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ice, the Office of the Under Secretary for Enforcement, and the Office of the General Counsel), and the Department of State (particularly the Office of Southern African Affairs).

I will continue to report periodically to the Congress on significant developments, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1703(c).

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 4.

Remarks Calling for the Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention and an Exchange With Reporters

April 4, 1997

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator Boren, for your words and your presence here today. We were laughing before we came out here. Senator Boren and I started our careers in politics in 1974 together, but he found a Presidency that is not term-limited—[*laughter*]—and I want to congratulate him on it.

Mr. Vice President, Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, Secretary Baker, Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker, General Shalikashvili. Let me thank all of you who have spoken here today for the words you have said, for you have said it all. And let me thank all of you who have come here to be a part of this audience today to send a clear, unambiguous, united message to America and to our Senate.

I thank General Colin Powell and Senator Warren Rudman, former arms negotiators Paul Nitze, Edward Rowny, and Ken Adelman; so many of the Congressmen who have supported us, including Senator Biden and Senator Levin who are here; the truly distinguished array of military leaders, leaders of businesses, religious organizations, human rights groups, scientists, and arms control experts.

Secretary Baker made, I thought, a very telling point, which others made as well. This is, in the beginning, a question of whether we will continue to make America's leadership strong and sure as we chart our course in a new time. We have to do that, and we can only do that if we rise to the challenge of ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are closing a 20th century which gives us an opportunity now to forge a widening international commitment to banish poison gas from the Earth in the 21st century. This is a simple issue at bottom, even though the details are somewhat complex. Presidents and legislators from both parties, military leaders, and arms control experts have bound together in common cause because this is simply good for the future of every American.

I received two powerful letters recently, calling for ratification. One has already been mentioned that I received from Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker, Senator Boren, and former National Security Adviser General Brent Scowcroft. The other came from General Powell, General Jones, General Vessey, General Schwartzkopf, and more than a dozen other retired generals and admirals, all of them saying as one, ''America needs to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we must do it before it takes effect on April 29th.''

Of course the treaty is not a panacea. No arms control treaty can be absolutely perfect, and none can end the need for vigilance. But no nation acting alone can protect itself from the threat posed by chemical weapons. Trying to stop their spread by ourselves would be like trying to stop the wind that helps carry their poison to its target. We must have an international solution to a global problem.

The convention provides clear and overwhelming benefits for our people. Under a law Congress passed in the 1980's, we were already destroying almost all our chemical weapons. The convention requires other nations to follow our lead, to eliminate their arsenals of poison gas and to give up developing, producing, and acquiring such weapons in the future. By ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention, as Secretary Cohen said, we can help to shield our soldiers from one of the battlefields deadliest killers. We can give our children something our parents and grandparents never had, broad protec-

tion against the threat of chemical attack. And we can bolster our leadership in the fight against terrorism, of proliferation all around the world.

If the Senate fails to ratify the convention before it enters into force, our national security and, I might add, our economic security will suffer. We will be denied use of the treaty's tools against rogue states and terrorists. We will lose the chance to help to enforce the rules we helped to write or to have Americans serve as international inspectors, something that is especially important for those who have raised concerns about the inspection provisions of the treaty.

Ironically, if we are outside this agreement rather than inside, it is our chemical companies, our leading exporters, which will face mandatory trade restrictions that could cost them hundreds of millions of dollars in sales. In short order, America will go from leading the world to joining the company of pariah nations that the Chemical Weapons Convention seeks to isolate. We cannot allow this to happen.

The time has come to pass this treaty as 70 other nations already have done. Since I sent the Chemical Weapons Convention to the Senate 3½ years ago, there have been more than a dozen hearings, more than 1,500 pages of testimony and reports. During the last 3 months, we have worked very closely with Senate leaders to go the extra mile to resolve remaining questions and areas of concern. I want to thank those in the Senate who have worked with us for their leadership and for their good-faith efforts.

Ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention, again, I say, is important both for what it does and for what it says. It says America is committed to protecting our troops, to fighting terror, to stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction, to setting and enforcing standards for international behavior, and to leading the world in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. I urge the Senate to act in the highest traditions of bipartisanship and in the deepest of our national interest.

And let me again say, the words that I have spoken today are nothing compared to the presence, to the careers, to the experience, to the judgment, to the patriotism of Republicans and Democrats alike and the military leaders who have gathered here and who all across this country have lent their support to this monumentally important effort. We must not fail. We have a lot of work to do, but I leave here today with renewed confidence that together we can get the job done.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

[*At this point, the President greeted the guests and later took questions from reporters.*]

Q. What about King Hussein—that the very terrorists who Secretary Cohen who was talking about are the ones who are most likely to get hold of these weapons and who really are not going to be prohibited by this treaty?

The President. But this will require—I have two responses. Number one, this will require other countries to do what we're already doing and destroy their stockpiles, so there won't be as much for them to get a hold of. Number two, it will make it much more difficult for the component parts that make bigger—are used to make chemical weapons, to get into the hands of terrorists because we'll have much stricter controls on them. So those are the two answers there. That's why all these people are for this.

Q. They really are the people, though, who can get these without being regulated. I mean, you know——

The President. Yes, but as Madeleine Albright said, that's the argument you make against drug trafficking. In other words, criminals will always make an effort to evade the law; that's what they do. But if you have—if you destroy the chemical stockpiles and you make it more difficult for the agents to make the chemical weapons, to get into the hands of terrorists, you have dramatically improved the security of the world. Yes there will still be people who will try to do it. Yes there will still be people in home laboratories who can made dangerous things. This does not solve every problem in the world, but it will make the world much safer.

Q. Why do you think you had to do this today? Why did you have to come out and do it today?

The President. Because we're going to have to work like crazy to pass the thing.

Q. You don't have the votes right now?

The President. No, but we'll get there. I don't know yet, but we'll get there. I feel very much better because of this broad bipartisan support, but I've been working with Senator Lott since the first of the year on this. He knows how important it is to me, and he's dealt with us in good faith. And we've worked with Senator Helms. We've worked with everybody, and we agreed that we would start the highly public, visible part of this campaign at about this time. So we're getting after it. We've got a month to deliver. We're going to try to do it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. in the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks to the Women's Economic Leadership Forum

April 4, 1997

Welcome to Humility 101. Thank you, Betsy, Maria, Linda. Thank you, Senator Landrieu, all of you. I'm delighted that you're here for this first ever Women's Economic Leadership Summit. Linda, I want to especially thank you and the Center for Policy Alternatives for your role in this meeting.

I couldn't help thinking, when Betsy was introducing me, that I—of all the things that I have done to try to elevate the status, the visibility, and the success of women, the most difficult one for me to do was just this week when I permitted Secretary Albright to represent me in throwing out the first ball—[*laughter*]—of the baseball season. It was very difficult. But you see, she got a lot more publicity for it than I would have. [*Laughter*]

She throws hard, straight, and low when necessary—[*laughter*]—that's good.

I'm delighted to see all of you here. When I came into office, one of the things that I wanted most to do was not only to fashion a new economic policy for our country that would move the economy forward but to do it in a way that would address two problems that I saw really eating away at the heart of America: one, the fact that all Americans didn't have a chance to participate in our economy, even when it was doing well, and I wanted to change that; and second, the fact that more and more Americans were having genuine difficulty fulfilling their responsibilities to their children and their responsibilities at work, principally lower income working people but not exclusively lower income working people, a lot of others as well.

So we attempted not only to have a big economic strategy on the big issues, focusing on cutting the deficit, eventually balancing the budget, continuing to invest in education and technology and research, expanding trade—all of those things that I think are so important—but also to specifically target people and places that had been left out of the economic mainstream with initiatives like the empowerment zones, the community development financial institutions initiative, the microenterprise initiative, which I imagine Hillary will talk a little bit about when she comes over in a few minutes. But also with a lot of initiatives specifically directed toward women, the things that we've done in the Small Business Administration, increasing by 300 percent the number of loans to women from the SBA, and a number of other things. And of course we have done a lot in the area of work and family.

And I think the results have been, conservatively speaking, pretty impressive. Just this morning the new unemployment figures were announced. Unemployment dropped to 5.2 percent. I now think we have persuaded most economists that we could actually have 5 percent or lower unemployment in this country without having inflation if we do it with discipline. I'm going to do everything I can to get a balanced budget agreement this year so that it will send a signal to the markets that they can keep interest rates modest, we can keep the markets strong, and we can keep creating jobs and bring more and more people into the work force.

Because, keep in mind, this 5.2 percent unemployment rate is misleading. There are lots and lots of States that have unemployment rates at 4 percent or less now. There are huge numbers of areas in States that have unemployment rates of 4.5, 4 percent, or less, and then there are places that have unemployment rates of 10 percent or more. So it's very important that we keep this effort going. It's also very important on the ques-