked the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, chaired by Warren Rudman, to undertake a review of the security threat at the Department of Energy's weapons labs and the adequacy of the measures that have been taken to address it. The Board is a bipartisan, independent advisory body responsible,

among other things, for assessing the quality and adequacy of our counterintelligence efforts.

I have asked the Board to address the nature of the present counterintelligence security threat, the way in which it has evolved over the last two decades and the steps we have taken to counter it, as well as to recommend any additional steps that may be needed. I have