

force. Example: in Pakistan—we worked with Pakistan to put thousands of their children back in school who were making soccer balls. And they discovered that, when they got the kids back in school, they made thousands of jobs for poor village women who were dying to go to work, and began to sustain their families. The rich countries of the world ought to ratify the child labor convention and do more to help women and to get little girls in school.

And finally, I think the WTO coming up ought to lead to more open markets. We ought to buy products from these countries. If we—you know, it's politically sensitive, but if you want to help these poor countries, they have to make a living. We've got to buy more of their stuff.

Last point before we go to lunch. Gerhard Schroeder said something that I want to reemphasize. The liberal left parties in the rich countries should be the parties of fiscal discipline. It is a liberal, progressive thing to balance the budget and run surpluses if you're in a rich country today. Why? Unless you have total deflation like Japan, you should always be running a balanced budget.

Why? Because it keeps interest rates down for your own people, which creates jobs and lowers costs. The average American has saved \$2,000 in home mortgages, \$200 in car pay-

ments, and \$200 in college loan payments since we cut the deficit.

Two—this is the most important point for Henrique—if all the rich countries in the world were running a surplus in times of growth—just when we're growing—then we not only would lower the cost of capital for our own business communities, we would make it so much cheaper for Henrique to get money in Brazil. It's the number one thing we could do to get money to poor countries at affordable rates is to start running surpluses.

I am trying to convince both parties in my country, before I leave office, to make a common commitment to pay off the public debt of America over the next 15 years for the first time since 1835. This is now a liberal thing to do. It helps poor people; it helps working families; it helps the poor countries of the world. If we could embrace that goal, I think it would be a very good thing to do.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:23 p.m. in the Room of Five Hundred at the Palazzo Vecchio. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Lionel Jospin of France; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil; Pope John Paul II; Irish musician and peace activist Bono; and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany.

Remarks at Session Two of the Conference on Progressive Governance for the 21st Century in Florence

November 21, 1999

Well, first let me—excuse me. I would like to compliment Professor Meny on his paper, which was presented to this conference, and on his remarks.

I think I should begin by noting that he quoted that wonderful section from Machiavelli, where he says something to the effect that there is nothing so difficult in all of human affairs than to change the established order of things. The next part of the quote is also very important, where Machiavelli goes on to say that is so because the people who will gain from the change are uncertain of their benefit, but the people who will lose are absolutely sure of the

consequences and will go to any lengths to avoid them. So that calls for a little humility here in our enterprise.

But let me say the points that Yves Meny made were the following: Democracy is an unfinished business, still to be perfected. I agree with that. Democracies will be different, depending on the circumstances they face and their cultural and historical differences. I agree with that. We need transnational civil society institutions to bring mutuality and interdependence and responsibility to the fore. I certainly agree with that. And we will have to have

through all these differences a reaffirmation of fundamental rights, and I agree with that.

Let me say what I think we know about all this. First of all, I think it is not an accident that we have the flourishing of a new economy that is based on knowledge and individual entrepreneurialism and creativity at the very time when, for the first time in history, more than half the world's people live under governments of their own choosing. I think there is a connection between the primacy of the citizen and the equality of individuals, and the way this economy works so well in successful democracies.

Secondly, I think the fact that we now have democracies makes it even more important that we be committed to universal education and not just technical education but the kind of education that makes for good citizenship, the liberal arts, education in logic and reasoning and judgment, understanding different cultures, and making reasoned arguments. If you're going to have democracies make good decisions in difficult times—not just when everything is going well—the importance of universal education and not narrowly defined education is greater than at any time in all of human history.

Thirdly, I very much agree with the point which was made about the need for transnational institutions. I say all the time in the United States that we are very fortunate that at this moment in history we have a lot of prosperity, and we have a lot of influence.

But we should make no mistake, nothing lasts forever. We should be humble; we should be responsible; and we should recognize that we live in an increasingly interdependent world, where it is important that we both assume and receive obligations and cooperation.

The last point I would like to make is that when we talk about the perfection of democracy and when we talk about the different cultures, one of the things that I think we have to reaffirm is that, in the world in which we live, democracy is far more than majority rule; it is also majority rule within given restraints of power which recognize minority rights and individual rights, whether they are religious rights, whether they are the rights of women as well as men or given ethnic groups or homosexuals or any other discrete group in society.

It seems to me that if you look at all the troubles in the world we're having over racial and ethnic and religious and tribal turmoil, the most effective democracies that will do best with the modern economy are those that not only have majority rule but very clear, unambiguous, and passionate commitments to the protection of the rights and the interests of minorities.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the Room of Five Hundred at the Palazzo Vecchio. In his remarks, he referred to Yves Meny, director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute in Florence.

Remarks at the Closing Session of the Conference on Progressive Governance for the 21st Century in Florence *November 21, 1999*

First of all, Prime Minister, I want to thank you and the Government and the people of Italy for hosting us here in the city of Florence and all the people who have done so much to make this a wonderful stay.

I don't know that I can add anything to what I have said and what the others have said. I would like to begin by saying I feel deeply privileged to have been here. I respect and admire the other leaders who are here on this panel and those who are in the audience who have participated. And I think we are all fortunate

to serve at this moment in history when, really for the only time in my lifetime we have the chance in the absence of external threat and dramatic internal turmoil, to forge the future of our dreams for our children and to give people in less fortunate parts of the world the chance to live out their God-given capacities. So I think we should come here with gratitude and humility.

Now, let me also say that for—at a certain level, this is about politics. What we want to do is to find a way to, first, explain the world