

the municipal governments, including several of the most populous municipalities. Opposition party candidates also have made many gains in the assembly. Now the challenge is in the hands of the various parties to work together, build coalitions, and do what is best for all of the people of El Salvador.

Mr. Speaker, they have their work cut out for them. As the country takes on the tremendous challenges of a struggling economy, horrible poverty, a frighteningly high crime rate, and the need for widespread judicial reform, we have to encourage Salvadoran leaders to continue to work together for what is best for all of its citizens. The difference is that today there is hope and political room for positive change.

□ 1550

Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure getting to know the people of El Salvador, and I am very honored to have been given that opportunity, and I want to congratulate my friends for their tremendous accomplishment. Today's democratic elections means tomorrow's prosperity.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. BALLENGER], the sponsor of this resolution.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, in 1962, 35 years ago, my wife and I went to El Salvador to help in developing their economy. It was peaceful and quiet then, the war had not started, and we have been working ever since to continue that growth and the growth in the democracy.

On June 25, 1997, the Committee on International Relations unanimously passed a resolution that I introduced, House Concurrent Resolution 88, congratulating the government and the people of the Republic of El Salvador on successfully completing free and democratic elections for the fourth time. On March 16, 1997, El Salvador held free and fair elections for 84 national legislative assembly seats, 262 mayoral and municipal council posts. This was yet another milestone in the normalization of the democratic process in El Salvador, and I wish to commend that nation for its efforts.

El Salvador has come a long way since the 1980's when the nation was in the midst of a terrible civil war. Many of my colleagues will recall that that war cost the lives of tens of thousands of El Salvadorans and left the country in shambles. Now the Salvadorans have replaced bullets with ballots. It was a strong leadership and guidance coupled with the courage demonstrated by former President Alfredo Cristiani that rescued the country and paved the way for El Salvador's future. He continued to seek peace in spite of the fact that the war continued. His successor, the new President Armando Calderon Sol, elected in a free and fair contest, had the same commitment to democracy and will strive to keep this nation

moving forward in the next century. The stark contrast between war-torn El Salvador and the El Salvador of today is a tribute to its people and its leaders.

In addition to holding successful elections, we see the Salvadoran Government's effort to foster free-market enterprise and privatization of certain industries as part of its move toward a free and fair society. Most importantly, we continue to witness the successful implementation of the 1992 peace accords. I believe the Americans must continue to show support for our Salvadoran neighbors through this long and fragile process, and I hope my colleagues will join me and congratulate El Salvador in this latest and most remarkable accomplishment.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Again I want to commend the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. BALLENGER] for his outstanding leadership on this issue and certainly want to thank him on behalf of the minority caucus for his outstanding leadership and for his understanding of the speakers here today.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. MENENDEZ].

(Mr. MENENDEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have had the opportunity to work with my colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. BALLENGER], to introduce this resolution. El Salvador means "the Savior" in Spanish, and I believe that El Salvador represents hope and salvation for all of Central America.

During the civil war in the 1980's, about 75,000 Salvadorans lost their lives in this country, a small country of 5 million people, but they have managed to find peace, democracy, and a market economy, and today El Salvador leads the region economically with an average annual growth rate of 6 percent in this decade.

This resolution is an expression of good will toward the people of El Salvador and toward President Armando Calderon del Sol who was just recently here, and we have had discussions with him and as he faces the challenges that are still present before El Salvador. But we are confident that El Salvador, as has been mentioned here, will continue to progress, building democratic institutions and improving the lives of the Salvadoran people.

We can do our part by making sure that the seeds of democracy which are taking root in El Salvador are fully cemented, and that is why I want to hail the Attorney General's decision not to deport, not to deport Salvadorans who came to the United States, fleeing from civil war, as a result of our foreign policy in part, and now would

have made a dramatic economic impact on El Salvador if, in fact, they were massively deported. These are people who I believe had rights under the law which were eviscerated under the Immigration Reform Act of last year, and whose rights retroactively should never have been abolished in that manner. In essence, by preserving their opportunity to go ahead and make their case before the Immigration Court of Appeals, this provides an opportunity for El Salvador also to flourish in the process.

So I want to commend all of those and also the Congressional Hispanic Caucus who worked very hard on this with the administration. For our part we want to make sure that the United States Congress and administration provide El Salvador with the necessary resources and the type of policy that continues stability and growth, stability which is clearly in the national interests of the United States in a region that is so close to our borders.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 88.

The question was taken.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### RESOLUTION REGARDING THE CONGO

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 175) expressing concern over the outbreak of violence in the Republic of Congo and the resulting threat to scheduled elections and constitutional government in that country, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 175

Whereas President Pascal Lissouba defeated former President Denis Sassou-Nguesso in a 1992 election that was determined to be free and fair;

Whereas losing candidates raised questions concerning the results of the 1993 legislative election and used those concerns to cast doubt on the entire democratic process in the Republic of Congo and as the rationale for creating private militias;

Whereas thousands of citizens of the Republic of Congo have been killed in intermittent fighting between Government soldiers and private militia men since 1993;

Whereas there are concerns about the unfinished census and resulting electoral list to be used in the scheduled July 27 election;

Whereas the recent fighting resulted from the Government's attempt to disarm former

President Sassou-Nguesso's "Cobra" militia in advance of the scheduled July 27 election;

Whereas the fighting and uneasy peace has caused serious loss of life and diminished ability to care for those who are without access to adequate medical care or food and water;

Whereas the fighting between Government troops and militiamen have forced the evacuation from the country of foreign nationals and endangered refugees from both Rwanda and the former Zaire; and

Whereas African governments have attempted to bring about a negotiated settlement to the current crisis: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the current fighting and urges the warring parties to reach a lasting ceasefire that will allow for humanitarian needs to be addressed as soon as possible;

(2) calls on all private militia to disarm and disband immediately to end the continuing threat to peace and stability in the Republic of Congo;

(3) commends African leaders from Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Benin, Central African Republic, Senegal, and Chad for their efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement and encourages their continuing efforts to find a sustainable political settlement in this matter;

(4) supports the deployment of an African peacekeeping force to the Republic of Congo if deemed necessary;

(5) urges the Government of the Republic of Congo, in cooperation with all legal political parties, to resolve in a transparent manner questions concerning the scheduled elections and to prepare for open and transparent elections at the earliest feasible time; and

(6) encourages the United States government to provide technical assistance on election related matters if requested by the Government of the Republic of Congo.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] and the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. LUTHER] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN].

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us was introduced by the gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE] the distinguished chairman of our Subcommittee on Africa. This resolution expresses our grave concern about the violence and chaos that have taken hold in the Republic of Congo. This is Congo Brazzaville, Mr. Speaker, not the Democratic Republic of Congo which was formerly known as Zaire.

The Republic of Congo is a small nation with only 2½ million people, but over the past few years it has been a beacon of hope in a troubled region. Congo held democratic elections in 1992. Recent oil discoveries have given hope for a better life for the Congolese people. Although Congo has always been troubled by ethnic difficulties, many people believe that there was a new opportunity for reconciliation and democracy. Regrettably, those hopes have now been dashed by the recent vi-

olence in Congo which has taken thousands of lives in the capital of Brazzaville and other areas.

Mr. Speaker, there are no good guys in this latest violence. Neither the elected government nor its opponents have demonstrated an ability to restrain their worst impulses. This resolution firmly puts the Congress on the side of the Congolese people, urging an end to the fighting and supporting the work of those who seek reconciliation between the warring factions.

Accordingly I urge the House to adopt this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. MENENDEZ] the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Africa.

(Mr. MENENDEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Africa, I and a cosponsor of this resolution, and I want to thank the chairman of the committee for his diligence in putting it forth and for working with us on its language; we are very concerned about the ongoing violence in the Republic of Congo, and although a truce was called between President Lissouba and former President Denis Sassou Nguesso on June 17, reports of gunfire and shellings still continue to this date, and it has been estimated that between 1,000 and 3,000 people have died as a result of the fighting.

President Lissouba won his seat in 1992 in an election that was determined to be free and fair and, as in Sierra Leone, we cannot tolerate violence as a format for change. The Congo was scheduled to hold elections on July 27. Elections are the appropriate format for change, if so decided by the people of the Congo. It is crucial that the two parties come together to negotiate a real truce and to reschedule elections, and certainly it is not too late to get things back on track.

The draft declaration issued by the Foreign Ministers of the West African Economic and Monetary Union in which they stated that they are prepared to join a peacekeeping force to restore peace in the Congo is demonstrative of a growing consensus among African nations for a proactive and African response to the outbreak of violence on the continent, and I think we should welcome their declaration.

Again I want to thank the gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE] for responding quickly in drafting the resolution. It is important that the Congress clearly condemn the fighting, place its support behind democracy, negotiation, elections, peace, and ultimately behind the will of the people of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE], our chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, since violence in the Congo escalated several weeks ago, an estimated 3,000 lives have been lost. What started as an effort by Congo President Pascal Lissouba to safeguard the upcoming election by neutralizing the so-called cobra militia which is operated by a political rival, this situation has degenerated into ethnic cleansing and into political wrangling.

All this has developed beneath the media's radar. As the world watched the unraveling of the Mobutu regime in the neighboring country then known as Zaire, now the Congo, the Congo itself was seen as a safe haven for refugees from the collapsing nation. Western nations sent military forces to Congo to evacuate their citizens from Zaire. So it was shocking to find several weeks later that foreign nationals had to be evacuated from Congo Brazzaville and that refugees from that nation were running for safety to what is now sometimes called Congo-Kinshasa.

Today nearly a quarter of the population of the capital city of Brazzaville has left town to avoid being caught in the fighting. Unfortunately, these refugees have found themselves stopped along the way, and if they belong to the wrong ethnic group, militia men do what is called there making them travel, and to make someone travel means being taken away and killed. More than 2,500 Congolese were killed in ethnic fighting after the disputed 1993 election, and now ethnic tensions in the central African nation has dramatically worsened.

It is too late for elections to be held as planned on July 27. A dispute between President Lissouba and former President Denis Sassou Nguesso on the elections now threatens the future of Congo's developing democracy. President Lissouba has called for a 3-month postponement of elections and for his ruling mandate which expires next month. However, Mr. Sassou Nguesso wants the President to leave office next month and be replaced by a transitional government for 2 years. This resolution is a reinforcement of our Government's commitment to the democratic process in Congo-Brazzaville.

The threat to elected government and rule of law in Congo must be dealt with now, and a lasting solution to this ethnic and political crisis must be found. African nations and African leaders have been trying to broker a peace. There have been several cease-fires since the fighting began in June, but none of them have held longer than a few days. We are in the midst of yet another cease-fire as we speak. Meanwhile, a peacekeeping force is being gathered, but it will not be deployed until both factions agree to stand down. U.S. encouragement of the ongoing peace process as expressed in this resolution would bolster the peace process at this point.

This resolution I am offering calls for a halt to the fighting and a lasting

peace that will allow for considerable humanitarian needs of the Congolese people to be met and for the holding of elections at the earliest agreeable time.

□ 1545

Moreover, we call for the disarming and disbandment of the private militias, which are a continuing threat to peace and stability. And, finally, we call upon the parties involved in the elections to address and resolve questions concerning the election process so that there can be fair and free elections in the Congo.

Over the past several years nations caught in seemingly intractable conflict have managed to successfully complete a democratic transition: South Africa, Malawi, and Mozambique are but three examples of this process, and Liberia, we will see if that will be a new example.

There is no reason to expect any less from the Congo. Although these developments are halfway around the world, they matter. America has a great deal to gain from a healthy democratic Africa, and a stable Congo is a part of that. We have discussed this measure with the administration, which supports the approach taken on the resolution to the current crisis in the Congo. I urge the House to approve this resolution and to address the worsening crisis in the Republic of Congo.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I support this resolution because I believe this draws attention to an explosive situation in Central Africa. I commend the gentleman from California, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, for introducing it and for working with the chairman of the committee to move it forward.

By reflecting the views of the U.S. Congress on this important issue, I hope this resolution will encourage the parties to maintain the question and reach a political solution in their ongoing talks. I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW].

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege, along with Chairman ARCHER of the Committee on Ways and Means, to travel to Brazzaville and then to the Ndoke Forest in the Republic of Congo. While there we spent considerable time with President Lissouba and got to know him quite well, as well as his daughter, who is a medical doctor.

President Lissouba by background is a college professor. He is a very gentle man who believes in the democratic process, and believes deeply in the future of his country, and believes deeply in the welfare of the people that he serves.

The Republic of Congo is an emerging country in Africa that does have a number of important natural resources. The American investors are finding a friendly reception in Brazzaville as they are investing not only in the oil but also in many of the other assets and resources in the Republic of Congo.

I am very concerned, as I am sure other Members are, of the virus of revolution which seems to be spreading across Africa. It is important that we show our resolve to put forth and help enforce and hold in place democratic principles. The election that was scheduled for just next week has been postponed, not because of any fault of the present administration under President Lissouba but because of the revolt that is going on in that country today. Never did I think when we were there just a few months ago that the democratic process would be interfered with as it is today.

I would like to speak briefly of another interest that the United States has in the Republic of Congo. The Republic of Congo has been very cooperative with us in looking at and supporting a United States AID project in the Ndoke Forest which goes toward the preservation not only of the rain forest but also of the rain forest elephants that are present there, as well as the rain forest gorillas. These are species that are very much endangered. We have found great cooperation from the Republic of Congo in cooperating with the United States' interest in the preservation of these wonderful creatures.

We have also found the need and concern that we have to do more for the preservation of the rain forest, and the great concern that we have as to some of the logging operations which are not only devastating these rain forests, but also because of the use of the gorillas and other wildlife in the area, using them as camp meat.

The rain forest does have a very definite effect on our weather. Being from Florida, this is right in the area where hurricanes are created. We do have a very, very large stake in seeing that there is a friendly government that we can work with for the preservation of these great natural resources.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW] for his supporting comments.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 175, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's

prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of order of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER RECENT EVENTS IN SIERRA LEONE IN WAKE OF RECENT MILITARY COUP D'ETAT

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 99) expressing concern over recent events in the Republic of Sierra Leone in the wake of the recent military coup d'etat of that country's first democratically elected president.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 99

Whereas for the first time in almost 30 years, the Republic of Sierra Leone held their first truly democratic multiparty elections to elect a president and parliament and put an end to military rule;

Whereas the elections held on February 26, 1996, and the subsequent runoff election held on March 15, 1996, were deemed by international and domestic observers to be free and fair and legitimate expressions of the will of the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone;

Whereas on May 25, 1997, a military coup d'etat against the democratically elected Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, including President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, took place;

Whereas the coup d'etat, led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma and the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) on May 25, 1997, signifies a giant step backward for freedom and democracy in the Republic of Sierra Leone;

Whereas there has been fighting, killing, looting and a disruption of relief supplies in the Republic of Sierra Leone since the coup d'etat; and

Whereas the best solution to this crisis would be a peaceful solution: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—*

(1) condemns the leaders and members of the rebellious Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) for ousting the democratically elected Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, including President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah;

(2) urges an immediate end to all violence in the Republic of Sierra Leone;

(3) encourages the members of the AFRC to negotiate a hand-over of power back to the democratically elected Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone in order to restore order and democracy in the country;

(4) encourages all citizens of the Republic of Sierra Leone to work together to bring about a peaceful solution to the current conflict;

(5) reaffirms the United States support of the democratically elected Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone led by President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah;

(6) urges the members of the AFRC and all armed elements involved in the conflict to ensure the protection and safety of international aid agencies and personnel serving in the country, and allow them unobstructed access to affected areas to deliver emergency humanitarian relief to people in need; and

(7) commends the Organization of African Unity for calling on all African countries, and the international community at large, to refrain from recognizing the new regime or lending support in any form whatsoever to the perpetrators of the coup d'etat, the AFRC.