

thoroughly examined the new Venezuelan tax law; and
(iii) the new Venezuelan tax law is fully consistent with and appropriate to the obligations under the Convention.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: The letter was sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 30.

Message on the Observance of a New Millennium *December 30, 1999*

Warm greetings to all Americans as we welcome a new century and a new millennium. This rare moment in our history is a time for hope and reflection, a time to recognize both the challenges and the opportunities that will face us in the coming years.

We have much to celebrate on this wonderful occasion and many reasons to be proud. Today we are enjoying the longest sustained period of economic growth in our nation's history, offering greater opportunities for every American. We can be rightfully proud, too, that the history of our democracy, with its widening circle of human freedom, still inspires the world and that America continues to serve as a leader in promoting peace and human rights across the globe.

Even as we celebrate our successes, however, we must also acknowledge that we face many challenges in the century ahead. While we are making great strides toward achieving full equality and justice for all Americans, we must ensure that in the coming century all our people live in One America—an America where we are not separated from one another by prejudice, by economic injustice, or by a digital divide.

We must have the vision to use new technology to improve our schools and stir the creativity of our young people; and we must ensure that every school and every child has access to the treasury of electronic resources that lies just beyond our keyboards and computer screens. We must continue our efforts to find cures for the diseases that still afflict us and that ravage many parts of the developing world. And we must put new resources at the disposal of our artists, scholars, and scientists to help them make new discoveries, preserve our historic legacy, and light tomorrow with the fire of their imaginations.

The theme for our national millennial celebration is "Honor the Past—Imagine the Future." By resolving at this moment to make a lasting difference in the lives of others, both in our communities and around the world, we will keep faith with our great past and ensure that America's future will reflect our fundamental ideals of freedom and opportunity for all.

Best wishes for an unforgettable celebration.

BILL CLINTON

Remarks on the Resignation of President Boris Yeltsin of Russia and an Exchange With Reporters *December 31, 1999*

The President. Good morning. Not long ago, I had about a 20-minute phone conversation with President Boris Yeltsin, who today ends his historic tenure as Russia's democratically elected President. Under his leadership, since 1991, the Russian people have faced the unpre-

cedented challenge of building a new democracy and a new life after decades of corrosive Communist rule. His lasting achievement has been dismantling the Communist system and creating a vital democratic process within a constitutional framework. The fact that Prime Minister Putin

assumes responsibility today as Acting President, in accordance with the Constitution, is the latest example of President Yeltsin's achievement.

The relationship between the United States and Russia under President Yeltsin has produced genuine progress for both our people. Five thousand strategic nuclear weapons have been dismantled. Our nuclear weapons are no longer targeted at each other. We have worked together to eliminate nuclear weapons from the other states of the former Soviet Union. Russia has withdrawn its troops from the Baltic nations, and now its troops are serving alongside Americans to maintain peace in the Balkans. In fact, Russia was instrumental in achieving the peace agreement in Kosovo.

Of course, we have also had our differences, but the starting point for our relationship has always been how Russia and America can work together to advance our common interests. In that spirit, I look forward to working with Acting President Putin, as the Russian people begin the process of making the transition from one democratically elected President to another.

To President Yeltsin, let me convey my appreciation again for the work we have done together. Hillary and I extend our warmest wishes to him, Naina, and their family.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President, are you going to Moscow in February, at the invitation of the Prime Minister/Acting President?

The President. I have made no plans to do that yet.

Q. Mr. President, can you share some of your personal recollections of Boris Yeltsin? You seemed to have a warm personal relationship

with him. What did you admire? What are your thoughts about him as a person now?

The President. Well, I liked him because he was always very forthright with me. He always did exactly what he said he would do, and he was willing to take chances to try to improve our relationship, to try to improve democracy in Russia. He took the Russian troops out of the Balkans. He recently agreed to take them out of Moldova and Georgia. We got rid of all those nuclear weapons in the other states of the former Soviet Union. We got rid of thousands of nuclear weapons. He's committed to START II, and I hope it will be ratified by the Russian *Duma* so we can quickly move to START III and reduce our nuclear arsenals even further.

I liked him because I think he genuinely deplored communism. He lived with it; he saw it; and he believed that democracy was the best system. I think it was in every fiber of his being. And we had our arguments; we had our fights; we had our genuine disagreement about our national interests from time to time. But I think that the Russian people are well-served to have a leader who honestly believed that their votes ought to determine who was running the show in Russia and what the future direction of the country should be.

I have to go. I'm sorry.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. on the South Grounds at the White House prior to departure for millennium celebrations. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who became Acting President on President Yeltsin's resignation; and Mr. Yeltsin's wife, Naina.

Statement on the Resignation of President Boris Yeltsin of Russia December 31, 1999

Today President Yeltsin ends his historic tenure as Russia's first democratically elected President.

Under his leadership, since 1991, the Russian people have faced the unprecedented challenge of creating new institutions and building a new life after decades of corrosive Communist rule. His lasting achievement has been dismantling

that Communist system and building new political institutions under democratically elected leaders within a constitutional framework. The fact that Prime Minister Putin assumes responsibility today as Acting President in accordance with the constitution is but the latest example of this achievement.