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But while the trend in the Americas is positive, clearly the transition is not complete. If we want citizens to make a lasting commitment to democracy, peace, and open markets, we must support them in gaining confidence that they have made the right choice.

Three years ago, at our historic Summit of the Americas in Miami, the leaders of this hemisphere mapped out a concrete plan to lock in the democratic gains the Americas have made and to see that they work for all of the people. This week we will continue to advance that plan. Together, we can strengthen the institutions of democracy and promote respect for human rights. We can broaden the benefits of open and fair trade. We can shore up the stability of nations that have renounced war. We can combat the drugs and crime and environmental degradation that threaten all our futures. And we can open the doors of education to more, so that they can have the skills they need to make the most of their own lives.

It is fitting that this trip should begin in Mexico. We share one of the broadest and deepest relations of any two nations on Earth. Beyond the 2,000-mile border that joins us, beyond the strong bonds of trade that benefit both our people, we must cooperate as never before to find common solutions to common problems.

Our partnerships with Mexico and with the other nations should be the foundation of our own freedom, stability, and prosperity in the 21st century, an engine for economic growth and jobs, a sword in the fight against transnational threats that respect no borders, an example to the world that democracy and open markets actually deliver for those who embrace them. If we continue to shape the future of our hemisphere, the Americas will prosper and so will America.

Thank you.

Director of Central Intelligence Nomination

Q. Mr. President, given the frustrations of what Tony Lake went through for his nomination, are you confident that George Tenet will sail through on his nomination—confirmation process?

The President. I believe he will be confirmed. I sure do.

Flood Aid Legislation

Q. Mr. President, while you are gone, the House and Senate are going to take up the legislation regarding the flood aid. Are you still threatening to veto that? Do you still feel a need to, especially with the budget deal?

The President. I have no reason to change the position I adopted.

Q. But people are waiting for that aid.

The President. That's right, and that's why Congress ought to pass it unencumbered.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:21 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Message on the Observance of Cinco de Mayo, 1997

May 5, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

The life of our nation has been continually renewed and strengthened by the many different people who choose to come here and become our fellow citizens. Each brings a part of his or her own heritage, which over time becomes part of our common heritage. As we seek to become a more united people, we must not forget our roots, for they remind us of who we are and of what we have to share with others.

This year, as we celebrate the 135th anniversary of the Mexican Army's triumph at the Battle of Puebla, we realize anew how much our nation has been enriched by the people and culture of Mexico and how closely our futures are intertwined. The U.S.-Mexican relationship is one of the closest our nation has today, and it is most appropriate that my visit to Mexico should begin on Cinco de Mayo.

On this day devoted to victory, pride, and independence, let us rededicate ourselves to strengthening the bonds of friendship and partnership between Mexico and the United States.

Let us work together to ensure that the legacy of courage and freedom we commemorate on Cinco de Mayo will continue to inspire us as we look forward to the promise of the twenty-first century.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a wonderful holiday.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Statement on the Resignation of Cynthia A. Metzler From the Department of Labor

May 5, 1997

From the time she assumed the role of Acting Secretary of Labor in January, Cynthia A. Metzler provided leadership and vision for the 16,000 employees of the Department of Labor. As a result of her unique blend of skills, the Department did not miss a beat in fulfilling its mission for America's working families. As Ms. Metzler departs for the private sector, the Department of Labor is positioned for a smooth and effective transition to Alexis Herman's leadership.

During her tenure as Acting Secretary, Ms. Metzler continued and accelerated the Department's initiatives on behalf of working families. Low wage workers now have better protections as a result of Ms. Metzler's efforts to expand the Department's sweatshop initiative, as well as new initiatives launched in other low wage industries. Ms. Metzler has also assured that workers' pensions are better protected.

In addition, Acting Secretary Metzler kicked off this year's Washington, DC, summer jobs program earlier than any other year. She doubled the number of summer youth the Department will hire, and she led the Department's effort to create more job opportunities for DC residents in furtherance of this administration's DC initiative. She also provided outstanding leadership in our effort to train and employ welfare recipients.

As Cynthia Metzler starts a new chapter in her exceptional career, Hillary and I wish her the very best and thank her for her outstanding service to this administration and to the American people.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Hong Kong-United States Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement With Documentation

May 5, 1997

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Hong Kong on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, with Annex, signed in Hong Kong on April 15, 1997 (hereinafter referred to as "the Agreement"). I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, a related exchange of letters, with attached forms, signed the same date, and the report of the Department of State with respect to the Agreement.

The Agreement is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties that the United States is negotiating in order to counter criminal activities more effectively. The Agreement should be an effective tool in our continued cooperation with Hong Kong after its reversion to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997, to assist in the prosecution of a wide variety of modern criminals, including members of drug cartels, "white-collar" criminals, and terrorists. The Agreement is self-executing.