

## Statement on the Earthquake in New Zealand *February 22, 2011*

On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I extend our deepest condolences to the people of New Zealand and to the families and friends of the victims in Christchurch, which has suffered its second major earthquake in just 6 months. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those whose lives have been touched by this tragedy, especially as they search for their loved ones and work to recover from this disaster. The United States is a close friend and partner of New Zealand, as evidenced by the meeting of the U.S.-New Zealand Partnership Forum that was underway in Christchurch

when the earthquake struck. To assist in the rescue and recovery efforts, we have agreed to deploy a U.S. Agency for International Development Disaster Assistance Response Team, including an urban search and rescue team, and we stand ready to provide more assistance as needed. As our New Zealand friends move forward, may they find some comfort and strength in knowing that they will have the enduring friendship and support of many partners around the world, including the United States.

## Statement on the Election of Rahm I. Emanuel as Mayor of Chicago, Illinois *February 22, 2011*

I want to extend my congratulations to Rahm Emanuel on a well-deserved victory tonight. As a Chicagoan and a friend, I couldn't

be prouder. Rahm will be a terrific mayor for all the people of Chicago.

## Remarks on the Situation in Libya *February 23, 2011*

Good afternoon, everybody. Secretary Clinton and I just concluded a meeting that focused on the ongoing situation in Libya. Over the last few days, my national security team has been working around the clock to monitor the situation there and to coordinate with our international partners about a way forward.

First, we are doing everything we can to protect American citizens. That is my highest priority. In Libya, we've urged our people to leave the country and the State Department is assisting those in need of support. Meanwhile, I think all Americans should give thanks to the heroic work that's being done by our Foreign Service officers and the men and women serving in our Embassies and consulates around the world. They represent the very best of our country and its values.

Now, throughout this period of unrest and upheaval across the region, the United States has maintained a set of core principles which

guide our approach. These principles apply to the situation in Libya. As I said last week, we strongly condemn the use of violence in Libya.

The American people extend our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of all who've been killed and injured. The suffering and bloodshed is outrageous, and it is unacceptable. So are threats and orders to shoot peaceful protesters and further punish the people of Libya. These actions violate international norms and every standard of common decency. This violence must stop.

The United States also strongly supports the universal rights of the Libyan people. That includes the rights of peaceful assembly, free speech, and the ability of the Libyan people to determine their own destiny. These are human rights. They are not negotiable. They must be respected in every country. And they cannot be denied through violence or suppression.