

they may not be hearing the same desperation that I am hearing. Their farmers are in no better shape, but they are not yet trying to put the 2001 crop in the ground. Arkansas farmers have been wringing their hands all winter trying to determine if it is worth it to try one more year. They are literally on the brink of bankruptcy and are weighing whether it is worth exposing themselves to more potential financial loss. These are not bad businessmen. They have survived the agricultural turmoil of the 1980s because they practice efficient production techniques and are sound managers. They have simply been dealt an unbelievably difficult hand and are trying to figure out how they can stay in the game. Some have already lost the battle. I have heard of more respected Arkansas farmers closing their shop doors and selling the family farm than ever before. Farm auction notifications fill the backs of agricultural publications.

Established, long time farmers are crying for help. A typical example, a farmer from Almyra, Arkansas recently wrote to me asking for help. He has been farming rice and soybeans in southeast Arkansas for almost 30 years. Like many others, he wanted Congress to know that government assistance is vitally needed. He and other farmers would prefer to get their income from the marketplace, but most of all, he just wants to stay in business.

The repercussions of losing people like this good farmer will have a drastic effect on our rural communities. To ignore agriculture's plight is to ignore rural America. Without farmers, the lifeblood of small towns like Almyra, Arkansas will be lost, and I fear never regained.

Around 800 to 1,100 farmers apply for Chapter 12 bankruptcy each year. The average age of the American farmer is getting older every year because young men and women simply do not see a future in agriculture production. I am reminded of a joke that my father used to tell me about the farmer who won the lottery. When a reporter asked him what he was going to do with all that money, he replied "Farm 'til it's gone!" Unfortunately, that joke is not too far from the truth these days.

We have a responsibility to provide a better agricultural policy for our nation's producers. As I stated earlier, I will address my specific frustrations with the current farm bill at a later date. Today, I am pleading that the disaster assistance we passed last Fall be delivered to the farmers as soon as possible.

I have written and urged President Bush to expedite this situation. I stressed the importance of quick action on this issue to Secretary Veneman in both private meetings and during her confirmation hearing. I contacted the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) urging them to act promptly on the rules that must be finalized to begin the payment process. For all the farmers listening out there, don't hold

your local FSA offices accountable. Their hands are tied just like yours. They await the rules and procedures for disaster assistance distribution just like you do. The responsibility lies right here in Washington, DC. Specifically, OMB, is responsible for finalizing the rules. I'm sure they are working hard to get the ball rolling, but we need action today. Not tomorrow, not next week, but today!

I call upon the Administration to deliver the disaster assistance to the farmers. Congress did its part last fall. It is now imperative that the Administration take care of things on their end. Unfortunately, this situation is nothing new. The last Administration was less than quick about implementing disaster programs as well. But that is no excuse, farmers need the help now. Dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's" in the required paper work should not take months to accomplish.

For countless farmers across the nation, I call on the President to please expedite this matter.

I look forward to many further discussions on the Senate floor about the plight of the American farmer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business, notwithstanding the previous agreement. I thank the chairman of the Budget Committee for his courtesy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, with this agreement, what is the time arrangement after he finishes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico was to be recognized at 10:30. He was to be recognized for 10 minutes. Under a unanimous consent request, Senator FEINSTEIN took an additional 5 minutes. If the Senator from New Mexico objects to it, then he will be recognized at 10:30. If he doesn't, the Senator from Wisconsin will be recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. DOMENICI. I had only 10 minutes in any event, did I not?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 15 minutes.

Mr. DOMENICI. I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to object at this point, and I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for 15 minutes when my time comes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished chairman of the Budget Committee.

WEST AFRICA'S CRISIS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to draw my colleagues attention to the continuing crisis in West Africa, where a deeply disturbing trend has emerged in strong-man politics. In the

model emerging in that region, violent regimes hold entire civilian populations hostage in order to win concessions, and even the guise of legitimacy, from the international community.

At the heart of this trend, is Liberian President Charles Taylor. While the Liberian Embassy here and the man himself are currently trying to persuade the world of their good intentions, no one who has followed Africa in recent years should be deceived. Taylor has absolutely no credibility. All reliable reports continue to indicate that he is manipulating the situation in West Africa for personal gain, at the expense of his own Liberian people, the people of Sierra Leone, and now the people of Guinea.

Some of the responsibility for the terrible abuses committed in the region must fall upon his shoulders. I believe that Liberian President Charles Taylor is a war criminal.

Having secured the presidency essentially by convincing the exhausted Liberian people that there would be no peace unless he was elected, he proceeded to provide support for the Revolutionary United Front, Sierra Leone's rebel force perhaps best known for hacking off the limbs of civilian men, women, and children to demonstrate their might, although their large-scale recruitment of child soldiers—a page borrowed from Taylor's book—is also notorious. By funneling diamonds that the rebels mined in Sierra Leone out through Liberia, and providing weapons in exchange, Taylor has profited from terrible bloodshed. And after the capture of RUF leader Foday Sankoh last year, many RUF statements suggested that Taylor was directly in control of the force. The U.N. has found "overwhelming evidence that Liberia has been actively supporting the RUF at all levels."

An international sanctions regime has been proposed, but regrettably postponed, at the United Nations. Sanctions are the correct course. And while many fear the impact on the long-suffering Liberian people, the unfortunate truth is that they are living in a state of total economic collapse even without the sanctions, largely because their head of state has no interest in the well being of his citizens.

Mr. President, I raise these issues today because I was in Sierra Leone just a few days ago. Previously, I had traveled in Nigeria, the regional giant in transition. Although I am more convinced than ever before, in the wake of my trip, that Nigeria's leadership must take bold steps to confront that country's difficult resource distribution issues and to hold those guilty of grand corruption accountable for their actions, I came away from my visit to Nigeria more optimistic than I had been when I arrived. From Port Harcourt to Kano, in Lagos and in Abuja, I met with dedicated, talented individuals in civil society and in government, who are absolutely committed to making the most of their historic opportunity

to chart the course of a democratic Nigeria.

I also visited Senegal, which is truly an inspirational place. In a neighborhood plagued by horrific violence, where even the most basic human security is in jeopardy, Senegal is moving in the opposite direction. Last year they experienced a historic and peaceful democratic transition. Senegal continues to be a global leader in AIDS prevention.

Both of these countries—one still consolidating its transition, another forging ahead in its quest for development and concern for the condition of its citizens—affected by the crisis in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. The entire region is. Refugees flee from one country to the next, desperately seeking safety. States fear they will be the next target of the syndicate of thugs led by Charles Taylor and personified by the RUF, and for Guinea, this fear has become a reality. Many, most notably Nigeria but also including Senegal, are undertaking serious military initiatives to bolster the peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone.

Some will ask, why does it matter? Why must we care about the difficult and messy situation of a far-away place. We must care because the destabilization of an entire region will make it all but impossible to pursue a number of U.S. interests, from trade and investment to fighting international crime and drug trade. We must care because, if we do not resist, the model presented by the likes of Charles Taylor will surely be emulated elsewhere in the world. We must care because atrocities like those committed in Sierra Leone are an affront to humanity as a whole. We are something less than what we aspire to be as Americans if we simply turn our heads away as children lose their limbs, families lose their homes, and so many West Africans lose their lives.

What is happening in West Africa is no less shocking and no less despicable than it would be if these atrocities were committed in Europe. The innocent men, women, and children who have borne the brunt of this crisis did nothing wrong, and we must avoid what might be called ignorant fatalism, wherein we throw up our hands and write off the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia and Guinea with some groundless assertion that this is just the way things are in Africa. Africa is not the problem. A series of deliberate acts carried out by forces with a plan that is, at its core, criminal—that is the problem. And these are forces that we can name, and we should. And Mr. President, the leadership of these forces should be held accountable for their actions.

That leads me to the next question—what can we do?

We can help the British, who are working to train the Sierra Leonean Army and whose very presence has done a great deal to stabilize Sierra Leone. Their commitment is admi-

nable; their costs are great. When they need assistance, we should make every effort to provide it.

We can reinforce the democracies in the region, like the countries of Senegal, Ghana, and Mali, to help them pursue their positive, alternative vision for West Africa's future.

We can continue our efforts to bolster the peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone through Operation Focus Relief, the U.S. program to train and equip seven West African battalions for service in Sierra Leone. And we can urge the UN force in Sierra Leone to develop their capacity to move into the rebel controlled areas, and then to use that capacity assertively.

We can work to avoid the pitfalls of the past. We must not forget that the welfare of the people of Sierra Leone is the responsibility of that beleaguered government. I met with President Kabbah, and with the Attorney General and Foreign Minister. I know that they want to do the right thing. But the point is not about which individuals are holding office. The point is that we must work to enhance the capacity and the integrity of Sierra Leone's government, and it must work on that project feverishly as well. The people of Sierra Leone need basic services, they need to have their security assured, they need opportunities. Ending the war is not enough.

In the same vein, we must not tolerate human rights abuses no matter who is responsible. When militia forces that support the government of Sierra Leone abuse civilians, they should be held accountable for their actions. And we must work to ensure that our involvement in the region is responsible, and collaborate with regional actors to ensure that we monitor the human rights performance of the troops we train and equip. West Africa must break the cycle of violence and impunity, and all forces have a role to play in that effort.

And that leads me to a crucial point, one that is particularly important for this new Administration and for this Congress. We must support the accountability mechanisms being established in the region. There has been consistent, bipartisan support for accountability in the region. The Administration should find the money needed to support the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and it should find it now. And this Congress should commit to contributing to that court in this year and the next.

The Special Court will try only those most responsible for terrible abuses—the very worst actors. Others who have been swept up in the violence will be referred to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, another entity which deserves international support. The Court and the Commission are two elements of the same strategy to ensure accountability without leaving the rank-and-file no incentive to disarm and demobilize. They are vital to Sierra Leone's future, and they will

serve as a crucial signal of a changing tide, and an end to impunity, throughout the region.

Finally, we must join together to isolate Charles Taylor and his cronies and to tell it like it is. There was a time when some believed that he could be part of the solution in West Africa. At this point, we should all know better. And we must speak the truth about the role played by the government of Burkina Faso, the government of Gambia, and the others involved in the arms trade in the region.

Mr. President, these issues do matter. I have looked into the faces of amputees, refugees, widows and widowers and orphans. I have seen the tragic consequences of the near total disruption of a society—the malnourishment, the disillusionment, the desperation. Some people are getting rich as a result of this misery. I have heard the people of neighboring countries speak of their fears for the region's future. I implore this body and this Administration to take the steps I have described. It is in our interest and it is right. And if we fail to do so, I fear that the terrible crisis will only get worse.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. DOMENICI pertaining to the introduction of S. 472 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). Under the previous order, the distinguished Senator from Kansas, Mr. ROBERTS, has the floor.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer.

(The remarks of Mr. ROBERTS pertaining to the introduction of S. 478 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ROBERTS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I am going to be joined shortly by my friend from Texas. In the meantime, I want to comment for a moment on the statement of the Senator from New Mexico on energy. We need to take a long look at where we are with respect to energy. The Vice President with his working group is putting together a national policy on energy, as are many groups. We have an oil and gas forum, which I cochair. We will be taking a look at where we want to be on energy and energy production in this country over a period of time.