

Statement on the Appointment of President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania as President of the African Union and Foreign Minister Jean Ping of Gabon as Chair of the Commission of the African Union  
*February 5, 2008*

I congratulate President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania on his appointment as the new President of the African Union, as well as Foreign Minister Jean Ping of Gabon on his appointment as the new Chair of the Commission of the African Union. I am confident that the African Union and the people of Africa will be well served by the leadership and vision President Kikwete and Minister Ping will bring to these important posts.

The African Continent has experienced important progress in recent years. Economic growth is at historic highs; democracy is taking root in many countries; and

efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other infectious diseases are showing results. Difficult challenges remain, including ending genocide in Darfur, restoring peace and stability to Kenya, and bringing freedom to the Zimbabwean people. The United States looks forward to working closely with President Kikwete, Minister Ping, and the African Union to address these challenges and to build on recent achievements to secure a better future for all Africans.

Laura and I look forward to beginning our visit to Africa next week.

Message on the Observance of the Lunar New Year, 2008  
*February 5, 2008*

I send greetings to those celebrating the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Rat.

Throughout our country and around the world, men and women of Asian descent welcome the Lunar New Year with a spirit of giving and renewed hope. This holiday, filled with vibrant traditions, celebrates new beginnings and recognizes the enduring wisdom of ancestors. During this special time of year, millions of people reunite with family and friends, reflect on the past, and look forward to a future of prosperity and opportunity.

The Lunar New Year also reminds us of the richness of Asian culture and the significance of its history. By preserving and sharing their heritage, Asian Americans enhance the American experience and contribute to our country's legacy of diversity.

Laura and I send our best wishes for peace, health, and happiness in the New Year.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Memorandum on Security Clearances  
February 5, 2008

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs*

*Subject:* Security Clearances

The Federal Government needs a qualified, trusted workforce available to successfully execute its missions. However, long-standing practices used in the security processing of individuals and contractors to work for the Government pose challenges to the speed with which these individuals can begin their work or move from one role to another. Specifically, the processes for determining eligibility for access to classified information, determining suitability for Federal employment, determining eligibility to work on a Federal contract, and for granting access to federally controlled facilities and information systems, created for separate purposes, rely on similar background data. Yet the processes for collecting and analyzing this data are not sufficiently standardized or coordinated to allow for individuals to efficiently move between agencies and positions of Government covered by one or more of these processes.

I have determined that the significant opportunities to improve these processes, and the expected benefits of doing so, argue for aggressive efforts to achieve meaningful and lasting reform. Without altering the distinct lines of authority for establishing policies and procedures relating to security clearance, Federal employment suitability, and related determinations, such reform should ensure that the executive branch executes these authorities within a framework that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness while protecting the information collected from unauthorized use or dis-

closure. Embedding that framework in policies, practices, and infrastructure will ensure that the reform effort and its benefits will continue into the future.

Efforts toward achieving this integration are already underway, sponsored by the Director of National Intelligence, Secretary of Defense, Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and coordinated by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. These efforts span near-term improvement opportunities up to a blueprint for a transformed clearance process. I direct that their continued close coordination and integration produce a comprehensive reform proposal that:

- Establishes modernized and comprehensive credentialing, security clearance, and suitability processes that employ updated and consistent standards and methods;
- To the extent consistent with applicable law, ensures that investigative standards for security clearance and suitability investigations support and build on each other without requiring duplicative steps;
- Enables these innovations with enterprise information technology capabilities that ensure the most effective and efficient performance across the Federal Government;
- Updates Government information record systems and, as necessary, applicable laws and regulations, to ensure that information maintained by executive departments and agencies and required for investigation and adjudication is available and can be shared rapidly across Government, while still protecting privacy-related information;