

the year 2003, but I think Brazil is not too keen on that idea. So now, we're talking about 2005, which was the original date at the Summit of the Americas in 1994. Is that a real possibility, or will that date also pass by?

President de la Rúa. The important thing is that agreement has been reached on that date in Buenos Aires. I celebrate the generosity and flexibility of Mr. Zoellick, who represented the President. An agreement was reached by all countries. In addition to the date, it is important for us to make progress in terms of the contents, in terms of the way to build a common market to benefit and integrate all countries.

President Bush. Let me say something about that. First of all, I don't want to dispute, of course, the supposition of your question. But I was asked—I think you asked me at a press conference, would I be pleased to see the date moved up, and the answer is, of course. The sooner we get a free trade agreement for the Americas in place, the better off the continent will be.

However, I recognize reality, and it looks like we're going to be aiming for the date 2005. But big progress has been made. And Ambassador Zoellick went down and met

with other leaders in our hemisphere, and we've got the framework for an agreement. And not only that, after the Summit of the Americas, we'll be putting out the agreement itself or the framework of the agreement for people to review, so that citizens from all countries—this is the first time this has ever happened—where the citizens will be able to review the contents of the trade agreement.

But I appreciate so very much the President's commitment to free trade. He understands the power of trade, and he understands the promise of free trade. And I believe you're going to hear a strong statement at Quebec City that nations of our hemisphere are bound together by the concept of a free trade agreement. And it will be good for our people.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:02 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Economy Domingo Cavallo of Argentina. President de la Rúa spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Flooding in the Upper Mississippi River Basin April 19, 2001

I know that all Americans share my concern for the displaced families and residents of Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois. Yesterday the Mississippi River engulfed homes and businesses. Even more flooding is predicted in the upcoming days.

Those who live and work along the upper Mississippi are not strangers to the threat of spring floods. Since the 1993 floods, many communities and residents have taken measures to protect themselves and

their property. They are to be commended for this preventative work.

At my direction, FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh and his staff are working closely with State and local officials throughout the impacted and threatened areas to closely track the flooding and any further damage. As I travel to Canada for the Summit of the Americas, I will continue to monitor the situation.