AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO



other time in history. We must be wise as we advance.

I told you earlier that the First Lady sponsored a Millennium Evening with Vint Cerf and Professor Lander. One of the most interesting things he said about his genomic research confirmed not other scientific research but the teachings of almost every religion in the world. He said that, genetically, we are 99.9 percent the same. And he said, furthermore, that the genetic differences among individuals within a given racial or ethnic group are greater than the differences between groups as a whole, suggesting that we are not only our brothers' and sisters' keepers but, in fundamental genetic ways, we are our brothers and sisters.

And I leave you with this thought. I think the supreme irony of our time is that I can come here as President and have the high honor of discussing these unfathomable advances wrought by the human intellect that have occurred, and the even greater ones yet to occur, in a world where the biggest social problem is the oldest demon of human society: We are still afraid of people who aren't like us. And fear leads to distrust, and distrust leads to dehumanization, and dehumanization leads to violence.

And it is really quite interesting that the end of the cold war has marked an upsurge in ethnic and racial and tribal and religious hatred and conflict around the world and that even in our own country we see countless examples of hate crimes from people who believe that others are different and, therefore, to be distrusted and feared and dehumanized.

You have the power to put science and technology at work advancing the human condition as never before. Always remember to keep your values at the core of what you do. And tell every one of your fellow citizens, and indeed, people with whom you come in contact all across the world, that every single scientific advance confirms over and over again the most important facts of life, our common humanity.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at Beckman Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Gordon Moore, chair, board of trustees, and David Baltimore, president, California Institute of Technology; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom; Eric Lander, director, Whitehead/MIT Center for Genome Research; physicist Stephen W. Hawking; and Dean Ornish, founder, Preventive Medicine Research Institute, and author of several health and diet books. The President also referred to JPL, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

## Statement on the Geneva Protocol on Child Soldiers

*January 21, 2000*

Today the United States joined a consensus in Geneva on the text of a protocol that addresses the problem of child soldiers. I am very pleased with the final result, and I look forward to the early adoption of the protocol by the United Nations.

The forcible recruitment of very young children—some no more than 9 or 10 years old—into an increasing number of civil wars and other conflicts shocks the conscience and shames humanity. By addressing forced recruitment and the conduct of armed rebel groups, this agreement strikes at the heart of the problem of child soldiers. Countries that become parties to the protocol would prohibit the use of soldiers under 18 by non-state forces and would cooperate in rehabilitating and reintegrating child soldiers into society.

The protocol also deals in a realistic and reasonable way with the issue of minimum ages for conscription, voluntary recruitment, and participation in hostilities by national armed forces. The protocol would establish an 18-year minimum age for compulsory recruitment; require parties to raise their minimum age for voluntary recruitment to an age above the current 15-year international standard; and require parties to take all feasible measures to ensure that armed forces personnel who are not yet 18 do not take a direct part in hostilities.

This protocol is an important advance for human rights. At the same time, it fully protects the military recruitment and readiness requirements of the United States. I am committed to a speedy process of review and signature and to working with the Senate on this historic achievement to protect the world's children.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts, adopted on January 21 by a working group of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

## Statement on Indications of a Third Consecutive Budget Surplus

*January 21, 2000*

Today we received further evidence that our economic strategy of fiscal discipline is working. The tough choices we made on deficit reduction have turned a deficit of $290 billion in 1992 into a surplus of $124 billion in 1999—the largest surplus in history and the second consecutive surplus in more than 40 years. The latest financial numbers from the Department of the Treasury indicate that we are on track this year to reach a third consecutive annual budget surplus. In the last 2 years we have paid down more than $140 billion in debt, and these numbers confirm that we are continuing to pay down even more debt. I remain committed to maintaining our strategy of fiscal discipline to keep our economy strong and pay down the debt by 2015 for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Comprehensive Trade and Development Policy for Africa

*January 21, 2000*

*Dear _____:*

I am pleased to submit the fifth annual report on the Administration's Comprehensive Trade and Development Policy for Africa, as required by section 134 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act. The past year has seen the broadening and deepening of our economic relations with Sub-Saharan Africa as we pursue common objectives under the Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa and set a course for the 21st century.

For the first time in history, a U.S.-Africa Ministerial meeting was held in Washington in March 1999. The event was attended by 83 ministers from 46 Sub-Saharan countries, as well as representatives from 4 north African nations, the heads of 8 African regional organizations, and 8 members of my Cabinet and 4 agency heads. The Ministerial resulted in the *Blueprint for a U.S.-Africa Partnership for the 21st Century*, a document setting forth common perspectives and plans for U.S.-Africa cooperation on a series of important issues, including the integration of African states into the global economy, regional integration, development assistance, sector issues including investment, debt, and agriculture, and the broader issues of human resource development, HIV/AIDS, transnational threats, and conflict resolution. We will continue to build on this blueprint in the coming year.

The legislative cornerstone of our Africa trade policy is the African Growth and Opportunity Act. I am pleased that this legislation has been approved by both chambers of Congress, and I look forward to final approval by the Congress of this historic legislation early this year.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act will add further impetus to our Nation's bipartisan efforts to enhance economic growth and strengthen U.S. trade with and investment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

My Administration continues to be guided by the conviction that economic development in