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Statement on Action To Lift Sanctions Against Serbia

October 12, 2000

Today I have directed the Department of the Treasury and the Department of State to take immediate steps to begin lifting the trade and financial sanctions imposed against Serbia in 1998, except those targeted against members of the former regime. This includes lifting the oil embargo and flight ban, which will be effective immediately.

The victory of freedom in Serbia is one of the most hopeful developments in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It ended a dictatorship, and it can liberate an entire region from the nagging fear that ethnic differences will again be exploited to start wars and shift borders. Therefore, we have a strong interest in supporting Yugoslavia's newly elected leaders as they work to build a truly democratic society. Our disagreement was with the Milosevic regime, not the people of Serbia who have suffered under the regime's brutal policies.

The removal of these sanctions is a first step to ending Serbia's isolation. It is within the scope of the sanctions-lifting measure announced Monday by the European Union (EU) ministers in Luxembourg, and we will move forward in coordination with the EU. We will also ensure that such measures do not allow those supporters of Milosevic to continue the systematic theft of resources that have marked the last 13 years. In that vein, we will continue to enforce a ban on travel to the United States by top members of the Milosevic regime and keep in place measures that help the new government deter a looting of the national patrimony during the current period of transition in Yugoslavia. We will also review our restrictions on Serbia's participation in international financial institutions as Serbia makes its democratic transition and meets its international obligations.

There is still much work ahead for the Yugoslav people and their new government: restoring confidence in the rule of law, rebuilding an honest economy, accounting for the past while building a better future. Thankfully, that work can now begin—without the burden of isolation—and with the friendship of the American people.

Statement on Signing the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

October 12, 2000

I am pleased today to sign the instrument of ratification for the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles. This treaty is the first international agreement dedicated solely to raising standards for the protection of sea turtles.

All six species of sea turtle found in the Western Hemisphere are threatened or endangered, some critically so. The extensive migration patterns of these majestic creatures span thousands of miles in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Consequently, effective conservation measures depend on close international cooperation. This treaty fosters that cooperation and serves as a model for others focused on conserving the world's most endangered species.

This Convention also demonstrates that countries can work together to protect marine life, and that our trade and environment policies can be mutually supportive. I commend the Senate for giving its advice and consent to ratification of this important agreement.