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Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the National Emergency With Respect to Sierra Leone and Liberia
July 22, 2002

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), and section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I am providing herewith a 6-month periodic report prepared by my Administration on the national emergency with respect to Sierra Leone and Liberia that was declared in Executive Order 13194 of January 18, 2001, and expanded in scope in Executive Order 13213 of May 22, 2001.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
July 22, 2002.

Remarks on the Adoption Public Service Announcement Campaign
July 23, 2002

The President. Thank you, Laura. Laura loves children a lot, and I'm really proud to call her wife. And she's doing a fine job as our First Lady, and I'm proud of the job she's doing.

Here's what I love about adoption: It reveals the good heart of America. That's what adoption does. Extending the welcome of family to a vulnerable child is a great commitment, but it's an extraordinary act of love. Adoptive families and foster families deserve our Nation's thanks and our Nation's recognition. So, thanks.

Every year, American families adopt tens of thousands of children. Many of these children come from America's foster care system. Yet, there are many more in that system whose deepest desire is to become a member of a family. Today I'm proud to announce some steps that will make adoption easier and a more common part of our life in America.

But first, I want to thank Laura, and I want to thank Congresswoman Anne Northup, an adoptive mom, for being here, State of Kentucky. And I appreciate Ben Cardin from Maryland being here as well. Thank you both for coming. I want to thank my Assistant to the President for Economic Policy, Larry Lindsey, for being here. Larry's an adoptive dad. Thank you for coming, Larry. I'm glad my sister-in-law Margaret is here, and Marshall. Thank you both for coming.

I appreciate so very much Bruce Willis in his role in this, what you're about to see. It's awfully generous and kind of a person who is a busy person to say, "What can I do to help? How can I lend my fame to make America a better place?" And we appreciate that spirit of giving.

I also want to recognize the fact that his daughters are with us today, Rumer and Scout and Tallulah. I want to welcome you all. Tallulah—actually, Tallulah Belle—[*laughter*]—followed her dad's example of serving something greater than self in life. She wrote me a letter informing me that she and her Girl Scout troop had raised 36—money to buy 36,000 boxes of Girl Scout cookies to send to the children of Afghanistan. And that is—[*applause*]. And we want to thank Demi Moore for coming as well. Welcome to the White House, the mom of the three girls.

I appreciate so very much and want to welcome the families created through adoption who are with us today. It is our great

privilege to welcome you to the people's house, and we hope you enjoy your stay as much as we are enjoying our stay. It's a beautiful place. [*Laughter*] And it's a great place to welcome some of our—America's heroes, people who are making a huge difference in the lives of our fellow citizens.

I also appreciate the Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau for their good work. I want to thank you all very much for helping to promote this noble cause.

Common sense and social science lead to the same conclusion: Children thrive in secure, loving, and stable homes. Providing that kind of home through adoption can be a long and a time-consuming process. I understand that. Adopting a child can add to the normal challenges of one's daily life. I fully understand that as well. Yet, adoption changes a single life forever, and it brings countless blessings to the lives of parents.

Mitch Pearlstein and his wife, Diane, live in Minneapolis. They couldn't be with us today, but I want to share with you some of his—their quick story—their story in a quick way. They adopted their daughter, Nicole, when she was 5 years old. Nicole was born to a mom who used crack cocaine during her pregnancy and a dad who was a drug dealer. Nicole lived in more than a dozen foster care and emergency placement homes before she was adopted by Mitch and Diane. Here's what Mitch says: "Adopting Nicole was the most difficult thing we've done in our lives, period. And adopting Nicole was the best thing we've done in our lives, period." I bet some people here understand what they were saying.

As I mentioned, my brother Marvin and Margaret have two children who are adopted, and many members of my administration do as well. My Secretary of Commerce and great friend from Midland, Texas, Don Evans, adopted a little boy. And Larry and his wife have adopted children—three children. And many here have adopted. Adoptive parents have a special calling, and you deserve our gratitude.

There are many children in America, toddlers, teens, brothers and sisters who need to stay together, and children from every background. They urgently need love and permanent homes. Finding that home may determine a more hopeful course for their entire life. Right now there are about 130,000 children in our Nation's foster care system waiting to be adopted—130,000 precious lives hoping to find a permanent home. Good foster care is essential. Yet, children hunger for the stability of a permanent home, and every child deserves to be a part of a permanent, loving family. That's our hope.

Promoting adoption is an issue where all Americans of both political parties can agree. It's one of those issues—it's not a partisan issue. And for those of us who support the dignity of every human life, we have a responsibility to encourage hopeful lives for children who are born.

Earlier this year, I signed into law the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act, which supports adoption and post-adoptive services to place children with loving families. It helps ease a child's transition into a new family. It helps ensure that families stay strong and intact. It also provides for educational and training vouchers to children adopted after the age of 16, as well as older foster youth.

The tax relief bill I signed into law last year eases the financial burden on families that adopt children. It doubled the maximum adoption tax credit up to $10,000 for adoption-related expenses. And parents who adopt children with special needs will automatically get the full credit once the adoption is finalized.

These are practical ways to help. We're using the Tax Code to help, providing Federal dollars to help. We've eased the burdens on adoption, but now we must encourage more Americans to choose adoption. And that's what we're here to talk about today.

And so, today I'm pleased to announce the first Federal adoption web site. It's called AdoptUSKids.org. In its first year of operation, the web site will feature pictures and profiles of more than 6,500 children who are available for adoption as well as maintain a database of prospective adoptive parents who have been approved by the States.

AdoptUSKids.org will help overcome geographic barriers to adoption and shorten the time a child may have to wait in foster care. And that's important. In addition, the site is a great resource for families who have already adopted. I urge parents across America to visit this site and, as they visit the site, examine their hearts to find a place in their home for a waiting child.

Today I'm also unveiling a new public service announcement campaign to promote adoption. This PSA urges families to consider adopting children in foster care. It features the new web site I mentioned and provides a toll-free number that families can call to receive useful information on how to adopt. The PSA will raise public awareness, and our hope is that they will make a difference in the lives of a lot of children.

I'm pleased to tell you that the PSA will feature two distinguished Americans. I hand-picked them myself—[*laughter*]—well, not exactly. But Laura and Bruce Willis have agreed to serve in the PSA.

We all know Bruce is a tough guy on the—in the movies. Truth of the matter is, he has a tender heart. He has a tender heart for children. And I'm thrilled he's our new national spokesman for Children in Foster Care. It's my honor to welcome to the podium Bruce Willis.

[*At this point, actor Bruce Willis, spokesman for Children in Foster Care, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you, Bruce. Now we're going to watch the PSA, I believe.

Mr. Willis. Yes. I'm pleased to announce this new adoption public service announcement.

[*The public service announcement featuring Bruce Willis and Laura Bush was shown.*]

The President. Looks like one of those Oscar-winning performances to me. [*Laughter*] Anyway, thank you both for doing this. I think it's going to make a big difference. I do. I want to thank you all for coming again.

You know, we live in a great country. It's a country full of really loving and decent people, and there's no doubt in my mind, when people hear the call, they will respond to the needs of a lot of our children, just like parents have here today. Laura and I had the honor of greeting some adoptive parents to the White House today, and we want to thank you all for coming.

May God bless your work, and may God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his brother Marvin Bush and his wife, Margaret, and their daughter, Marshall; actress Demi Moore; and Susan Lindsey, wife of Larry Lindsey. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Bruce Willis. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.