

Week Ending Friday, July 25, 1997

Joint Statement on Republic of Georgia-United States Relations

July 18, 1997

During their July 18, 1997 meeting in Washington, Presidents Clinton and Shevardnadze underscored the special importance they attach to the close and productive relationship between the United States and Georgia. They committed to work together actively to expand cooperation throughout the foreign policy, security, economic and commercial spheres. The Presidents noted that the growing U.S.-Georgia partnership is firmly based on common goals and values and reflects the national interests of both states.

President Clinton praised President Shevardnadze's staunch leadership in vigorously implementing democratic and free-market principles, which has made Georgia a model of political and economic reform among the new independent states. President Clinton underscored the full support of the United States for the efforts of the Georgian government and parliament in pursuing reform in recent years. Georgia's continued commitment to democratization and respect for human rights will only further strengthen the warm ties between the two states and peoples.

The two Presidents noted positively the contribution to Georgia's reform efforts made by U.S. technical and humanitarian assistance. President Clinton pledged continued robust support for Georgia's reforms.

The Presidents called for expanded cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, to promote Georgia's further integration into emerging European security structures. They expressed satisfaction with the entry into force on May 15, 1997 of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Flank Document. President Clinton encouraged Georgia's

active involvement in NATO's new Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). He also expressed strong commitment to assisting Georgia's efforts to address non-proliferation and export control concerns and to develop a modern military under civilian control and a viable border guard.

President Clinton reaffirmed U.S. support for Georgia's territorial integrity and a peaceful settlement to the tragic conflict in Abkhazia. The United States and Georgia support the early resumption of negotiations on Abkhazia, under the aegis of the UN, with Russia as facilitator and the participation of the OSCE and the other Friends of Georgia countries—France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The two Presidents agreed on the need to expand commercial relations between the United States and Georgia, including higher levels of trade and investment. In support of these goals, the instruments of ratification for the U.S.-Georgia Bilateral Investment Treaty were exchanged during the visit. The two sides agree to continue close cooperation in support of Georgia's rapid accession to the World Trade Organization on commercial terms generally applied to newly acceding members, which will further Georgia's integration into the global economy.

President Clinton praised Georgia's efforts to strengthen regional cooperation in the Caucasus, including its strong support for the Eurasian transport corridor. The Presidents agreed that this project is vitally important to the economic future not only of Georgia, but the region as a whole.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7012—Captive Nations Week, 1997

July 18, 1997

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

From its earliest days as a Nation, America has been a champion of freedom and human dignity. Our Declaration of Independence was a ringing cry against “the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these States” and affirmed the revolutionary concept that governments derive their powers from the free consent of those they govern. For more than two centuries our Bill of Rights has guaranteed such basic human rights as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom from arbitrary arrest. With such a history and heritage, we can feel only outrage that millions of people around the world still suffer beneath the shadow of oppression, their rights routinely violated by their own governments and leaders.

Almost four decades ago, our Nation observed the first Captive Nations Week to express formally our solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world. Since that time, thanks to our steadfast advocacy for democratic reform and universal human rights, and the courage and determination of countless men and women around the globe, the world’s political landscape has undergone a remarkable transformation. Nations once dominated by the Soviet Union and its satellite governments have blossomed into new democracies, establishing free market economies and free societies that respect individual rights. Families and countrymen once divided by walls and barbed wire, now walk together in the fresh air of liberty. The unprecedented gathering of 44 countries at the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council meeting earlier this month in Madrid symbolizes how far we have come in building a stable, democratic, and undivided Europe.

Yet while countries like Poland, Romania, and Estonia are no longer among the ranks of captive nations, too many others are still held hostage by tyranny, and new nations still fall victim to the scourge of oppression. Tragically, even as the wave of freedom and

democratic reform sweeps across Eastern and Central Europe, former Soviet bloc countries, and nations in South America, Asia, and Africa, there are still governments that derive their strength, not from the consent of their citizens, but from terror, repression, and exploitation. Too many leaders still fuel the fires of racial, ethnic, and religious hatred; too many people still suffer from ignorance, prejudice, and brutality.

As we observe Captive Nations Week this year, let us reaffirm our commitment to the American ideals of freedom and justice. Let us strengthen our resolve to promote respect for human rights and self-determination for women and men of every nationality, creed, and race. Let us continue to speak out for those who have no voice. It is our Nation’s obligation to do so, as the world’s best hope for lasting peace and freedom and as a source of enduring inspiration to oppressed peoples everywhere.

The Congress, by Joint Resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week in July of each year as “Captive Nations Week.”

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 20 through July 26, 1997, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities and to rededicate ourselves to supporting the cause of human rights, liberty, peace, and self-determination for all the peoples of the world.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

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