

Remarks to the Organization of American States
April 17, 2001

Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much. Secretary General, distinguished Ambassadors, it's a pleasure for me to be here at the OAS. Thank you for having me.

I want to recognize, before I begin, Luigi Einaudi. He has ably served our Government for decades. He's now lent his skills and experience to the OAS. It is clear that he and the Secretary General have made a very good team. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

As I prepare to go to the Summit of the Americas in Quebec, I thought it was important to make a visit to the house of the Americas. It was a good meeting. I just had a good meeting with the Secretary General. We had a good discussion about the future of the OAS and its important role. We discussed opportunities and challenges that our hemisphere faces.

Today I want to speak with you about our shared future and the important role the OAS will play in helping to shape it. Our gathering in Quebec comes at a remarkable moment in history. All the nations of this hemisphere, save one, have embraced a collective commitment to democracy and to the fundamental freedoms that underlie democracy. We have embraced a collective challenge to build a hemisphere that trades in freedom and grows in prosperity. We have embraced a collective responsibility to break down the barriers of poverty, disease, ignorance, so individuals may better realize their full, God-given potential. The OAS has an important role to play in these common goals.

In lands where liberty is threatened by corruption, drugs, and human rights abuses, the OAS is helping combat these destructive forces. Along borders where tensions run high, the OAS helps build confidence and avoid crises. And in lands where freedom's hold is fragile, the OAS is there to strengthen it.

The OAS's recent work in Peru is an example of this organization's commitment to democracy. The election, held there on April the 8th, was peaceful and well-run. And we know this: It is a direct result of the Secretary General's involvement. And our hemisphere is grateful, Mr. Secretary.

We need to build on successes like these. The United States hopes, for example, that the OAS can serve as a valuable mediator in Haiti between President Aristide and the democratic opposition.

We also need to build on the progress the OAS has made in the fight against drug trafficking and abuse. Thanks to the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, our hemisphere is more united in addressing this problem—both in supply and, I might remind you, in demand—than it has ever been before. And the Commission's new evaluation system for monitoring nations' progress in fighting drugs is a major achievement.

In this week's Quebec Summit, our goal is simple, yet profound. The discussions we hold and the mandates we produce must help improve the lives of people throughout our hemisphere. A summit is given meaning and value by concrete results.

We must strengthen democratic institutions in this hemisphere to give reality to the forms of democracy. This means improving judicial institutions and making government more open. Good government is essential to building the trust of our citizens. And democratic values must remain the core of our hemispheric *familia*. As Prime Minister Chretien so aptly said in this very hall last February, "We must ensure that smaller economies are provided the assistance they need to implement trade agreements and to realize the full benefits of a more integrated hemisphere."

We must extend the benefits of education in this hemisphere. Both development and democracy in the long term depend on education. We must build the skills and reward the hopes of all our people.

And we must affirm our commitment to complete negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas by January 2005. Nothing we do in Quebec will be more important or have a greater long-term impact. It will make our hemisphere the largest free trade area in the world, encompassing 34 countries and 800 million people.

There's a vital link between freedom of people and freedom of commerce. Democratic freedoms cannot flourish unless our hemisphere also builds a prosperity whose benefits are widely shared. And open trade is the essential foundation for that prosperity and that possibility.

Open trade fuels the engines of economic growth that creates new jobs and new income. It applies the power of markets to the needs of the poor. It spurs the process of economic and legal reform. It helps dismantle protectionist bureaucracies that stifle incentive and invite corruption. And open trade reinforces the habits of liberty that sustain democracy over the long term.

For all these reasons, my administration is committed to pursuing open trade at every opportunity. We'll pursue open trade bilaterally with individual nations such as Chile and Singapore and Jordan. We'll pursue open trade globally through a new round of multilateral negotiations. We want to open global markets so that our farmers and ranchers and workers and service providers and high-tech entrepreneurs can enjoy the benefits of a more integrated world. And of course, we'll pursue these goals throughout our hemisphere through the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Since open trade is one of my top priorities for our hemisphere, gaining U.S. trade promotion authority is one of my top prior-

ities in Congress. I made this clear in my first address to the Congress. We have reinforced this message in meetings my Cabinet officers and I have had with over 100 Members of Congress. Trade promotion authority gives our trading partners confidence that they can rely on the deals that they negotiate. It allows us to seize opportunities to expand the circle of trade and prosperity.

We're now actively working with Congress on a strategy for passing legislation granting the trade promotion authority. We'll intensify this effort when I return from Quebec, and I'm confident we'll succeed.

Shortly after the summit, we'll also publish the initial working draft of our hemispheric free trade agreement. This will allow our citizens from all our countries to see what is being negotiated and give them a chance to provide their views on this important document.

Just a few moments ago, the Secretary General and I walked from his office, and we passed the Hall of Heroes. The great leaders honored there embody the spirit of cooperation that characterizes the OAS. These visionaries imagined a future in which the Americas would be bound together in a common effort to create a hemisphere that is both free and prosperous.

Today, we have the opportunity to realize that dream. Together, it is our responsibility to seize the moment.

Thank you for having me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in the Hall of the Americas at the Organization of American States headquarters building. In his remarks, he referred to Colombian Ambassador to the OAS Humberto de la Calle, who introduced the President; Secretary General César Gaviria and Assistant Secretary General Luigi R. Einaudi, OAS; President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti; and Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada. The President spoke a portion of his opening

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remarks in Spanish, and the translation was provided in the transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Statement on Environmental Protection Agency Action To Combat Lead Poisoning *April 17, 2001*

I support Administrator Whitman's decision to implement a rule to significantly expand and disclose the information available to the public about the presence of lead and lead emissions in their communities.

Lead is a persistent and highly toxic substance that can cause a range of environmental and health problems. It has an especially harmful impact on the health of children and infants. And it is found too often in some of America's older, poorer communities. Under this new rule, workers, consumers, and communities will be pro-

vided crucial information about the presence of this toxic substance.

To assist in complying with this rule, I have asked Administrator Whitman to provide technical assistance to affected small businesses to help them prepare their first reports.

This is an important and responsible approach that will protect American families and our environment from unnecessary exposure to lead. My administration will continue to support and promote efforts based on sound science to clean our air, water, and land.

Remarks at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut *April 18, 2001*

Thank you all. Thank you very much for that warm welcome. Governor, it's good to see you again. On the way in, he heard I was going to get an honorary degree in law, and he said, "Does that make you a lawyer?" [*Laughter*] I said, "Nope." But it's such an honor to receive such a degree. I want to thank the chairman, I want to thank Dick Judd, and I want to thank all the folks here at Central for working so hard to make our visit a great visit.

I love your Governor. It seems like the people of Connecticut do, too. And like me, he married well. [*Laughter*] It's an honor to be here with the first lady of the State of Connecticut.

Sorry Laura is not with me today. She's doing a great job as the First Lady. I'm really proud of her. I'm proud of the fact that she's got her priorities straight: her faith and her family, her country, and teachers. She's spending a lot of time not only promoting literacy, but she's going to spend a lot of time encouraging people to become teachers, to saying to folks that are young and old alike, "If you can, get in the classroom. It makes a huge difference."

And so, for the teachers who are here, we thank you from the bottom of our heart for being teachers. And for the young who are trying to figure out what they're going