

direction towards self-reliance in Afghanistan. And I must thank you very much once again.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. at the United States Mission at the United Nations Headquarters. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Joint Statement on Road Construction in Afghanistan by the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Japan, and the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia
September 12, 2002

Since the horrific events of September 11, 2001, the Governments of the United States, Japan, and Saudi Arabia have worked together both on ridding the world of the scourge of terrorism and, following the success of Operation Enduring Freedom, supporting Afghanistan's Transitional Administration, led by President Hamid Karzai. With Japan, our joint work on this endeavor grows from the close bilateral relationship that has long existed between our peoples and our governments as reflected in the U.S.-Japan Partnership for Security and Prosperity, based on our shared values, mutual trust and friendship, reaffirmed at Camp David in June 2001. Similarly, the United States and Saudi Arabia have built a strong bilateral relationship over the past 60 years based on mutual trust and respect and a common vision of a just, peaceful, and prosperous world.

In November 2001, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Japan foresaw the need for the community of nations effectively to plan how to provide humanitarian relief and reconstruction for Afghanistan as the Taliban fell from power. This culminated in the Tokyo Pledging Conference in January 2002, which yielded 4.5 billion dollars in pledges to finance Afghanistan's humanitarian and reconstruction needs over the next five years.

Our governments have acted as leaders in the international community to address the humanitarian needs of Afghanistan, including

repatriation and resettlement of refugees and the internally displaced.

While these challenges continue, it is now time for the international community to take strong, visible steps to begin Afghanistan's physical reconstruction. Traditionally, Afghanistan's key unifying transportation artery has been the road connecting Kabul in the east to Herat in the west. This is the key link in Afghanistan's "ring road" which also connects its northern provinces with the capital.

To launch the reconstruction of this key transportation network, which now lies in ruins, the United States, Japan, and Saudi Arabia are committing today to reconstruct the road from Kabul, through Kandahar, to Herat to international standards. We invite others to join us in this project. But to make clear our determination, the United States is today committing eighty million dollars toward this project, Japan is committing fifty million dollars focusing its effort on the road from Kabul to Kandahar, and Saudi Arabia is also committing fifty million dollars. Taken together, this initial funding alone should complete the bulk of this roadway.

Because it is essential for Afghanistan's people to see the fruits of their government's work and the commitment of Saudi Arabia, Japan and the United States made real, we intend to begin initial construction before winter sets in and will make every effort to complete the entire highway—from Kabul to Kandahar to Herat—within thirty-six months.

We intend to use this project to foster opportunity for economic growth and prosperity in Afghanistan. It is our belief that this road, along with others that will connect Afghanistan to its neighbors north and south, can set the stage for a complete transportation system, the lowering of tariff and other barriers to trade, and the establishment of links through Afghanistan from the Indian Ocean to Central Asia and from the Caspian Basin to the Far East. With this vision in mind, we look forward to the day that Afghanistan regains its place along the "Silk Road" connecting East and West in a highway of mutual understanding, commerce, and peace.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a Luncheon Honoring Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations in New York City

September 12, 2002

The President. Mr. Secretary-General, and distinguished members of the United Nations community, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to New York. My country is honored to be the home of the United Nations. And I'm honored to be with you today for the opening week of the 57th Session of the U.N. General Assembly.

We gather in a city that was changed forever by the events of one year and one day ago. Secretary-General, the people of the United States will never forget your leadership in the days following September the 11th. Within a day, the General Assembly strongly condemned the terror, and very quickly the U.N. took strong action to support and strengthen a global coalition against global terror. The United States is grateful to the U.N. and to every person and every nation that has joined this cause.

We gather to address the urgent challenges of a world awakened to danger. Mr. Secretary-General, thanks to your leadership, the U.N. is playing a valuable role in meeting these challenges. The U.N. Charter commits each nation here to promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Today we rededicate ourselves to these ideals.

Mr. Secretary-General, I offer a toast to you to continued cooperation between the United States and the United Nations.

[At this point, the participants drank a toast.]

The President. Thank you. Let's eat.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:39 p.m. in the U.N. Delegates Lounge at United Nations Headquarters.

Statement on Proposed Legislation To Implement the Healthy Forests Initiative

September 12, 2002

Just 3 weeks ago, I visited Oregon to see firsthand the devastating effects of the catastrophic wildfires that have burned more than 6 million acres of forests across the West this summer. I also announced a new and commonsense initiative to restore forest health and prevent these unnaturally severe fires. I directed Secretaries Veneman and Norton to work with Congress to develop legislation to address the crisis in forest and rangeland health that has put more than 190 million acres of public land—an area twice the size of California—at risk of catastrophic fires. We have a simple choice: We can act now to protect these forests, or we can stand by and watch them burn. Secretaries Norton and Veneman delivered to Congress a legislative package that meets our responsibility to reduce fire risks quickly in high-priority areas, and I am very pleased that this proposal was introduced in the House of Representatives today. There is bipartisan agreement that public lands of the West are desperately in need of active management efforts to restore forest and rangeland health. I call upon Congress to act upon this urgent priority as quickly as possible.

Remarks at a Reception for Heads of United Nations General Assembly Delegations in New York City

September 12, 2002

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Laura and I appreciate you all coming. It's an honor to be with you tonight. I want to apologize for the photo line taking so long. I'm the person to blame; I talked too much. But thank you for coming. I appreciate so very much all the Presidents who are here and the Prime Ministers who are here and the Foreign Ministers who are here, the Ambassadors to U.N. who are here. I want to thank my citizens from our country who are here. I appreciate John Negroponte, the Ambassador to the United Nations. I want to