

minority rights and rule of law. But they're all on different stages of the development of democracy.

Democracy just doesn't happen. It grows. It takes a while. It's the experience of our country. It's the experience of the Russian Federation. I mean, democracies take on the customs and habits of the particular people, and they mature. And so they're at different stages. I mean, clearly, Iraq is a struggling democracy. But one thing is for certain: The people have made their mind about what they want. They want democracy: 8.5 million Iraqis went to the polls, see, and they've got a constitution that's been written. It wasn't written under bayonet or under the barrel of a gun. It was written by people from different factions of the society that have come together. And it will be voted on soon. And then there will be another election. So this is an emerging democracy, and it's different from a more mature democracy.

*Q.* Can I follow up?

*President Bush.* No. [Laughter] Got to keep order and discipline. Right, Steve?

*President Putin.* On the last question about Iraq and Ukraine—Iraq, we are aware of the situation in Iraq. Unfortunately, we are facing constant violence, and that relates to known factors having to do with the upcoming referendum on constitution there. I believe that if it will be possible to get constitution, this will be a good,

strong step forward to achieve stability in that country.

In my opinion, it will be only possible if the main political forces, ethnic groups, will get a sense that it's their own constitution. If this document will be confirmed, agreed upon by the overwhelming segments of the population, if the current leadership makes a strong case and convinces population that this constitution is satisfactory to all, it will maintain territorial integrity, will take into account the interests of major minority groups, then it will be a real step forward in settlement. And we hope very much that will occur.

Now, as regards Ukraine, well, what can be said here? The political crisis, as I said recently in Berlin, the situation is under control of the President.

*President Bush.* Good job. Thank you. Good job.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:59 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA. President Putin referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; and President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine. President Putin and some reporters spoke in Russian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of this news conference could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

## The President's Radio Address *September 17, 2005*

Good morning. This week I visited Mississippi and Louisiana and reported to the Nation on our strategy to help our neighbors in these devastated areas recover and rebuild. In the aftermath of Katrina, we have seen our fellow citizens uprooted from their homes, searching for loved ones, and grieving for the dead. These scenes have

touched our hearts and moved our whole Nation to action. And the outpouring of compassion has sent a clear message to the victims of this storm: Our whole Nation cares about you; you are not alone.

The recovery of the gulf coast region will be one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen. And I have made

a pledge of the American people: Throughout the area hit by the hurricane, we will help our citizens rebuild their communities and their lives.

Our strategy rests on three commitments. Our first commitment is to meet the immediate needs of those who had to flee their homes and leave all their possessions behind. As of this week, more than 500,000 evacuee families have gotten emergency help to pay for food, clothing, and other essentials, and they will receive broader help in the future. I've asked for and the Congress has provided more than \$60 billion, an unprecedented response to an unprecedented crisis.

Our second commitment is to help the citizens of the gulf coast put their lives back together and rebuild their communities. Our goal is to get people out of shelters by the middle of October. So we're providing direct assistance to evacuees that will allow them to rent apartments, and we're beginning to bring in mobile homes and trailers for temporary use in affected areas. We will also help provide housing for the many workers who will rebuild cities in the region so that reconstruction can move forward quickly.

To relieve the burden on local health care facilities in the disaster areas, we're sending extra doctors and nurses and setting up well-supplied temporary community health centers. A number of States have taken in evacuees and shown them great compassion, admitting children to school and providing health care. So I'll work with Congress to ensure the States are reimbursed for these extra expenses.

Our third commitment is to ensure that the communities we rebuild emerge better and stronger. Out of this tragedy comes an opportunity to harness the good and gracious spirit of America and deliver new hope to neighborhoods that were suffering before the storm. Our reconstruction efforts will be guided by certain principles: When cities are rebuilt, those cities should have many new businesses, including minority-

owned businesses. When houses are rebuilt, more families should own, not rent, those houses.

To achieve these aims I've proposed the creation of a Gulf Opportunity Zone in the disaster area, with immediate tax relief and other incentives for job-creating investment. And to encourage homeownership, I have proposed a new urban homesteading act, which would identify property in the region owned by the Federal Government and provide lots to low-income citizens free of charge, through a lottery. In return, they would pledge to build on the lot with either a mortgage or help from a charitable organization like Habitat for Humanity.

As we rebuild homes and businesses, we will renew our promise to be the land of equality and decency. And one day, Americans will look back at the response to Hurricane Katrina and say that our country grew not only in prosperity but also in character and justice.

Our citizens have responded to this tragedy with action and prayer. We ask God's comfort for the men and women who have suffered so much. We pray that the missing find safe return and those who were lost find holy rest. And we sought the strength of the Almighty for the difficult work that lies ahead.

In the life of our Nation, we have seen that wondrous things are possible when we act with God's grace. From the rubble of destroyed homes, we can see the beginnings of vibrant new neighborhoods. From the despair of lives torn asunder, we can see the hope of rebirth. And from the depth of darkness, we can see a bright dawn emerging over the gulf coast and the great city of New Orleans.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on September 16 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary

on September 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the

Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Afghanistan September 18, 2005

I congratulate the Afghan people and Afghan Government for today's successful parliamentary elections, which are a major step forward in Afghanistan's development as a democratic state governed by the rule of law. Braving deadly attacks and threats of violence, Afghans voted in large numbers

for representatives to their new National Assembly and Provincial Councils. We commend the tremendous progress that the Afghan people have made in recent years, and we pledge the full support of the United States as Afghanistan acts to meet the new challenges ahead.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the Homeland Security Council and an Exchange With Reporters September 19, 2005

*The President.* I just met with my Homeland Security Council to discuss ongoing relief efforts in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. I have made it clear that I believe it's a national security matter for people to review emergency plans. And so therefore, I've instructed Secretary Chertoff and folks around this table to work with our local counterparts to make sure that we've got emergency plans in place that will deal with significant disaster. And for the local folks, I urge them to cooperate in a review of these plans. It's important.

Secondly, one of the things that I heard loud and clear on my travels down there was that people are concerned about red-tape. And one of the big concerns for the mayors and the Governor of Mississippi, in particular, and the mayors along the gulf coast, was this issue about debris removal—who's responsible, how can we get it done in an effective way. And I want to thank the Secretary for working with Governor Barbour on this issue to expedite a process by which we can start getting some of this

debris removed from a part of our country that was just wiped out by this storm; I mean, there are piles and piles of homes and buildings just in rubble. And in order to help this region get rebuilt, first things first, and that's to get rid of the debris. And so we've got a plan in place to cut through the redtape and get this done in an effective way.

On another matter, a couple of other matters—one, I want to congratulate the people of Afghanistan for showing up at the polls and defying the Taliban and those who threaten their lives and say, look, you know, these people supported democracy. It's just another step on their road toward a stable democracy, and we congratulate them.

And as well, I want to welcome the comments of the OPEC and non-OPEC nations, talking about making sure they get enough supply on the markets to help, hopefully, affect the world price of crude oil. I have been concerned about the price at the pump that our folks are paying. Part