

and then cleaning it up; Mr. Kono remembers—I remember the first time I went to Tokyo over 20 years ago, people wore masks riding their bicycles around, and now the air there is cleaner than it is in my hometown in Arkansas.

What is the difference now? It is not just a national issue. If you foul the atmosphere and then you later clean it up, the greenhouse gases are still up there, and they'll be there for 100 years, warming the climate.

Now, we do not have a right to ask anybody to give up economic growth. But we do have a right to say, if we're prepared to help you finance a different path to growth, and we can prove to you—and you accept, on the evidence—that your growth will be faster, not smaller, that you'll have more good jobs, more new technology, a broader base for your economy, then I do believe we ought to have those kind of environmental standards. And we ought to do it in a voluntary way with available technologies. But we ought to put environment at the core of our trade concerns.

Now I don't know if I've persuaded any of you about any of this. But I know one thing: This is a better world than it would have been if our forebears hadn't done this for the last 50 years. If we're going to go into the next 50 years, we have to recognize that we're in a very different environment. We're in a total information society, where information has already been globalized, and citizens all over the world have been empowered. And they are knocking on the door here, saying, "Let us in,

and listen to us. This is not an elite process anymore. This is a process we want to be heard in."

So I implore you, let's continue to make progress on all the issues where clearly we can. Let's open the process and listen to people even when we don't agree with them. We might learn something, and they'll feel that they've been part of a legitimate process. And let's continue to find ways to prove that the quality of life of ordinary citizens in every country can be lifted, including basic labor standards and an advance on the environmental front.

If we do this, then 50 years from now the people who will be sitting in all these chairs will be able to have the same feelings about you that Mr. Moore articulated our feelings for the World War II generation.

Thank you very much, and welcome again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. in the Spanish Room at the Four Seasons Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Susan G. Esserman; World Trade Organization Director-General Mike Moore; European Commission President Romano Prodi; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yohei Kono of Japan. The President also referred to GSP, the Generalized System of Preferences. The Executive order on environmental review of trade agreements is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at the Child Labor Convention Signing Ceremony in Seattle *December 2, 1999*

Thank you, Secretary Herman; Mr. Samovia, thank you for your leadership; John Sweeney, Ambassador Tom Niles; all the Members of Congress here; Governor Locke; I would like to begin—I have to make a brief statement about Ireland, but before I do, just to illustrate the depth of support here, I'd like to ask all the Members of Congress who are here to stand and be recognized, and thank them for their help.

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Before I make my statement about this important convention, I'd like to say a few words about the truly remarkable and historic events taking place today in Northern Ireland. Eighteen months ago today the Good Friday agreement was signed with the promise of a future of peace and hope. Today the promise is being realized. The people of Northern Ireland now have the power to shape their own destiny and choose their own future. Democratic government by and for all the people of Northern Ireland is

now replacing suspicion, fear, and violence. It is now possible to believe that the day of the gun and the bomb are, in fact, over.

There are many leaders who deserve special tribute for their contributions, but I would like to mention especially David Trimble and John Taylor, John Hume and Seamus Mallon, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, John Alderdice, Monica McWilliams, David Ervine and Gary McMichael and so many others.

I would also like to thank Prime Minister Blair, Prime Minister Ahern, their predecessors, John Major, John Bruton, Albert Reynolds. I thank Sir John de Chastelain for his work. I thank the special envoys to Northern Ireland, Ms. Mowlam and Mr. Mandelson, for the work they have done. And especially I thank our great American leader there, George Mitchell, whose patience, commitment, and conviction were essential to making this day happen.

The Good Friday agreement must continue to be implemented in full, in word and in spirit. The United States must continue and will continue to stand with all those who are unequivocally committed to the pursuit of peace and justice and democracy in Northern Ireland. This is our common responsibility to the children there, whose future is the best reason for all that has been done.

Let me say that the United States is the home of the largest Irish diaspora in the world. Many of us claim Irish heritage. For all the years and all the bloodshed, to have the promise of being over today, this is an especially meaningful day for Irish-Americans, and I thank you very much.

ILO Child Labor Convention

I'd like to begin this day by thanking all the Members of the Senate. Thank you, Senator Murray, for being here. And I want to thank the Republicans, as well as the Democrats, who voted on this together. But I would be remiss if I did not say that the first person who ever discussed this issue with me in 1992 when we were both running for the office I am privileged to hold was Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa. And for more than 7 years now, at every occasion, he has talked to me about this issue. It has been truly one of the driving passions of his life, and without him we would not be here doing this today. And I would like to ask him to stand.

Thank you, Senator Harkin. Thank you.

I also want to thank Secretary Herman and Gene Sperling and Karen Trmontano for what they did in our administration to spearhead the effort. Perhaps there is no better way to conclude my visit here, because what we celebrate this morning symbolizes in many ways what we're seeking in the launch of a new round of trade talks, not just to lower barriers but to raise living standards, to help ensure that people everywhere feel they have a positive stake in global trade that gives them and their children a chance for a better life.

We are here in Seattle to continue our efforts to help establish a new consensus on international trade that leads to jobs that are secure, development that is sustainable, prosperity that is broadly shared. We seek to widen the circle of opportunity, deepen our commitments to human rights and human freedom, and put a human face on the global economy.

Some say that it is not possible, that the interests of nations, businesses, and labor, within and across national borders, are too divergent. This child labor convention proves that, at least on this profoundly important issue, it is possible. It is a living example of how we can together come to level up global standards and lift up core labor values.

The step we take today affirms fundamental human rights. Ultimately, that's what core labor standards are all about, not an instrument of protectionism or a vehicle to impose one nation's values on another but about our shared values, about the dignity of work, the decency of life, the fragility and importance of childhood.

In my State of the Union Address almost 2 years ago, I asked Congress to help make the United States a world leader in this cause and to start by working to end abusive child labor. We are making good on that effort. Together, again across party lines, we secured the largest investment in American history to end abusive child labor around the globe.

We're establishing the first-ever United States Government purchasing ban on goods made by forced or indentured child labor, and we've beefed up enforcement to stop the importation of goods made by such labor. Just last week, the Customs Service banned the importation of certain hand-rolled cigarettes, known as bidis, because of evidence that one firm was making them with bonded child labor.

Today we build on our achievements and our common commitment. This convention is truly

a victory for labor, for business, and for Government, for all those who worked long and hard for 2 year to reach a consensus; a victory for the nations of the world who joined together in the ILO this summer to adopt this convention on a unanimous vote. Today we say with one clear voice: Abusive child labor is wrong and must end.

Above all, of course, this is a victory for the children of the world, and especially for the tens of millions of them who are still forced to work in conditions that shock the conscience and haunt the soul; children brutalized by the nightmare of prostitution; children indentured to manufacturers working against debt for wages so low they will never be repaid; children who must handle dangerous chemicals or who are forced to sell illegal drugs; children who crawl deep into unsafe mines; children who are forcibly recruited into armed conflicts and then spend the rest of their entire lives bearing the scars of committing murder when they were 8 or 9 or 10 years old.

For the first time, this convention calls on the international community to take immediate and effective steps to stop the worst forms of child labor. This convention enables the world to say, no more. We recognize, of course, that no treaty or convention is enough and that to end abusive child labor once and for all we must untangle the pathology of grinding poverty and hopelessness that lies at its root. If we want to slam the door shut on abusive child labor, we must open the door wide to education and opportunity. After all, nations can only reach their potential when their children can fulfill theirs.

John Sweeney put it best when he said economic development is based in education, and school is the best place for children. That's why this convention places a priority on basic education, and we are trying to honor that priority.

Around the world, we are investing in creative solutions to get children out of abusive workrooms and into classrooms. We are giving them a way out of the soccer ball industry in Pakistan, the shoe industry in Brazil, the fireworks industry in Guatemala. We are giving them back the most precious gift of all, their childhood.

And as we work to provide both boys and girls access to schools, we are also working to provide their parents with viable economic alternatives and access to jobs. In Pakistan, for example, when 7,000 children moved out of the soc-

cer ball manufacturing plant into the schools, 7,000 parents moved into jobs they didn't have before, at better incomes.

Microcredit loans help people in developing countries, and women in particular, to start businesses, raise their standard of living, build a better life for their children. I am proud that through the Agency for International Development, the United States financed 2 million such loans last year. So we have here not only the Secretary of Labor but the Secretary of Commerce. We see this not only as a labor issue but a business and an economic issue. We believe that everyone will be better off when children are given back their childhoods.

We are working to integrate the agenda, also, as all of you know, of the World Trade Organization, the IMF, and the World Bank with the agenda of the ILO. That is key to making sure that the issues of child labor and core labor standards, more generally, are on the international economic agenda, and they don't become either/or conflicts. That's why ensuring the rights, the basic rights of labor, is central to our mission here in Seattle.

This is a good day for the children of the world, but we can make tomorrow even a better day. We can do it by seeing that other nations also ratify this treaty and join in our cause, and we can do it by building on the solid foundation of this convention and the common ground forged by leaders here in the work of the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, and other international institutions. We have to harness the spirit of progress and the sense of possibility that this noble document embodies. We can light the way out of the darkness of abusive child labor into the dawn of a new century of promise for all the children of the world.

Thank you very much.

They've elected me to say this. I would like to ask Mr. Sweeney and Ambassador Niles and all of the Members of the Congress, the Governor and Secretary Daley, Secretary Slater, to come up and join us as we do this signing, please.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 a.m. at the Bell Harbor International Conference Center. In his remarks, he referred to Juan Samovia, director general, International Labor Organization; John J. Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO; former U.S. Ambassador to Greece Thomas M.T. Niles, president, U.S. Council for Business; Gov. Gary Locke

of Washington; David Trimble, leader, and John Taylor, member, Ulster Unionist Party; Social Democratic and Labor Party members John Hume and Seamus Mallon; Gerry Adams, leader, and Martin McGuinness, member, Sinn Féin; Alliance Party leader Lord John Alderdice; Monica McWilliams of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition; Progressive Unionist Party spokesman David Ervine; Ulster Democratic Party leader Gary McMichael; Prime Minister Tony Blair and former Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and former Prime Ministers John Bruton and Albert

Reynolds of Ireland; Gen. John de Chastelain, Canadian Defense Forces, chair, Independent International Commission on Decommissioning; former United Kingdom Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam and her successor, Peter Mandelson; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland. The convention was entitled the International Labor Organization Convention No. 182, Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

Telephone Interview With Mark Little of RTE and Steve Grimason of BBC From Seattle

December 2, 1999

President's Possible Visit to Belfast

Mr. Grimason. First of all, Mr. President, thank you very much for joining us. There has been some speculation that, with things again moving in the peace process, you may actually be considering making a return trip to Belfast, and we could say that it's safer than Seattle.

The President. [Laughter] Yes, Seattle, the new home of the Troubles.

Well, let me say this. First of all, I am elated about today's events. They are truly historic. Now the people in Northern Ireland have the authority and the power to work together and to shape their own future, and it's wonderful. And you know how much I love to come there, and I would come at the drop of a hat if there is some contribution I can make to the ongoing peace process and the work still to be done. I've told George Mitchell that. I've told Bertie Ahern that, and I've told Tony Blair that. And obviously, the parties know that. All the others know that I would do that. But I have not made a decision to come right now.

Decommissioning of Arms

Mr. Little. If I could ask you, it seems, unfortunately, with every victory in the peace process, there are sometimes the seeds of the next crisis, and we have the Ulster Unionist Council coming back in February to consider progress on decommissioning. Are you concerned that the historic development we see today could be col-

lapsed in February? And do you agree with the Republicans who say, this is Unionists setting a new deadline which is not in the Good Friday agreement?

The President. Well, I agree with George Mitchell's assessment that decommissioning is an essential element of the Good Friday accord, and it has to be achieved in the overall implementation of the agreement. All parties have a collective responsibility here, and I think what we should do is to give the agreed-upon process the chance to work. I have great confidence in General de Chastelain. I believe the parties have great confidence in him. And I don't think you can underestimate the terrific importance of the IRA naming its representative to General de Chastelain's commission, and I hope they do that today. And the Loyalists should do the same.

And all of us on the outside, rather than speculating on this day about what might happen bad, I think we've got a roadmap for the future. We've got a process, and we've got a commission with a leader that the parties respect, and I think we ought to give it a chance to work.

Ulster Unionist Deadline on Decommissioning of Arms

Mr. Grimason. The problem that we have had with last weekend's events, although today's events are genuinely historic, is that the Ulster