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NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Henry Kissinger as Chairman of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States
December 13, 2002

It is with regret that I accept Dr. Kissinger's decision to step down as Chairman of the national commission to investigate the events of September 11, 2001, and the years that led up to that event.

As I stated at the time of his appointment, Dr. Kissinger is one our Nation's most accomplished and respected public servants. I thank him for his willingness to consider serving his country once again. His chairmanship would have provided the insights and analysis the Government needs to understand the methods of our enemies and the nature of the threats we face.

My administration will work quickly to select a new Chairman whose mission will be to uncover every detail and learn every lesson of September 11, even as we act on what we have learned so far to better protect and defend America.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Northern Ireland
December 13, 2002

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am transmitting to you a report prepared by my Administration as required by section 701(d) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–228).

The enclosed report broadly addresses policing reform and human rights in Northern Ireland. It provides information on topics of interest outlined by the Congress, including details on paramilitary decommissioning, and the manner in which U.S. law enforcement training for members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland is being administered.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Joseph R. Biden, Jr., chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and Henry J. Hyde, chairman, House Committee on International Relations.

The President's Radio Address
December 14, 2002

Good morning. This week I introduced new members of my economic team. For the Secretary of the Treasury, I have submitted the name of John Snow, a respected

business leader and economist who shares my commitment to faster growth and more new jobs for American workers. I have nominated Bill Donaldson to serve as Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, to vigorously enforce the laws against corporate corruption. And here at the White House, Steve Friedman will be the Director of the National Economic Council, giving me daily advice on our economy.

These leaders will assume their duties at an important moment for our economy. There are many good signs. Inflation is firmly under control, which means food, clothing, and other necessities are more affordable. Mortgage interest rates remain at historic lows, helping more Americans become homeowners. And growth has returned to the American economy.

Yet we also face specific challenges that could slow the recovery and limit future growth. Many Americans have very little money left over after taxes. Some struggle under a weight of debt that makes it difficult to save for retirement. Investor confidence needs to be strengthened in practical ways. And the Nation's rate of unemployment is now 6 percent—and significantly higher in some parts of America. We will not rest until every person in America who wants to work can find a job.

The new Congress that convenes next month will have a responsibility to address these challenges, and I will be making specific proposals to increase the momentum of economic recovery through a jobs and growth package.

The last Congress also left behind some unfinished business. The House and Senate passed different bills extending unemployment benefits. However, no final bill was sent to me extending unemployment benefits for about 750,000 Americans whose benefits will expire on December the 28th. These Americans rely on their unemployment benefits to pay for the mortgage or rent, food, and other critical bills. They need our assistance in these difficult times, and we cannot let them down.

I have shared these concerns with leaders of the House and the Senate, and they understand the need for early action. When our legislators return to the Capitol, I ask them to make the extension of unemployment benefits a first order of business. And the benefits they approve should be retroactive, so that people who lose their benefits this month will be paid in full. I've also directed the Department of Labor to work with the States to minimize any delay in helping these Americans once Congress has acted and extended these benefits.

I look forward to working with Members of both parties in the new Congress on our economic challenges. We must help our fellow citizens who have lost their jobs. And we must create an environment in which businesses, especially small businesses, can grow and generate the new jobs our country needs.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:02 a.m. on December 13 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.