

(ILO), where the business, labor, and government representatives to the ILO from countries around the world unanimously adopted this historic convention.

With this action, the Senate has declared on behalf of the American people that we simply will not tolerate the worst forms of child labor: child slavery, the sale or trafficking of children, child prostitution or pornography, forced or compulsory child labor, and hazardous work that harms the health, safety, and morals of children. With this action, the United States continues as world leader in the fight to eliminate exploitative and abusive child labor. This also is another important step forward in our continuing efforts to put a human face on the global economy.

I am particularly gratified by the bipartisan unanimity that carried this convention through

the Senate from introduction to final approval. For this, I offer my sincere thanks to Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, Ranking Member Joe Biden, and especially Senator Tom Harkin, who has been America's leading advocate for the world's laboring children. I also want to make note of the special efforts of the U.S. representatives to the ILO: John Sweeney of the AFL-CIO, Thomas Niles of the United States Council for International Business, and Labor Secretary Alexis Herman. They worked as a superb team in negotiating a convention that should be widely ratified throughout the world. Such bipartisan support and the coordinated efforts of labor, business, and government are key to building a new consensus on our approach to international economic policy.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Disaster Assistance and Relocation Funding for States Struck by Hurricane Floyd

November 5, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

When Hurricane Floyd swept through the Mid-Atlantic region, it left in its wake a wide path of destruction and despair. Since that time, my Administration has been working closely with all of the affected States to ensure that Federal disaster assistance programs are used to the maximum extent possible to support residents as they repair and rebuild their communities and their lives.

An important element in this rebuilding process will be mitigating against a repetition of such widespread destruction. An unprecedented number of the homes destroyed—11,000 in North Carolina alone—were in flood plains and therefore remain vulnerable to future floods. To address this most pressing need, I am asking the Congress to approve the use of \$429 million of the contingent disaster relief funds recently appropriated to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to buy out many of these homes and relocate them to safer, higher ground.

During my visit to eastern North Carolina after Hurricane Floyd, I was profoundly moved by the resolve of the citizens of the region to recover from this incredible devastation. To sup-

port the long-term efforts of people in every affected community to reconstruct their homes, businesses, and infrastructure, assistance from the Federal Government must be responsive and prompt. Federal disaster relief programs already have provided more than \$600 million to help individuals and communities recover from the effect of Hurricane Floyd. Among other things, Federal assistance has provided temporary housing and shelter, disaster unemployment benefits, debris removal, funds to repair and reconstruct public infrastructure, and loans to rebuild homes and businesses. My Administration will continue to work with the States and with the Congress to assess remaining needs and provide further assistance.

The recent appropriation of \$2.5 billion for FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund will allow those working on the ground to continue to respond quickly and effectively. I urge the Congress now to provide both the funding that I have requested for the Small Business Administration's disaster loan program, and the additional \$500 million that I have requested, and for which my Administration will provide budgetary offsets, to provide for the unmet needs of farmers and ranchers. Together, these funds will ensure

that the Federal Government continues to provide needed disaster assistance in a timely manner.

I know the rebuilding process will not be easy, but as I saw on my trip to North Carolina, the true spirit of America remains evident, with people from all backgrounds coming together when times are tough. Let us do our part and authorize the necessary funding to support the hard work being done to rebuild all of the States affected by recent disasters.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; and Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Interview With Maria Elvira Salazar of Telemundo Noticiero in Hartford, Connecticut

November 5, 1999

Enforcement of Gun Control Laws

Ms. Salazar. Before we talk about your visit here to Hartford, the head of the NRA, Charlton Heston, said that the White House and the Justice Department lack the spine to enforce the existing gun control laws. How do you respond to this?

The President. Well, first of all, let me say what the substance of his claim is. They say that we are bringing fewer criminal prosecutions in the Federal courts for violations of the gun laws than were being brought a few years ago. The truth is that prosecutions for violations of the gun laws are increasing in America. But we have a partnership between the Federal prosecutors and the State prosecutors. And more of the minor cases are being brought at the State level now, and the major multistate cases are being brought at the Federal level. So it is simply not true that the gun laws are not being enforced.

But let me say, the more important thing is—why is Charlton Heston saying this? Because he doesn't want us to do background checks when people buy guns at gun shows or at urban flea markets. He didn't want us to do background checks when people bought handguns in gun stores, and they said it wouldn't do any good. But we know that 400,000 people, because of a criminal background, couldn't buy guns under the Brady bill. We know we've got the lowest crime rate and the lowest murder rate in 30 years. So he's just wrong about it.

We also know that America is still a country that's too dangerous, because we're the only country in the world that still doesn't have enough sensible restraints on keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and children. So I disagree.

New Markets Initiative

Ms. Salazar. Okay. Let's talk about, now, your visit to Hartford. Tell us why this new markets initiative is so important to you.

The President. It's important to me because even though we have the longest peacetime economic expansion in history, over 19 million new jobs, highest homeownership ever, lowest unemployment rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest Hispanic- and African-American unemployment rates we have ever recorded. In spite of all that, there are still all these people and places that have not felt this recovery, that need investments and businesses and jobs and hope. And I believe that we need to convince the American business community that these are markets to invest in. And I think we ought to give them the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America or Africa or Asia. That's the whole deal, and I think it will work.

Ms. Salazar. And what incentives can you offer them that are not in place right now?

The President. We can offer them tax credits, and we can offer them loan guarantees. And