

Statement on the Situation in Georgia *September 3, 2008*

Last month, Russia invaded a sovereign neighbor and violated Georgia's territorial integrity. The people of Georgia withstood the assault from the Russian military, and the international community rallied to stand with the people of Georgia and their democratically elected Government.

Early in the crisis, I directed a series of steps to demonstrate America's solidarity with Georgia, including instructing Secretary Gates to oversee a mission by the U.S. military to provide humanitarian aid for the people of Georgia. Since the conflict began, our Nation has provided nearly \$30 million in humanitarian assistance to Georgia, including more than 1,200 tons of food and other relief supplies delivered by the U.S. military. While that mission continues, the United States is also prepared to help Georgia rebuild and regain its position as one of the world's fastest growing economies.

On Monday, September 1, European leaders announced that the European Union is prepared to provide aid for reconstruction in Georgia, including the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and would soon convene an international conference to assist Georgia in its reconstruction. The United States applauds the actions taken by the European Union, and we will participate in the EU's reconstruction conference.

As part of America's contribution to this international effort, today I am announcing \$1 billion in additional economic assistance to meet Georgia's humanitarian needs and to support its economic recovery. More than half of these funds will be made available in the near term and will support reconstruction efforts in Georgia, assist the Government of Georgia in leading the nation's recovery, and meet ongoing humanitarian needs, including the resettlement of displaced families. The balance of the

funds, together with assistance from the European Union and other partners, will help the Government of Georgia rebuild critical infrastructure and help local communities and businesses get back on their feet. My administration looks forward to working with Congress on elements of this package. The Vice President will brief Georgia's leadership on this package when he visits Tbilisi tomorrow.

Today I have also directed a number of Federal agencies to expand their support for Georgia's economic recovery. U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab will take steps to expand trade and investment in Georgia, by negotiating an enhanced bilateral investment treaty and expanding preferential access to the U.S. market for Georgian exports. Secretary of Commerce Gutierrez will assist U.S. firms interested in trade and investment in Georgia and dispatch a trade mission to Georgia in the coming weeks. Secretary of Transportation Peters will make available risk insurance to support U.S. maritime commerce with Georgia. Secretary of the Treasury Paulson will continue to lead our efforts to coordinate assistance efforts with international financial institutions, and Secretaries Rice and Gates will continue to coordinate with our international partners to ensure that our aid is delivered swiftly to those who need it most.

Georgia has a strong economic foundation and leaders with an impressive record of reform. Our additional economic assistance will help the people of Georgia recover from the assault on their country and continue to build a prosperous and competitive economy.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

The President's Radio Address *September 6, 2008*

Good morning. Throughout the past week, Americans anxiously watched weather conditions in the Gulf Coast region. The people of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas were well prepared for Hurricane Gustav, and the coordination between these States and the Federal Government was strong.

Now we're focusing on the relief effort. Gustav caused damage to infrastructure, forced tens of thousands into shelters, and left more than a million people without power. The Federal Government is working with State and local officials to repair this damage, to help residents get back home, and to return life in the region to normal as soon as possible.

While these relief efforts have been in progress, we've also been preparing for the arrival of storms like Hanna, Ike, and others that may follow. My administration will continue to provide assistance to those affected by violent weather throughout this hurricane season. And we will continue to work diligently to coordinate our emergency response efforts with State and local governments.

While the Federal Government continues this vital work, there are also important responsibilities awaiting Members of Congress as they return to Washington. In just a few weeks, Members will be back out on the campaign trail, emphasizing the differences between the two parties. But before they leave Washington, they should show that they can work together on bipartisan measures to help strengthen America's economy, measures like approving the Colombia and Korean free trade agreements, extending relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax, and addressing one of the American people's biggest concerns, the high price of gasoline.

The fundamental reason for high gasoline prices is that the supply of oil is not keep-

ing pace with demand. By increasing supply through the use of our domestic resources, we can begin reducing the pressure on prices. So in June, I called on Congress to open up more of America's domestic oil resources for exploration, including off-shore exploration of the Outer Continental Shelf. The American people overwhelmingly support this proposal. But throughout the summer, the leaders of the Democratic Congress refused to allow it to come to a vote.

At the very least, Congress should take action on three commonsense energy solutions that enjoy bipartisan support.

First, Congress should open the way for environmentally responsible offshore exploration on the Outer Continental Shelf. Experts believe that these areas could eventually produce nearly 10 years worth of America's current annual oil production. This exploration is now banned by a provision included in the annual Interior appropriations bill. Congress should remove this restriction immediately.

Second, Congress should expand access to oil shale, a domestic resource that could produce the equivalent of more than a century's worth of imports at current levels. Last year, however, Democratic leaders slipped a provision blocking oil shale leasing on Federal lands into an omnibus spending bill. They should lift that ban immediately.

Third, Congress should extend renewable power tax credits to spur the development of alternative sources of energy like wind and solar. They should make these credits long-term and expand them to cover all forms of low-emission power generation, including nuclear power. In the long run, increasing production of low-carbon electricity can help us reduce our addiction to