

is the cradle of humanity, but also a big part of humanity's future.

I leave you with this thought: When I think of the troubles of Africa, rooted in tribal differences; when I think of the continuing troubles in America across racial lines, rooted in the shameful way we brought slaves here from West Africa so long ago, and our continuing challenges as we integrate wave after wave after wave of new immigrants from new places around the world, I am struck by the fact that life's greatest joy is our common humanity, and life's greatest curse is our inability to see our common humanity.

In Africa, life is full of joy and difficulty. But for too long, the African people have lacked for friends and allies to help the joys overcome the difficulties. The United States will be a friend for life.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks,

he referred to master of ceremonies and summit national cochair Andrew Young and his wife, Carolyn; Salim A. Salim, Secretary General, Organization for African Unity; President Daniel T. Moi of Kenya; President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar of Nigeria; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; Noah Samara, chairman and chief executive officer, WorldSpace Corp.; Gayle Smith, Director of African Affairs, National Security Council; Minister of Health Crispus W.C.B. Kiyonga of Uganda; former President Nelson Mandela and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; and the following National Summit on Africa officers: national co-chair Bishop John Ricard, board of directors members Andrea L. Taylor and Herschelle S. Challenor, and president and chief executive officer Leonard H. Robinson, Jr. The President also referred to ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, and SADC, the South African Development Community.

## Statement on Indications of a Third Consecutive Budget Surplus *February 18, 2000*

Today we received further evidence that our economic strategy of fiscal discipline is working. When I came into office, the debt had quadrupled over the previous 12 years. The deficit had reached a record \$290 billion and was projected to keep rising as far as the eye could see. As a result, interest rates were high, and growth was slow. We have turned this around with strong deficit reduction packages in 1993 and 1997 and tough choices in each and every budget. As a result, we have enjoyed back-to-back budget surpluses for the first time in over 40 years.

The latest financial numbers from the Department of the Treasury indicate that we are on track this year to reach a third consecutive budget surplus. The surplus in the first 4 months of this fiscal year was \$25 billion larger than the surplus last year. These surpluses will allow us to repay a projected \$157 billion in debt this year alone, bringing the debt reduction over 3 years to nearly \$300 billion. If we maintain our strategy of fiscal discipline, we can keep our economy strong and pay down the debt by 2013 for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President.

## Message on the Observance of Presidents' Day, 2000 *February 18, 2000*

I am pleased to join all Americans in observing Presidents' Day.

Today we salute the leadership and achievements of all those who have held America's highest elected office, and we celebrate with