

You make me proud to be a fellow employee of the people at the Federal level.

We've got a lot of work to do. The Governor and I were discussing the needs here of the citizens of Virginia. We're going to keep working hard to get the electricity up and running. There are crews working 24/7 so that people can get the electricity they need. I was talking to Congressman Bobby Scott and Congressman Eric Cantor about the needs of their district. And they're, like the Governor, deeply concerned about the fact that too many of the citizens don't have electricity. A lot do now, but too many don't. But I want to thank the companies for bringing in extra workers. And I want to thank those workers, who are manning the chainsaws and getting the lines back up so people can have electricity.

In the meantime, we're working to make sure that we get water and ice to the people so that they can move on with their lives. I want to thank the local folks, State folks, and the county and city police, firefighters and emergency responders and the mayors for their hard work as well. The truth of the matter is, the frontline on any emergency is the local people. And you've

done your State proud, and you've done your citizens proud.

I want to thank the people who are loving their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. There's a lot of neighborliness taking place in the State of Virginia and North Carolina and Maryland, where somebody hurts and somebody's lonely, somebody needs help is finding refuge and solace because a fellow citizen has taken it upon him or herself to help somebody in need.

You know, the true character of this country comes out during times of stress and emergency. And this country has responded once again. So on behalf of a grateful nation, I want to thank people at all levels of our Government for working extra hard to help our country when it needed help.

May God bless those who hurt. May God bless those who still mourn the loss of life. And may God continue to bless America. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:54 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mark Warner of Virginia.

Remarks Following Discussions With Iraqi Ministers *September 22, 2003*

President Bush. We're going to have a couple of statements here. First, it's my honor to welcome two Ministers from Iraq—free Iraq—the Minister of Public Works, the Minister of Electricity, people charged with improving the lives of the Iraqi citizens, people who the Governing Council has picked to lead these ministries.

And we've had a fascinating discussion. These two good souls have found that the system wasn't conducive for—the system they inherited was not conducive for taking care of the citizens. It was a—the infra-

structure was old and tired; power was centralized. Really, they inherited a system of a corrupt tyrant.

And their job now is to improve life. I love their spirit. I love the fact that they are dedicated to doing their jobs. And I also appreciate the appraisal of what's going on in Iraq, the assessment that we're making good progress toward achieving our objective.

So thank you all for coming here to America. We're proud of you and proud

of you being pioneers for a free people. And welcome.

If you'd like to say a few words, Madam Minister, we'd like to hear them.

Minister Nesreen Berwari. Well, on September 3d, the Governing Council formed an Iraqi Government. And this has been the most significant move after two steps before that. Forming the Government and Iraqis taking care of their own affairs has been received very well by the Iraqi people.

A sense of progress is being sensed in the streets of Iraq. More work is being done. And the work on restoring services to pre-war levels has been achieved. Now we're working on planning for the next year program. We have great plans to improve services. Our mission is to show a different governance. We want to tell the Iraqis that the change that has happened 4 months ago is for their own benefit, through improving the public service.

But also investing on Iraq that can become an asset to itself and to the rest of the world, an Iraq that can add values of peace and prosperity to itself, to the region, and to the rest of the world. A working Iraq is in the best interests of everybody, and you don't have to do a lot of investment, because Iraq is rich, rich with people, rich with oil, rich with water. We only needed help in the beginning, and we will do it ourself and contribute to the rest of the world.

Our visit this week is to seek support, continuous support from the U.S. Government who liberated us, and we're very thankful for that, and to pledge and show our commitment to the future partnership and cooperation.

Thank you.

President Bush. Mr. Minister, Minister of Electricity.

Minister Aiham Alsammarae. Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity. We are, since of course the war until now, we are working very hard to rebuild the electricity, which is destroyed by almost 30 years of

system, that you know how was a system of doing things—almost no technical background for it.

We lost a lot of power. We lost a lot of powerplants over the year. We don't have really, in the time when the war is over, more than 3,300 megawatt out of actually, before the war, almost 4,400. We are right now reaching that number back again. We have a plan to, by next June, to build another 2,000 to 3,000 megawatt. This is all—will make Iraq again having a lot of opportunities for work, because the employment will be high. When you have electricity, you have oil to produce. When you have electricity, you have a treatment for the water.

All that I like to talk about this more and more, but I like to tell you about what's happening in Iraq the last 5 months. The last 5 months, Iraqis, they have the freedom to talk. We have almost right now 86 newspaper, while before the war we have only 3 or 4 newspapers, all controlled by the Government. All the 86 newspapers are not controlled by anyone right now except the individuals who own them.

We have actually the people right now talking freely in the market. They go and get, for example, dishes. We know that every single Iraqis right now, he can go and buy anything he wants. This is the freedom which we missed before, and we got it over the last 5 months. If the Iraqi people and the American help us for the next year and a half, I almost guarantee—I guarantee it to the President but I almost guarantee it to the American people that we will have different Iraq, Iraq who is going to help the United States and the free world and also help the area around us, because we are going to build a democracy and Iraq will become example for all the Middle East areas and all the countries around us.

We need the help of the Americans right now to build Iraq so you have a secure country here, and you have a secure world,

and we have a secure Iraq. And I appreciate it, and thank you very much.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:26 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Transition of the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization *September 22, 2003*

I welcome today's decision by NATO to appoint Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the Dutch Foreign Minister, as its next Secretary General, beginning in January 2004. Mr. de Hoop Scheffer is a leader deeply committed to freedom and to strong and effective transatlantic cooperation. I look forward to working with him.

I also commend Lord Robertson for his many achievements during his 4 years as Secretary General. Under his leadership, NATO welcomes seven new countries. He helped launch a new relationship between NATO and Russia. He spearheaded an ambitious agenda of transformation to make NATO forces lighter, faster, and better able to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

During his tenure, NATO mounted its first operation outside its traditional area, proving that our Alliance can address terrorist threats where they arise. He made NATO a vital partner in the war on terror and in the effort to rebuild the newly freed nations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The American people will always remember Lord Robertson's leadership when after the September 11th attacks NATO invoked its solemn collective defense clause for the first time in its history. On behalf of all Americans, I extend best wishes to Lord Robertson as he prepares to depart his post as Secretary General of NATO and America's gratitude for a job well done.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations in New York City *September 23, 2003*

I appreciate being here with the Secretary-General. He's a leader and a friend. We look forward to working with the United Nations to achieve big objectives. The big objective, of course, is for there to be peace and freedom—peace in the Middle East, freedom for people who are oppressed.

I assured the Secretary-General our Nation will still continue to provide help for famine and disease. We're mostly going to talk about today the need for the United Nations and the free world to work against

slavery in all forms, particularly the sex slavery that takes place all over the world—in our civilized world. The world must combine our resources and our will to stop this abhorrent practice.

Mr. Secretary, thank you, sir. It's great to be back.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. at the United Nations Headquarters. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.