

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Convention on the Prohibition and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

August 5, 1999

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification of the Convention (No. 182) Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, adopted by the International Labor Conference at its 87th Session in Geneva on June 17, 1999, I transmit herewith a certified copy of that Convention. I transmit also for the Senate's information a certified copy of a recommendation (No. 190) on the same subject, adopted by the International Labor Conference on the same date, which amplifies some of the Convention's provisions. No action is called for on the recommendation.

The report of the Department of State, with a letter from the Secretary of Labor, concerning the Convention is enclosed.

As explained more fully in the enclosed letter from the Secretary of Labor, current United States law and practice satisfy the requirements of Convention No. 182. Ratification of this Convention, therefore, should not require the United States to alter in any way its law or practice in this field.

In the interest of clarifying the domestic application of the Convention, my Administration proposes that two understandings accompany U.S. ratification.

The proposed understandings are as follows:

The United States understands that Article 3(d) of Convention 182 does not encompass situations in which children are employed by a parent or by a person standing in the place of a parent on a farm owned or operated by such parent or person.

The United States understands the term "basic education" in Article 7 of Convention 182 means primary education plus one year: eight or nine years of schooling, based on curriculum and not age.

These understandings would have no effect on our international obligations under Convention No. 182.

Convention No. 182 represents a true breakthrough for the children of the world. Ratification of this instrument will enhance the ability of the United States to provide global leadership in the effort to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. I recommend that the Senate give its advice and consent to the ratification of ILO Convention No. 182.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
August 5, 1999.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 6.

Statement on the Convention on the Prohibition and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

August 6, 1999

Yesterday I sent to the United States Senate for advice and consent to ratification International Labor Organization Convention Number 182, the "Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor."

Around the world, tens of millions of children are deprived of their childhood and subjected to the worst forms of child labor: slavery; forced

or compulsory labor, including forced recruitment for use in armed conflict; prostitution; pornography; use for illicit activities; and other forms of harmful and unsafe work. Education, not hard labor, is ultimately the path to a better life for families and a stronger economy in the countries affected. But too often, very young children are denied an education and forced into abusive and exploitative work that poses

immediate risks of harm and can also perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

Convention Number 182 was adopted unanimously by all the government, labor, and business delegates to the ILO Conference at its 87th session in Geneva on June 17, 1999. The convention will establish a widely recognized international standard for the protection of children against the worst forms of child labor. During my visit to the ILO Conference in June, I urged other nations to ratify the convention. The United States should do so as well.

Under the leadership of Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, the U.S. helped to shape a convention that can be widely ratified. A tripartite panel of American government, labor, and business representatives has reviewed the convention and concluded that the United States can ratify the convention without changing our laws or regulations. Under the convention, the United

States and all ratifying nations accept a basic obligation to "take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, as a matter of urgency."

By ratifying Convention Number 182, the Senate will make clear our resolve that no child should be subjected to slavery, prostitution, or pornography, used for drug activities, or work under conditions likely to harm their health, safety, or morals. I urge the United States Senate to support this convention to demonstrate our commitment and enhance our ability to help lead the world in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. I thank Senator Tom Harkin for his continuing leadership in the fight to eliminate abusive child labor. I look forward to working with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate leadership to advance this convention toward ratification.

Remarks on the Drought and the National Economy and an Exchange With Reporters

August 6, 1999

The President. Good morning. Before I leave to go home to Arkansas, I want to comment briefly on two matters.

First, I want to talk about the action we're taking to address the terrible, crippling drought that continues to grip so much of our Nation. Throughout much of this country, we have seen the worst drought since the Dust Bowl days. And as the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration will formally announce later today, in Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, this is the worst drought for farmers ever recorded.

Such a natural calamity can have devastating consequences, not only for farmers but for small businesses and communities that depend upon a thriving agricultural sector and for the electric power systems so vital to our Nation. We've worked hard to help the victims of the drought and the heat wave. But as weather disruptions become even more common, and they will, they will demand a more coordinated response by the National Government. So today I'm directing that the White House immediately convene a task force of the relevant cabinet agencies

to coordinate our efforts and focus our attack on this problem. We must do more. It is our duty as a national community.

Second, I want to talk a little more about our efforts to continue our prosperity for all Americans. For 6½ years now, we have pursued a different economic strategy from the previous 12 years; one based on fiscal discipline, investing in our people, selling our products around the world. It has produced sustained prosperity, the longest peacetime expansion in history. Now, it has also produced an era of surpluses after 12 years in which we quadrupled the national debt. This is working. Today we received more evidence.

Just this morning it was announced that America's remarkably low unemployment rate remains at a remarkably low rate of 4.3 percent, that inflation is low, and that last month alone, over 300,000 new jobs were created in America. This brings the total since January 1993 when I took office to 19.2 million new jobs.

We should not abandon a strategy that is working, especially since now we are beginning an era of surpluses which will enable us to meet