

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