

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit of Turkey and an Exchange With Reporters

September 28, 1999

The President. Let me say it's a great pleasure and an honor for me to welcome the Prime Minister here to the White House. I would like to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to Turkey for the outstanding leadership exhibited during the crisis in Kosovo and the role Turkey played working with our NATO Allies there.

But we have much to discuss today, including the progress in dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake; the improving relationships between Turkey and Greece and the European Union; questions involving Cyprus, human rights, economic reform, many other things. But this meeting is occurring in an atmosphere of hope and a positive atmosphere that recognizes not only our long-time strategic partnership with Turkey but recent developments and this Prime Minister's leadership. And I appreciate it very much.

Oil Pipeline in Turkey

Q. —on the pipeline issue. Are you planning to help Turkey about that?

The President. Well, you know, we feel very strongly about the pipeline. We've made that very clear and unambiguous, and we will continue to support it.

Q. Are you going to give more aid?

The President. You had a question?

Cyprus

Q. Yes, Mr. President. What would you like to see from Turkey to see some progress in Cyprus? Do you need to see some movement from the Turkish side?

The President. Well, what we've been working for all along is the resumption of U.N.-sponsored talks without preconditions. And we hope that somehow we can find a way to get there.

Q. How about more aid?

Turkey and the European Union

Q. Mr. President, Washington watches very closely Turkey's relations with the EU,

and from your perspective, what are the major obstacles barring Turkey from having better ties and full membership?

The President. Well, first of all, I believe that there has been some progress. There's been the change in attitude in some of the European capitals about Turkey's integration into EU. I think that the actions that have been taken to improve relations with Greece have helped. I think some of the actions on human rights have helped. And I think more movement in those directions will eventually get the results that Turkey wants.

You know, the United States—from the first day I got here as President, almost 7 years ago, I have strongly supported Turkey's integration into Europe—into the economic structures of the European Union as well as, obviously, in NATO and other networks. I think it's very, very important to the future of the world, particularly the critical part of the world that you occupy. But we have to make some progress on these other issues. And I think we're moving in the right direction.

Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, if the Kosovars opt for independence, will that be a betrayal of our reason for going in there? And are we supporting independence?

The President. Well, we have supported for Kosovar, and we continue to support—for Kosovo, excuse me—autonomy, which is not protected autonomy because of the conduct of the Serbs and the government of Mr. Milosevic. And that continues to be our position. We need to do our best to implement the agreements that we have made within the policy framework that both NATO and the United Nations have approved. And we intend to do that.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you very much, everyone.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on James D. Wolfensohn's Decision To Serve a Second Term as President of the World Bank

September 28, 1999

I am very pleased that Jim Wolfensohn will serve a second term as World Bank president. During a precarious period for the world economy, Jim has shown a true passion for helping people who live in the poorest countries of the world weather the financial crisis and making sure they have a voice in decisions that affect them.

Jim's hands-on style has served the World Bank well. He has traveled to more than 100 countries to see for himself what is working and what needs to be done to create jobs, improve education, fight hunger, and attack diseases like AIDS. And he has shown an abiding commitment to reinventing the World Bank—to make sure that it is equipped to meet the challenges of globalization. In addition to improving governance and broadening participation, he has been working hard to improve transparency and clamp down on corruption.

His leadership, imagination, and deep moral commitment make him an outstanding choice for the World Bank as it enters the next century.

Statement on Education Appropriations Legislation

September 28, 1999

Today the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations committee passed a spending bill that fails to invest in key initiatives to raise student achievement. While its funding levels are better than those of the House version, the Senate bill still falls short of what we need to strengthen America's schools. It does not guarantee a single dollar for our efforts to hire quality teachers and reduce class size in the early grades. It cuts funding for education technology and underfunds such efforts as GEAR UP and after-school programs. And it does not provide funding to turn around failing schools.

To develop world-class schools, we need to invest more and demand more in return.

We need accountability from our schools—and from our Congress, too.

In addition, the reduction in funding for the social services block grant could severely undermine State and local efforts to provide child care, child welfare programs, and services for the disabled. By failing to fund the family caregiver initiative, the bill also withholds critical aid to families caring for elderly or ill relatives. The legislation also shortchanges public health priorities in preventive and mental health and underfunds programs that would give millions of Americans improved access to health care.

If this bill were to come to me in its current form, I would have to veto it. I believe, however, that we can avoid this course. I sent the Congress a budget for the programs covered by this bill that provided for essential investments in America's needs, and that was fully paid for. I look forward to working with Congress on a bipartisan basis to ensure that this bill strengthens public education and other important national priorities.

Statement on Returning Without Approval to the House of Representatives the "District of Columbia Appropriations Act, 2000"

September 28, 1999

H.R. 2587, the "District of Columbia Appropriations Act, 2000," approves local funding and provides for targeted Federal funding for the District of Columbia that we all support. The bill includes essential funding for District Courts and Corrections and the DC Offender Supervision Agency and makes some progress towards providing requested funds for a new tuition assistance program for District of Columbia residents.

However, I have decided to veto this bill because Congress has added a number of unacceptable riders that prevent local residents from making their own decisions about local matters. Congress has interfered in local decisions in this bill in a way that it would not have done to any other local jurisdiction in the country. For example, this bill bars the District from spending its own funds to seek voting rights for the citizens of the District of Columbia. Congress should not impose