

who have contributed so much to the passage of H.R. 1180, particularly Senators Jeffords, Kennedy, Roth, and Moynihan, as well as Representatives Dingell, Archer, Rangel, Stark, Waxman, Thomas, Matsui, Bliley, Shaw, Bilirakis, Nancy Johnson, Cardin, Sherrod Brown, and Lazio. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of Alexis Herman, Secretary of Labor; Kenneth S. Apfel, Commissioner of Social Security; and Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services; as well as Tony Coelho and other members of my Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities. These individuals, as well as many others throughout my Administration, worked tirelessly to bring this legislation forward.

Many individuals with disabilities want to work and become independent, and many can work if they receive the critical support they

need. For too long, the fear of losing health and cash benefits and the inability to obtain rehabilitation and employment services has prevented such individuals' work efforts. As a Nation, we are best served when all our citizens have the opportunity to contribute their talents, energy, and ideas to the workplace. I am pleased to sign into law today this important step to empower more Americans with disabilities to take their rightful places in our Nation's workforce.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
December 17, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 1180, approved December 17, was assigned Public Law No. 106-170.

Statement on Flooding and Mudslides in Venezuela

December 17, 1999

I was deeply saddened to learn of the loss of life and physical devastation caused by flooding and mudslides in Venezuela. On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sym-

pathies to all those who have suffered losses. We stand ready to help with rescue and relief efforts in any way we can.

United States-European Union Summit Statement on Chechnya

December 17, 1999

The United States and the European Union are deeply concerned about the situation in Chechnya. We recognize Russia's right to uphold its territorial integrity and to defend its citizens from terrorism and lawlessness, and we condemn terrorism in all its manifestations. But we believe that Russia's military tactics in Chechnya are undermining its objectives, creating a humanitarian crisis, endangering innocent civilians, and jeopardizing stability throughout the Caucasus region. A military solution to the conflict is not possible. We call for an immediate and lasting cease-fire throughout Chechnya and a political dialogue that can lead to a durable solution to the crisis.

The indiscriminate use of force against civilians is unacceptable. Providing for the safety of innocent civilians is a fundamental obligation of all states. We call on Russia to respect this principle unconditionally.

We stress that the respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of neighboring states is a fundamental principle of the international system. We are concerned by the impact of the Chechnya conflict on security throughout the Caucasus and stress the importance of avoiding steps that would further undermine regional security.

Displaced persons should be allowed full freedom of movement. Russian and regional authorities must provide for their well being. The

United States and the EU strongly support the courageous efforts of international relief organizations, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced people and others affected by the conflict. We ask Russia to work constructively with these organizations and ensure security for their personnel and access for their operations.

The OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration noted that the OSCE could contribute to finding a political solution to the conflict. We are encouraged that OSCE Chairman-in-Office Vollebaek was able to visit the North Caucasus. We support his efforts to promote a political

dialogue as well as the continuing role of the OSCE in finding a lasting solution to the conflict. We believe that an office of the OSCE Assistance Group should be opened in neighboring Ingushetiya to monitor the humanitarian situation. We call on Russia to respect all of the commitments it has made in the framework of the OSCE. In that regard, we acknowledge Prime Minister Putin's statements that he has held talks with representatives of Chechen President Maskhadov and urge continuation of meaningful discussions with responsible Chechen leaders.

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

United States-European Union Summit Statement on Southeast Europe *December 17, 1999*

We reaffirm our commitment to the emergence of a secure, democratic and prosperous Southeastern Europe. We agree on the central importance of promoting democratic change in Yugoslavia and will remain engaged in enhancing the security of the region until that happens. We will therefore work together with Yugoslav democratic forces, including the Government of Montenegro, to promote such change. We support the efforts of the freely elected government of Montenegro to advance political and economic reform within the FRY. We will also continue our support for the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1244 and for UNMIK and KFOR's efforts to establish in Kosovo a safe environment for all individuals regardless of their ethnic, religious or other affiliation. We will lay the foundations for an effective administrative and judicial system, just as we will continue our strong support for the work of SFOR and the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We call upon Croatia to take steps to ensure that its parliamentary and presidential election processes are free and fair, in accordance with democratic principles and OSCE standards.

We are further strengthening our cooperation with all the countries of Southeastern Europe in fulfillment of the goals and commitments of the Stability Pact. Led by the European Union

and strongly supported by the United States, the Pact has achieved much since the Sarajevo Summit last July, including specific steps to improve the investment climate, fight corruption, control small arms and light weapons, implement commitments on weapons of mass destruction, and advance democracy and human rights throughout the region. The countries of the region will play an essential role in implementing the Pact and have recognized the importance of accelerating overall economic and political reforms. There is now much work to do in the months ahead to transform the commitments of each country into concrete progress and to prepare for a Regional Funding Conference to be held in the first quarter of 2000. The European Union and the United States have made clear their readiness to provide assistance for regional reform efforts and to fight corruption and organized crime, build sound public institutions, mobilize private investment, and expand trade. We intend to work closely with Southeastern Europe to take full advantage of the opportunity before us at the verge of a new century to forge greater stability and advance the region's integration into the Euro-Atlantic mainstream.

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