

Remarks Following a Visit to Kigali Memorial Centre in Kigali, Rwanda

February 19, 2008

Laura and I have just finished going to a memorial for the—that recognizes the horrors of the genocide that took place here. This is a moving place that can't help but shake your emotions to your very foundation. It reminds me that we must not let these kind of actions take place; that—and that the people of Rwanda need help to reconcile, to move forward, after a brutal period.

It's a—I guess the only thing I can finish saying is that, you know, we ask for God's blessings on those who still hurt and on those who long for help and on the kids whose lives had to have been deeply affected by the trauma of the moment. And we thank the museum officials for their generosity and hospitality and for putting on such an exhibit to remind people that there is evil in the world, and evil must be confronted.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m.

The President's News Conference With President Paul Kagame of Rwanda in Kigali

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President Kagame. President, it's my great pleasure, it's the pleasure of the whole country to welcome you, Mr. President, and Mrs. Laura Bush and your distinguished delegation. We thank you very much for your visit, your friendship, and your support. These have made a substantive difference to many lives in our country.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Kagame. The bilateral investment treaty that we have just signed is further testimony to your commitment and the good will of the American people. Mr. President, your visit is a reflection that the United States and Rwanda have shared values. We believe in investing in our people. We share a commitment to expanding our people's economic and the democratic aspirations. We believe in strong and effective institutions accountable to our respective citizens.

But as it is well appreciated, different countries begin their democratic and development agenda from different circumstances.

You saw for yourself there is also decades of bad politics and bad leadership when you visited the genocide memorial that you just saw this morning. The country you are visiting today was vastly different 14 years ago, when the very survival of Rwanda as a nation was in question. But the Rwandan people refused to give up hope, and we have instead embarked on the task of healing, reconstruction, and development.

The results of these efforts may be illustrated by our modest achievements in such areas as education, health, and a general improvement towards sustainable economic growth. Rwandans and the more—especially our youth—have hope in a better future. Primary school enrollment has risen to about 96 percent, spurred by tuition-free education. In our concerted effort to invest in our people, we have extended universal education to the very first 3 years of secondary education. And we intend to do more through the entire value chain of trade.

In the field of health, immunization coverage has risen to 95 percent. Thanks to American support and partnership, thousands of Rwandan children and mothers are alive and have hope because of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program. Malaria has almost been eliminated in our country due in large part to the President's Malaria Initiative.

On the economic front, today's agreement will certainly deepen our economic collaboration, Mr. President. Mr. President, we share a deep commitment to democracy and good governance. In this respect, we in Rwanda believe strongly in power sharing and consensus-building as a cornerstone of our political dispensation. This perspective has been made the center piece of our Constitution, informed by our particular history and the circumstances that disenfranchised communities and political expressions—often leading to calamities. We know that governance has both universal and home-grown features to allow for greater relevance. We believe we are making progress towards a balance between these imperatives.