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Statement on Congressional Action on the Foreign Operations Appropriations Legislation

October 25, 2000

I commend the House and Senate for passing a foreign operations bill today that supports our efforts to promote peace and stability around the world, in turn helping to make our Nation more safe and secure.

I am particularly pleased that this legislation funds our landmark initiative to provide debt relief to the poorest of the world's nations. Our commitment to debt relief gives these poorest countries a critical opportunity to combine reform with funds to reduce poverty and provide basic health care and education for their people. I applaud the efforts of all those across the political spectrum who joined forces to secure this vital funding.

I also am pleased that this legislation increases funding to fight HIV/AIDS. In nations around the world, HIV/AIDS is a leading cause of death and is undermining decades of effort to reduce mortality, improve health, expand educational opportunities, and lift people out of poverty.

This legislation also helps strengthen our efforts to support democracy and stability in southeastern Europe, the Newly Independent States, and other key regions. It includes additional resources to combat terrorism and nuclear proliferation. It also provides increases for our Peace Corps volunteers around the world and for the Export-Import Bank, which supports the export of American products overseas.

Finally, I am pleased that this legislation commits additional critical funding for international family planning organizations and lifts the restrictions hampering their work that I have strongly opposed in the past.

Message on the Observance of Diwali, 2000

October 25, 2000

Warm greetings to Indian Americans across our country as you observe the festival of Diwali.

This ancient and joyous holiday, with origins in the Hindu faith, reflects both the unity and the rich diversity of the people and culture of India. It is truly a "festival of lights," marked by lighting candles and lamps, setting off firecrackers, and dressing in vibrant colors. During Diwali, Indians of all ages and backgrounds come together to celebrate life, the triumph of good over evil, and the hope for happiness and prosperity that we all share.

America has become home to men and women from countries across the globe, whose skills and perspective have enriched our culture, enhanced our economy, and broadened our vision of the world. Diwali presents all of us with an opportunity to reflect on the many ways the talents, history, and traditions of the Indian people have contributed to our national life and cultural heritage and to give thanks for the extraordinary diversity that is one of our nation's greatest strengths.

Hillary and I extend best wishes to all for a wonderful celebration.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.