

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.