

the responsibilities assigned to it under the Ahtisaari Plan. The United States welcomes this unconditional commitment to carry out these responsibilities and Kosovo's willingness to cooperate fully with the international community during the period of international supervision to which you have agreed. The United States relies upon Kosovo's assurances that it considers itself legally bound to comply with the provisions in Kosovo's Declaration of Independence. I am convinced that full and prompt adoption of the measures proposed by U.N. Special Envoy Ahtisaari will bring Kosovo closer to fulfilling its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

On the basis of these assurances from the Government of Kosovo, I am pleased to accept your request that our two countries establish diplomatic relations. The United States would welcome the establishment by Kosovo of diplomatic representation in the United States and plans to do likewise in Kosovo.

As Kosovo opens a new chapter in its history as an independent state, I look forward to the deepening and strengthening of our special friendship.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Remarks on Kosovo and an Exchange With Reporters in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania February 19, 2008

The President. Good morning. Sunday, the people of Kosovo declared their independence. They have asked the United States for diplomatic recognition, and yesterday the United States formally recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent nation.

In its Declaration of Independence, Kosovo committed itself to the highest standards of democracy, including freedom and tolerance and justice for citizens of all ethnic backgrounds. These are principles that honor human dignity; they are values America looks for in a friend. And soon we will establish full diplomatic relations with the new nation of Kosovo.

We will work with the leaders of Kosovo to carry out a smooth and peaceful transition to independence. America welcomes Kosovo's pledges to fully implement the plan of United Nations Special Envoy Ahtisaari and to accept a period of international supervision. We encourage

Kosovo's leaders to quickly adopt the provisions of the Ahtisaari plan, especially those designed to safeguard the rights of Kosovo's non-Albanian communities.

The independence of Kosovo is an historic step for the Balkans region. It presents an opportunity to move beyond the conflicts of the past and toward a future of freedom and stability and peace. The United States and the European Union must seize this opportunity to offer all the nations of this region the prospect of integration into the political, economic, and security structure of the Euro-Atlantic community. In this way, all the people of the Balkans will be able to see the promise of a better life for themselves and for their children.

Thank you. I'll answer a couple of questions. Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Kosovan Independence

Q. Mr. President, isn't this a poke in the eye to Vladimir Putin and the others

who say you're approving of secession movements everywhere implicitly?

The President. Actually, we have been working very closely with the Russians, as we have with the Europeans and other nations on the—on Kosovo's independence, because we believe it's the right thing to do. You know, there's a disagreement, but we believe, as do many other nations, that this is—history will prove this to be a correct move to bring peace to the Balkans.

This strategy has been a long time coming. Yesterday, for example, we had a—worked out with our European allies the sequencing of it to make sure that there was a concerted and constant voice supporting this move. The United States supports this move because we believe it will bring peace. And now it's up to all of us to work together to help the Kosovars realize that peace. And it's important for us to remind Kosovo, which I have just done, that they must honor their commitments to support the rights of non-Albanians, non-Kosovars' rights inside the country.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Excuse me. Hans [Hans Nichols, Bloomberg News].

Kosovan Independence/Russia

Q. Yes, Mr. President, thank you very much. When you talk about the sequencing of events, did you withhold the endorsement, the recognition, and wait until this morning for any particular reasons or as a favor to the Russians?

The President. No. Hans, as I told you, we worked with the European nations. We had—this strategy was well planned. And the endorsement, by the way, wasn't held until this morning; it was issued last night by the State Department, as I mentioned in my remarks.

But it was a way for us to create an effect that showed that the world was meant—many in the world were very supportive of the independence of Kosovo. Our position has been very clear all along. At the G-8, for example, I expressed—or in Albania, I expressed my position very clearly, so it shouldn't come as a surprise to anybody.

What you may be interested in knowing is that we have been in close consultation with the Russians all along. This wasn't a surprise to Russia. And, you know, today's announcement is simply putting an exclamation point onto a series of announcements that have been made over the last 24 hours.

Thank you all very much. See you in Rwanda.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:24 a.m. at Kilimanjaro Hotel Kempinski Dar es Salaam. In his remarks, he referred to former President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process of Kosovo. A reporter referred to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

Remarks Following a Visit to Kigali Memorial Centre in Kigali, Rwanda *February 19, 2008*

Laura and I have just finished going to a memorial for the—that recognizes the horrors of the genocide that took place here. This is a moving place that can't help but shake your emotions to your very foundation. It reminds me that we must not

let these kind of actions take place; that—and that the people of Rwanda need help to reconcile, to move forward, after a brutal period.

It's a—I guess the only thing I can finish saying is that, you know, we ask for God's