

of Peace; and Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Office of the Press Secretary also released

a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands

June 5, 2008

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thanks for coming back. I enjoyed being with you. You represent a great country. You're a good friend of the United States of America, and I appreciate our candid discussion of a variety of issues.

First, I want to thank you and your folks for helping the people of Afghanistan realize the blessings of liberty. There is a—we're engaged in a struggle against ideologues who use murder to achieve their political objectives. One way to help—and defeat those folks and marginalize them is to help others realize the blessings of a free society. And I appreciate your courage, and I appreciate the troops, and—but the people of Afghanistan appreciate them more.

We had a good discussion on a variety of issues. We talked about the need for—to continue our close cooperation on a series of issues. I appreciate very much your concern about the people on the continent of Africa, your concern about people needlessly dying because of HIV/AIDS. I share those same concerns with you.

Talked about completing the WTO round, the Doha round. The Prime Minister and I both agree, a world that trades freely is a world that is a more hopeful world and, certainly, a way to help people grow out of poverty.

And we talked about the climate issue. I assured him that the United States is concerned about the issue. We're concerned about being dependent on oil. And the two happen to go hand in hand. And we've developed a strategy to encourage

the advent of new technologies that will change our habits; at the same time, allow us to empower our economy in a way that will help us be good stewards in the environment. I want to thank you for your candid discussion on that.

Relations—bilateral relations with our countries are very strong and very good. And I can't thank you enough for coming. Welcome.

Prime Minister Balkenende. Mr. President, thank you very much for the hospitality and the friendship. It is true what you're saying about the bilateral relations between the United States and the Netherlands; they are very good. And also next year—and we have the 400-year celebration of the fact that Henry Hudson came, on behalf of the Dutch East Indian Company, to Manhattan.

President Bush. That's right.

Prime Minister Balkenende. And they'll be celebrated then. And just an example of the long tradition we have.

At this moment, we're working together. And you referred to that, by example, in Africa. In the struggle against HIV/AIDS, we are working together. We also are working together on the issue of deforestation in Latin America. There will be a meeting in Suriname in September, and we are supporting that event. And thanks for your remarks about our cooperation and the activities of our military people in Afghanistan. It's necessary to work together.

Of course when you are friends, sometimes there are issues you do not agree about, but because you have a friendship,

then you can talk about finding solutions and talk about critical aspects. We also talked about the European Union, and I'm convinced that the United States and the European Union share the same values. You talked about it: freedom, human rights and democracy, economic dynamism, sustainable development. And I think we—if we work together, we really can make a difference. And I think it's necessary.

So I'm really looking forward of the new administration also to have a good cooperation between the European Union and the United States.

It was also important what you said about role of multilateral channels, the United Nations; but also, we talked about the NATO. And it is important to make progress on the issues of climate change and energy. We have so many things in common.

So I want to thank you very much for hospitality, the cooperation. You know, there are really close ties between the people of the United States and the Netherlands. And I'm sure that will continue in the—in future. And when we talk about these issue—important issues like human rights, freedom, democracy—they—we have, really, a common responsibility.

I wish you all the best. I presume this will be the last time here in the White House when you're in office. I wish you all the best, and thanks again for the hospitality.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Prime Minister Balkenende. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Steven C. Preston as Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development

June 5, 2008

I am pleased that the Senate unanimously confirmed Steve Preston to serve as Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Steve is a strong leader whose understanding of our financial markets and strong management skills make him highly qualified to serve in this important position. He

will aggressively work to ensure that the Department remains focused on its mission of making housing more affordable and helping Americans keep their homes. Steve is also a consensus builder who will build on our efforts to work with Congress on responsible legislation addressing our Nation's housing policies.