

Remarks on Signing the North American Free Trade Agreement *December 17, 1992*

Thank you, Mr. Secretary General. And let me say at the outset how very pleased I am to be here. May I thank you for permitting us to have this ceremony here and welcoming us. I'm delighted to be back here. I've been privileged as Vice President and President over the past 12 years to be here on quite a few occasions, and I am so thrilled that this, the final one, is to sign the NAFTA agreement.

I want to salute so many people here today. I see so many members of our Cabinet that worked diligently on this agreement, whether it was Commerce under Bob Mosbacher; or Labor, Lynn Martin; or the Environmental Protection Agency under Bill Reilly; the Interior with Manuel Lujan. We're all represented here today. And the list should be inclusive, not exclusive, because this has been a massive team effort on the part of the Canadian Government, the Mexican Government, and certainly the U.S. side as well. But I do want to single out Ambassador Jules Katz, who is the Deputy to Carla Hills sitting over here, who worked tirelessly on this agreement, and then, of course, our special representative, the U.S. Trade Representative, Carla Hills, herself, sitting in the middle, who made this a labor of love and put everything she had into it. We owe her a great vote of thanks from the U.S. side.

Many others at the State Department, from Jim Baker on, were extraordinarily interested in this, kept the diplomacy alive and moving forward, and I salute them. Bernie Aronson is with us today. I'm delighted to see him here. He, too, has taken this on as a very special project. Arnold Kanter, our Acting Secretary, today Acting Secretary of State, is with us, and as I say, Bernie Aronson. And of course, I would be remiss if I singled out Americans if I didn't mention one who came in with me here, General Brent Scowcroft, who's done an awful lot to see that the White House was fully involved in these proceedings. So, there we are. And again I salute two more: the Mexican Ambassador to the United States, Gustavo Petricioli, who's over here,

and of course, Derek Burney, over here.

I know we have many representatives from other nations here, and I don't want to bore you with how things work in this country, but we have tried since the beginning of these negotiations to keep the various Members of Congress, the key Members of Congress, fully engaged in this, having them understand the gives and the takes that go with any complicated negotiation. And I'm very pleased to see several of the key Members of Congress, Members of the United States Senate here today. So, that's the American side.

Let me just now get on with some comments about this agreement and about the common business that brings us all together, the affairs of this hemisphere. Throughout history, the destiny of nations has often been shaped by change and by chance and by the things—when I say chance, I'm talking about things that happen to them. And then there are those unique nations who shape their destinies by choice, by the things that they make happen.

Three such nations come together today, Mexico, Canada, and the United States. And by signing the North American free trade agreement, we've committed ourselves to a better future for our children and for generations yet unborn. This agreement will remove barriers to trade and investment across the two largest undefended borders of the globe and link the United States in a permanent partnership of growth with our first and third largest trading partners.

The peace and friendship that we've long enjoyed as neighbors will now be strengthened by the explosion of growth and trade let loose by the combined energies of our 360 million citizens trading freely across our borders.

I want to pay a personal tribute to my partners in this endeavor, two rare and gifted leaders, two special and valued friends without whose courage and leadership and vision this day could not have possibly come about. And when the history of

our era is written, it will be said that the citizens of all the Americas were truly fortunate that Mexico and Canada, two great nations, two proud people, were led by President Carlos Salinas and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. For Mexico particularly, especially, the NAFTA is a bold undertaking, made possible by President Salinas' brave reforms to reinvigorate, to invigorate the Mexican economy.

It's especially fitting that an American President sign this agreement in this great Hall of the Americas, the home of the Organization of American States. You see, the NAFTA represents the first giant step towards fulfillment of a dream that has long inspired us all, the dream of a hemisphere united by economic cooperation and free competition. Because of what we have begun here today, I believe the time will soon come when trade is free from Alaska to Argentina; when every citizen of the Americas has the opportunity to share in new growth and expanding prosperity.

I hope and trust that the North American free trade area can be extended to Chile, other worthy partners in South America and Central America and the Caribbean. Free trade throughout the Americas is an idea whose time has come. A new generation of democratic leaders has staked its future on that promise. And under their leadership, a tide of economic reform and trade liberalization is transforming the hemisphere.

Today, as a result, the hemisphere is growing again. For the first time in years, more capital is flowing into the Americas for new investment than is flowing out. Every major debtor nation, from Mexico to Argentina, has negotiated a successful agreement to reduce and restructure its commercial bank debt under the Brady plan.

Let me just offer a brief aside about the Brady plan if I might. I remember telling my good friend Nick Brady, our Secretary of the Treasury, "Okay, we'll call it the Brady plan, but if it's successful we're going to call it the Bush plan." [Laughter] And he reluctantly accepted that guidance.

I think history will show that the leadership of our distinguished Secretary of the Treasury did pay off and the plan has been

highly successful. And by the way, the name will always be, appropriately, the Brady plan. And that's the way it's going to stay.

Now, under the Enterprise for the Americas, many nations, Jamaica, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Uruguay, have reduced or shortly will reduce their official debt with the United States. The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative is working. The initiative allows interest payments on official debt to be channeled into trust funds that protect the environment and support programs for child survival.

To those in other regions struggling to reform statist economies, Latin America shines as a solid example of hope that hyperinflation can be tamed, growth can be revitalized, and new investment and trade can accelerate if developing nations stay the course through the difficult challenge of economic restructuring.

These profound economic changes are a tribute to a courageous group of democratic leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean. Their revolutionary vision has altered forever the face of the Americas. Their friendship and counsel have been enormously gratifying to me as President. But these profound changes, along with the NAFTA itself, reflect a broader and, I believe, a more fundamental change in relations between the United States and the nations of this hemisphere. For many decades, we've proclaimed ambitious goals for ourselves of a good neighbor policy, of an alliance for progress, of a partnership built on mutual respect and shared responsibility. And those goals now are rapidly becoming a reality.

My talks with the hemisphere's leaders in recent weeks show a strong consensus that relations between the United States and its neighbors have never in our history been better, and that this development is working to benefit all of our peoples. And I take great pride in the fact that, working with those leaders, we've been a part of all of that.

I believe that in the future, America's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean will grow even stronger. I was pleased to hear our new President-elect, Bill Clinton,

affirm that same goal in his remarks recently, both to the Rio group and to the Caribbean Latin America Action Conference.

This century's epic struggle between totalitarianism and democracy is over. It's dead. Democracy has prevailed. And today, we see unfolding around the world a revolution of hope and courage, propelled by the aspiration of ordinary people for freedom and a better life.

The world will long remember the images of that struggle: a citizen of Berlin, you know, sitting atop of the wall, chipping away with his hammer and chisel; Boris Yeltsin and his followers waving the flag of free Russia and defying the tanks and coup plotters. And here in this hall, it is worth remembering that those images were preceded by a democratic revolution in Latin America. No people struggled for freedom against oppression more bravely than the people of this hemisphere.

And here too, in the Americas, we are constructing a hopeful model of the new post-cold-war world of which we dream. This is the first hemisphere and the OAS is the first regional organization in the world to take on through the Santiago Declaration the formal collective responsibility to defend democracy. And in this hemisphere, the weapons of mass destruction, strategic missiles, as well as nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, have been rejected voluntarily. And in this hemisphere, we've created new models of multilateral cooperation and success in resolving the conflicts that have tormented Central America.

As recent proof of the progress we've made, just 2 days ago we celebrated—and I'm sure everyone did—celebrated the end of the war in El Salvador. In this hemisphere, we have forged a new partnership to defeat the global menace of narco-trafficking, and we must succeed in that effort. And still we're not satisfied. The birth of democracy has raised expectations throughout the Americas, and now democracy must deliver. The communications revolution has opened the eyes of this hemisphere's citizens to the wider world. We're no longer blind to limits on legitimate political participation, to official corruption, or to economic favoritism.

If democracy is to be consolidated, the gulfs that separate the few who are very rich from the many who are very poor, that divide civilian from military institutions, that split citizens of European heritage from indigenous peoples, these gulfs must be bridged, and economic reform must ensure upward mobility and new opportunities for a better life for all citizens of the Americas.

To fulfill its promise, democratic government must guarantee not only the right to regular elections but human rights and property rights, swift and impartial justice, and the rule of law. Democratic governments must deliver basic services. Their institutions must be strengthened and must be modernized. To defend democracy successfully, the OAS must strengthen the tools at its disposal, and I commend the new steps that you took this week to suspend nondemocratic regimes. Together we must also create new means to end historic border disputes and to control the competition in conventional weaponry.

In all of this, I believe my country, the United States of America, bears a special responsibility. We face a moment of maximum opportunity but also, let's face it, continued risk. And we must remain engaged, for more than ever before our future, our future, is bound up with the future of the Americas.

This is the fastest growing region in the world for U.S. products. And in the struggle to defend democracy our most cherished values are at stake. Travel to Miami or El Paso, Los Angeles or Chicago or New York, and listen to the language of our neighborhoods. We are tied to the Americas not just by geography, not just by history but by who we are as a people. And no one knows that more profoundly than this proud grandfather.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of a voyage of discovery to the New World. And let this also be a time of rediscovery for my country, the United States, of the importance of our own hemisphere. If we are equal to the challenges before us, we can build in the Americas the world's first completely democratic hemisphere. Just think about that. Think of the importance. Think of the significance. Think of the ex-

ample for the rest of the world.

This hemisphere can be as well a zone of peace, where trade flows freely, prosperity is shared, the rule of law is respected, and the gifts of human knowledge are harnessed for all.

More than 150 years ago, Simon Bolívar, the Liberator, whose statue stands outside this hall, spoke about an America united in heart, subject to one law, and guided by the torch of liberty. My friends, here in this hemisphere we are on the way to realizing Simon Bolívar's dream. And today with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, we take another giant step towards making the dream a reality.

Thank you all very much for coming. And now I have the high honor of signing this agreement. Thank you.

[At this point, the President signed the North American Free Trade Agreement.]

Good luck to all of you now in the future. God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. at the Organization of American States. In his remarks, he referred to João Clemente Baena Soares, Secretary General of the Organization of American States; Bernard Aronson, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs; and Derek H. Burney, Canadian Ambassador to the United States.

Remarks Following Discussions With European Community Leaders December 18, 1992

Today's discussions with Prime Minister Major and President Delors mark our fifth meeting since we agreed to these semi-annual consultations with the European Community. And the frequency of these meetings is a sign of their vital importance for the world trading system, for our own economic well-being, and for meeting the challenges of the new world. And this morning we covered a broad agenda reflecting the many interests that we share in global partnership.

On trade, we are of one mind. We agreed that a sound Uruguay round agreement is essential to boost worldwide economic growth. And we all agreed to conclude the GATT agreement in Geneva by mid-January. We've instructed our negotiators to work together to this end. And we're committed not only to resolving the differences remaining among ourselves but also to encouraging Japan and other countries to join us in an energetic effort to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

I continue to believe that for the people of Europe as well as of the United States, free and open trade is the key to expanding prosperity. And a successful Uruguay round could result in over \$5 trillion in increased

world output over the next 10 years. Our estimate suggests that the European Community's gains would amount to about \$1.4 trillion, and the United States would benefit from a boost of \$1.1 trillion in that period. Clearly these tremendous gains would promote the well-being of all of our citizens.

Also this morning we discussed the continuing tragedy in what once was Yugoslavia. We reaffirmed our commitment to the unhampered flow of humanitarian aid and to ending the violence there through a sound political solution.

We also reiterated our continued support for the Russian people's brave efforts to create a market economy there. And we believe that reforms must be implemented quickly if external aid is to be effective. Used wisely, western aid can be a catalyst to democratic reform, reforms that are in the interest of all the world. And we agreed to work closely with President Yeltsin to achieve these goals.

Then I took the opportunity to share with the Prime Minister and the President our views of the Middle East peace process. I welcome the continued active role of the EC, particularly in the multilateral side of the talks.