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Kingdom; actress Jamie Lee Curtis; and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder, and her husband, Sargent Shriver, chairman of the board, Special Olympics.

Videotaped Remarks on the Shutdown of the Chernobyl Nuclear Powerplant

December 15, 2000

President Kuchma, honored guests, people of Ukraine, today is a great day for Ukraine and for the world.

On April 26, 1986, reactor number four at the Chernobyl nuclear powerplant suffered a runaway chain reaction, causing the worst nuclear disaster in history. That horrible destruction has offered us lessons not only in nuclear technology but also in people and governments. For when governments are arrogant and unaccountable, they will impose unacceptable risks on the health and safety of their people.

After the disaster, the outspoken father of the Soviet atomic program, Dr. Andrei Sakharov, declared that the safe use of nuclear technology demands open discussions and informed citizens. So it is fitting that while a Communist government of the U.S.S.R. built the unsafe plant, a free and independent Ukraine is shutting it down. It is also fitting to recall that the very event that exposed the weakness of the Soviet system revealed the courage and valor of the Ukrainian people.

Fourteen years ago Ukrainians took heroic steps to contain the danger and protect their people. Today, we see that same commitment, as Ukraine, with the cooperation of the United States, the G–7, and the EU, fulfills its historic decision to shut down the Chernobyl nuclear powerplant forever. This is a triumph for the common good. It is what is possible when free, democratic nations pursue common goals. As President Kuchma noted some years ago, after Ukrainian cosmonaut Leonid Kadenyk joined American astronauts on the space shuttle, "Not even the sky is the limit to Ukrainian-U.S. cooperation."

America will stand with Ukraine as you fight for a free and prosperous future. We will support Ukraine's efforts to take your rightful place among the nations of Europe and alongside the world's free market democracies.

As you open your economy, strengthen the rule of law, and protect a free press, you are both attacking the ills that led to the Chernobyl disaster and building a future where the children of Ukraine can live their dreams. America is on your side. We wish you Godspeed.

Slava Ukrayini.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:15 p.m. in Room 459 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, and his remarks were videotaped for later broadcast in Ukraine. In his remarks, he referred to President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on International Trade Commission Action Against Gray Market Cigarettes

December 15, 2000

Today I am allowing the U.S. International Trade Commission's exclusion order and cease and desist order regarding certain Brown & Williamson cigarettes (ITC Case Number 337–TA–424) to stand. Together with the legislation (Public Law 106–476) that I signed on November 9, 2000, these orders will ensure that no so-called gray market cigarettes are imported into the United States—including not only the two brands covered under the ITC orders but all brands of gray market cigarettes as provided in the November legislation. In the same way

that the report language for the November legislation made clear that it was in no way intended to alter current policies with respect to other gray market goods, I want to make clear that my allowing these orders to take effect should not be interpreted as setting a precedent for the treatment of other gray market goods.

Statement on Action Against International Crime

December 15, 2000

The growing reach of international crime poses threats to American citizens and American interests, both at home and abroad. Illegal activity from terrorism to trafficking in arms, drugs, or humans violates our values and threatens our safety. Intellectual property theft, financial fraud, and corruption also can endanger our prosperity and undercut public confidence in democracy and free markets around the world.

To confront these challenges, today I am pleased to announce several important initiatives in our ongoing efforts to combat international crime.

First, we are releasing a comprehensive International Crime Threat Assessment, prepared at my direction, as part of our International Crime Control Strategy adopted in May, 1998. The new assessment highlights the global dimensions of international crime and the ways this pervasive problem threatens U.S. interests. This broader understanding is necessary if we, together with our international partners, are to strengthen our response to this global problem.

Second, earlier this week in Palermo, Italy, the United States joined many other countries in signing the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, along with two supplementary protocols on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. By harmonizing criminal laws and promoting increased cooperation, the new convention and its protocols will enable the international community to better combat international organized crime.

Third, the Departments of State and Justice are establishing a Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Coordination Center. The Center will integrate and improve our efforts to counter these distinct but related global crime problems. The Center also will promote and assist increased efforts by foreign governments and international organizations to combat these problems.

The United States is strongly committed to strengthening our international crime control programs to achieve a world of greater safety, prosperity, and justice. We urge the international community to join us in enhancing our common efforts to advance these common aims.

Statement on the Fiscal Year 2001 Budget Agreement

December 15, 2000

I am pleased that Congress and I have reached agreement on a budget for the coming year. It is a budget that is fiscally responsible, pays down the debt, and makes vital investments in our Nation's future. In education, health care, and community renewal, this budget provides more opportunity for more Americans than ever before.

First and foremost, this budget tops 8 years of commitment to education with dramatic new investment in our Nation's schools. This includes an historic $1.2 billion initiative to help renovate classrooms in thousands of school districts across the country. It includes the largest increases ever in funding for the Head Start program. It nearly doubles funding for after-school programs—the largest increase ever. It increases by 25 percent funding to meet our goal of hiring 100,000 new, highly qualified teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. It dramatically