

Her story is the best of America's story, told with courage, compassion, and conviction.

As our U.N. Ambassador these last 4 years, she has stood unflinchingly for America's interest and values. Now as our Secretary of State, she will help lead the effort to build a world where America makes the most of its partnerships with friends and allies around the world, where America leads the fight for a world that is safer from weapons of terror and mass destruction, where America leads the fight for a world that is safer from organized crime, drug trafficking, and all terrorist activity, and where expanded trade brings growth and opportunity, where peace and freedom know no frontiers.

Just as I have benefited time and again from her counsel and her judgment, the American people will benefit from her leadership and her ability to speak to them about the importance of our being strong abroad in order to have a strong, good life here at home.

On their behalf, I ask now that the Vice President swear Madeleine Albright into her new office.

[At this point, Vice President Gore administered the oath of office and Secretary Albright made brief remarks.]

Q. Madam Secretary, what is your first order of business?

Secretary Albright. To go over to the State Department and tell them all that we have a very important job to do with the hard work of our foreign service and civil service who works in the State Department. And then I will plan the next steps. But my first goal is really to go and work with the excellent people that have provided the backbone of America's diplomatic service.

Q. Madam Secretary, now that you've made history, how else do you intend to differ from your predecessor?

Secretary Albright. I'm basically interested in serving the President of the United States and the people of the United States as best I can. I'm very proud to be an American. And I hope very much that the American people will be proud of me as I perform this service for the United States.

Thank you.

Q. Are you going to be tough on the new Secretary-General, as you were on his predecessor? *[Laughter]*

Secretary Albright. I think we are going to meet with the new Secretary-General. I'm very pleased, actually, that his—the first official trip that—the first visit here that the President is going to have after his inauguration is with the United Nations Secretary-General. My first official act will be to meet with the President and the new Secretary-General in a little while. And I think that is a very good sign of the support that the United States is going to give to the United Nations. And as the Vice President said last night, we are committed to the United Nations.

Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:18 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Following Discussions With United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and an Exchange With Reporters

January 23, 1997

The President. Good afternoon. Secretary-General and your distinguished staff, Mr. Vice President, Madam Secretary.

The President of the United States must exercise the leadership of our country for peace and freedom, for security and prosperity in the world. When we must, we will act alone. But when we can, we must work with others to spread the cost and the risks of engagement and to make our own leadership more effective.

The United Nations is critical in advancing the progress and peace of the world. It vaccinates children against disease, helps refugees to stay safe and go home, teaches farmers how to grow good crops, guards against the spread of nuclear weapons. And from Angola to the Middle East, UN peacekeepers are giving diplomacy a chance to work and peace a chance to take hold.

That is the kind of burden-sharing we need to seize the promise and meet the perils of a world growing ever closer together. That's why last year I believed so strongly that the

United Nations needed new leadership, a Secretary-General who could rebuild the institution to take on the challenges of the future.

I am very pleased that the UN chose Kofi Annan for the job. He is a man who shares that vision and is clearly prepared to act, an experienced diplomat, a proven reformer, a man committed to a revitalized United Nations, one that upholds its timeless mission but that adapts to new times.

We had a good discussion. We talked about the need to put the UN back on sound financial footing. That will demand far-reaching reform, the elimination of waste, streamlining staff, wiping out overlap and abuse. The Secretary-General and I agree that the UN must pursue this course of reform. It's clear to me that he is prepared and determined to get the job done.

As the UN moves to reform, it must know also that the United States is prepared to pay its way. In the weeks ahead, I will be working with Congress to reach an agreement through which America can pay our arrears to the UN, meet our obligations, and continue to spur real progress. We cannot expect to lead through the United Nations unless we are prepared to pay our own way and to pay what we owe as they do what they should along the path of reform. As long as the United States does its part—as long as the United Nations does its part, we simply have to be prepared to pay our debts and to pay our dues.

Today we are proud as Americans to stand as the indispensable nation, the world's leading force for peace and freedom and security and prosperity. But we cannot sustain our leadership or, more importantly, our goals for a better world, alone. And we cannot sustain it by words alone. Our well-being at home depends upon our engagement around the world. We have to have the resources to meet that challenge and to assume the responsibilities of leadership. Meeting our commitment to the United Nations is a crucial part of that task, and I might say also, on Secretary Albright's first day in office, adequately funding our foreign policy operations through the State Department and our other diplomatic missions is also a critical part of that task.

I'm very encouraged that the Secretary-General will be meeting with congressional leaders during his visit here to Washington. I look forward to working with the Congress and with the Secretary-General to renew the United Nations for the century ahead, and I'm very glad that he is the first leader that I have met with after my Inauguration.

Mr. Secretary-General, would you like to say a few words? Welcome to Washington.

[At this point, Secretary-General Annan made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you very much.

U.S. Debt to the United Nations

Q. Mr. President, why did you wait so long to want to pay back your debts? And is it conditional on reforms?

The President. First of all, I wanted to pay it back all along. Our budget will actually have a plan to pay it back and to pay it back in a prompt fashion. As a practical matter, I know from consulting with the Members of Congress that we won't be able to secure support in the Congress for paying the arrears unless they're convinced that reform is going forward.

But you know, the United States has been, I think, very fortunate to have hosted the United Nations since its creation, to have supported it and worked with it in ways large and small. And we have been immensely benefited by the burden-sharing and humanitarian work that the United Nations has done. So I am determined to see that we pay our way. And I think it's a part of—I'll say again, it's a part of having the proper attitude toward our foreign policy operations in general.

I'm gratified that Secretary Albright and Secretary Cohen were confirmed yesterday. I hope that Bill Richardson and Tony Lake will be promptly confirmed so we can put our whole foreign policy team on the field and go to work. But we have to recognize that our diplomacy and our leadership cannot be through the defense budget alone. We also have to have an adequate diplomatic budget to do the work that has to be done. And that is—a part of that is paying our UN way.

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about—

Q. Mr. President, if you put the UN on a scale of 1 to 10, where would you place it?

The President. Rising rapidly. [Laughter]

Canada-Cuba Trade Agreement

Q. What do you think about Canada's trade deal with Cuba?

The President. Excuse me?

Q. Canada's trade deal with Cuba?

The President. What about it?

Q. What is your reaction to it? Do you have any?

The President. Well, my reaction is I'm gratified that the Canadians, along with the Europeans, are now talking more to the Cubans about human rights and democratic reforms. I'm skeptical, frankly, that it will—that the recent discussions between the Canadians and the Cubans will lead to advances. I believe that our policy is the proper one, but I'm glad that the Canadians are trying to make something good happen in Cuba.

U.S. Debt to the United Nations

Q. Gentlemen, would the two of you like to have a common strategy about how to get a reluctant Congress to give up this money?

The President. Well, I think we have common interests there. I've already told you that I'm utterly convinced that the Secretary-General has a chance to genuinely reform the United Nations for the 21st century because he is committed to do it and because he and his team have the capacity to do it. And I think all that remains is for him to establish an appropriate relationship with our Congress. And I think he'll do it and do quite well with it. And we don't need to coordinate a strategy for that. No secret here, we've told you everything we've just said in there.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Memorandum on Increasing Seatbelt Use

January 23, 1997

Memorandum for the Secretary of Transportation

Subject: Increasing Seatbelt Use Nationwide

We have made steady progress in improving highway safety over the years. However, there are still far too many tragic and unnecessary deaths and injuries on the Nation's roads. As a first line of defense, we must all wear seatbelts. Seatbelts protect passengers not only in frontal crashes, but also in side, rear, and rollover crashes, saving about 10,000 lives a year. I understand that about 70 percent of the population use seatbelts. Increasing seatbelt use will clearly save more lives and reduce injuries.

I hereby direct you, working with the Congress, the States, and other concerned Americans, including the automobile and insurance industries, and safety and consumer groups, to report back to me in 45 days with a plan to increase the use of seatbelts nationwide. The plan shall address, among other things, the State laws that require the use of seatbelts, assistance from the Department of Transportation to improve those State laws, and a comprehensive education campaign on behalf of the public and private sector to help the public understand the need to wear seatbelts.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

Remarks at the Swearing-In of William Cohen as Secretary of Defense and an Exchange With Reporters

January 24, 1997

The President. Good morning. Mr. Vice President, Secretary-about-to-be Cohen, Janet, Secretary Perry, Deputy Secretary White, General Shalikashvili, General Ralston, Senator Inouye, Senator Levin, Senator