

in Afghanistan are going to be incredibly successful.” It didn’t seem like it was possible, did it? But yet there’s something in everybody’s soul, in my judgment, that desires to be free. And the people of Afghanistan showed that by the millions—not by the handfuls but by the millions—when given a chance to vote. Same in Iraq. And there was an election in Ukraine—two elections in Ukraine. And then there was the election in the Palestinian Territory. Freedom is on the march, is the way I like to put it. And the world is better off for it. And I look forward to continue to articulate how we can work together to keep freedom on the march.

Thank you all very much.

*Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.* Let me—

*President Bush.* Oh, I’m sorry.

*Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.* No, no, no—

*President Bush.* He gave me a hand signal that said he didn’t want to answer. [Laughter] You don’t know what this means. [Laughter] That means, “End the press conference.” [Laughter]

*Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.* I signaled to the President this was too difficult a question, but I nevertheless answer very briefly.

NATO is 26—not 25 plus one or 24 plus 2. NATO showed today that these 26 Allies in Europe or the United States of America or Canada will and must strengthen this Alliance, this very successful Alliance,

which is doing—with the West and European participation—all the things I started to discuss in my introduction.

Second remark would be that European integration, including in security and defense matters, is important. But in that area, it’s of the utmost importance that, also, that process takes place in complementarity with NATO and without duplication. That’s important for NATO; it’s important for European Union. That’s why I want this wide NATO-EU agenda that’s relevant. European integration is a great process, and I always say I’m an Atlanticist and I’m European. But here is the point, where we are now standing in NATO Headquarters, where we see the primary forum for transatlantic security cooperation, and we’ll do that at 26 and not at 24 plus 2 or 25 plus one.

Thank you very much.

*President Bush.* Now we’re finished. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 2:45 p.m. in the Joseph Luns Press Theatre at NATO Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine; President Jacques Chirac of France; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany. He also referred to Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), a component of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force operating in Afghanistan.

## Joint Statement by the United States and the European Union: Announcement on Iraq Conference February 22, 2005

The United States and Europe stand together in support of the Iraqi people and the new Iraqi government which will soon come into being. To that end, should the new Iraqi government request it, the

United States and the European Union are prepared to co-host an international conference to provide a forum to encourage and coordinate international support for Iraq.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

## The President's News Conference With European Union Leaders in Brussels

February 22, 2005

*President Juncker.* Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. As heads of state and government of the European Union, we've been very happy to welcome the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, to the heart of the European institutions. And once again, I would like to thank him for this visit and for the fact that he has taken the initiative of coming to Europe so soon after his Inauguration for his second term as President of the United States.

In the course of our discussions, we have touched on a whole range of issues, which it is clearly impossible for me—[*inaudible*]*—*that wasn't me; that was the microphone—[*laughter*]*—*a whole series of issues which we cannot summarize here. What I would say is that what we have established is that, as so often in our past, if we work together, if we pool our strengths, we as Europeans and Americans can make the difference. We have the strength; we have the legitimacy; and we have the means—because we have the same ambitions for the world, ambition of democracy, of freedom, of fighting together against terrorism, the ambition to end the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

On our flags, we have the words “freedom” and “democracy.” And we recognize the obligations that result from this, the fight against poverty, the fight against underdevelopment. And so, in a very studious, constructive, and friendly atmosphere, we addressed a number of issues.

Middle East: We both do consider that peace prospects are better than they have been for a long time, and we are looking

forward to cooperate in close partnership with the U.S. and with other Quartet members. It is of crucial importance, we do think, to go back to the implementation of the roadmap. In Gaza, we do all hope and prospect for a negotiated, two-state solution as defined in this roadmap. That means that we have to make sure for Israel that peace, security, and recognition by all countries in the region are guaranteed. And that means for the Palestinians that they have the right to have a viable, democratic, independent, and totally contiguous state.

As regards Iraq, we applauded the courage of the Iraqi people and the results of recent Iraqi elections as far as the outcome was concerned. We are pursuing our common engagement in Iraq. The United States and the U.S. stand together in support of the Iraqi people and the new Iraqi Government, which will soon come into action. To that end, should the new Iraqi Government request it, the United States and European Union are prepared to cohost an international conference to provide a forum to encourage and coordinate international support for Iraq.

We spoke at length about the Middle East and in particular about Lebanon—Lebanon, this country which is lurching from misfortune to misfortune, from tragedy to tragedy. And we condemned vigorously the assassination of the former Prime Minister. We insisted on full compliance and immediate compliance with the Security Council resolution, and we, the U.S. and the European Union, have called for a joint committee of investigation.