

June 11 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

Remarks on Departure for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

June 11, 1992

Well, today I travel to Rio de Janeiro to join over 100 heads of state at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Informally, the Rio meeting has been called the Earth summit. But I want to focus for just a minute on the official name. I think it's critical that we take both those words, environment and development, equally seriously. And we do.

On the environment, America's record is second to none. No other nation has done more, more rapidly to clean up the water, the air, or preserve public land. No other nation has done more to advance the state of technology that promises cleaner growth. We are proposing to double forest assistance. No other nation has put in place stricter standards to curb pollution in the future. We've done a great deal, and we are determined to do more.

But let me say up front: I am determined to protect the environment, and I'm also determined to protect the American taxpayer. The day of the open checkbook is over. I will go to Rio with a series of sound proposals designed to foster both environmental protection and economic growth. I'll sign a climate convention that calls for sound action, like increased energy efficiency and cleaner air. I'll offer technology cooperation because I believe American technology can help clean up the world's environment. I'll propose to share U.S. science, the most advanced in the world, to increase understanding of these complex issues. And I'll bring my Forests for the Future initiative, the most concrete and effective plan for dealing with the pressing problems of deforestation of all those that have been proposed at Rio.

Finally, I go to Rio with a firm conviction: Environmental protection and a growing economy are inseparable. No matter what some people may want to pretend, they are inseparable. It is counterproductive to promote one at the expense of the other.

For the past half-century, the United States has been a great engine of global

economic growth, and it's going to stay that way. Every American knows what that means for us. What many may not know is that the world also has a stake in a strong American economy. Right now, one-half of the developing countries' exports of manufactured goods to all industrialized nations are sold, yes, in the United States of America. A weak economy in this country would harm workers in other nations and cut their export earnings to a trickle. Nations struggling to meet the most elemental needs of their people can spare little to protect the environment.

Many governments and many individuals from the U.S. and other nations have pressed us to sign a treaty on what's called biodiversity. I don't expect that pressure to let up when I reach Rio. The treaty's intent is noble, to ensure protection of natural habitat for the world's plants and animal life. The U.S. has better protections for species and habitat than any nation on Earth. No one disagrees with the goal of the treaty. But the truth is, it contains provisions that have nothing to do with biodiversity.

Take just one example: The private sector is proving it can help generate solutions to our environmental problems. The treaty includes provisions that discourage technological innovations, treat them as common property though they are developed at great cost by private companies and American workers. We know what will happen. Remove incentives, and we'll see fewer of the technological advances that help us protect our planet.

My Forests for the Future initiative will offer real assistance to protect habitats, a downpayment of \$150 million in new U.S. assistance toward the goal of doubling worldwide funding for forests. It invites developing countries to propose their best plans for forest conservation, and it encourages innovation, like biotechnology, that will help us protect biodiversity worldwide.

I cannot speak for actions other nations

may take. But this I promise: I will stand up for American interests and the interests of a cleaner environment. And if the United States has to be the only nation to stand against the biodiversity treaty as now drawn, so be it.

I believe deeply in protecting our com-

mon environment, and I will proudly present in Rio the U.S. record that is second to none anywhere in the world.

Note: The President spoke at 7:50 a.m. at Andrews Air Force Base in Camp Springs, MD.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by President Guillermo Endara in Panama City, Panama

June 11, 1992

The President. Mr. President and Mr. Vice President and members of the Cabinet, Barbara and I are just delighted to be with you to witness firsthand the great progress that Panama has made since its liberation from that dictatorship and tyranny back in December 1989. Panama is once again free, democracy restored, and the rule of law prevails.

With your nation's return to democracy, Panama resumes its place in the world community. This country's path toward economic reform and also liberalization has re-kindled economic enterprise. And maybe some don't realize it, but last year your nation's economic growth was the highest in the whole hemisphere. I salute your success and your efforts, which bring the prospect of a better future for all Panamanians.

Our countries have enjoyed a unique partnership since Panama gained its independence nearly 90 years ago. That partnership is embodied today in the 1977 Panama Canal treaties. Mr. President, let me just assure you the United States keeps its word: Those treaties will be fully implemented on schedule.

But what I really wanted to do to come

here was to salute those of you in this room who stood up to the tyranny of Noriega and who dared to oppose him in the 1989 elections and who now have the responsibility for strengthening your democracy for future generations.

As we were riding in in the car I sensed a little nervousness on the part of my friend President Endara. I think he was worried that I might be offended by some show of protest. But what I saw and felt was that overwhelming welcome from the people along the streets. It expressed, I think, a genuine friendship between Panama and the United States. And for the tiny, tiny handful of people that are protesting, I said they ought to go up to San Francisco and get an idea what a real protest is like. [Laughter]

So we've been here, and we are very grateful to you. We salute you. And I would like to just propose a toast to the health of President and Mrs. Endara and to that lasting, strengthening friendship between Panama and the United States of America.

Note: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. at the Presidential Palace.

Remarks to the American Community in Panama City

June 11, 1992

Thank you so very, very much for that warm welcome. And General Joulwan, thank you for the introduction. And may I salute

not only the general but also Ambassador Hinton, our distinguished Ambassador. He and Mrs. Hinton, Mrs. Joulwan, and