

is the cause of all mankind. This approach not only reduces a danger to free peoples; it honors the dignity of all peoples by placing human rights and human freedom at the center of our agenda. And our alliance has the ability and the duty to tip the balance of history in the favor of freedom.

We know there are many obstacles, and we know the road is long. Albert Camus said that “freedom is a long-distance race.” We’re in that race for the duration, and there is reason for optimism. Oppression is not the wave of the future; it is the desperate tactic of a few backward-looking men. Democratic nations grow in strength because they reward and respect the creative gifts of their people. Freedom is the direction of history, because freedom is the permanent hope of humanity.

America holds these values because of ideals long held on this continent. We proudly stand in the tradition of the Magna Carta, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the North Atlantic Treaty. The signers of that treaty pledged “to safeguard

the freedom, common heritage, and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.” In this new century, the United States and Europe reaffirm that commitment and renew our great alliance of freedom.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:08 p.m. at the Concert Noble. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt of Belgium; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Lt. Gen. Ethem Erdagi, commander, International Security Assistance Force, NATO; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania; Secretary General Javier Solana of the European Council; President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Jacques

Chirac: Lebanon

February 21, 2005

The United States and France join with the European Union and the international community in condemning the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and in their support for a free, independent, and democratic Lebanon. We support the U.N. investigation into this terrorist act and urge the full cooperation of all parties in order to identify those responsible for this act.

We urge full and immediate implementation of UNSCR 1559 in all its aspects, including its call for a sovereign, independent, and democratic Lebanon as well

as for the consolidation of security under the authority of a Lebanese government free from foreign domination.

Lebanon’s forthcoming parliamentary elections can mark another milestone in Lebanon’s return to independence and democracy if they are free and fair, conducted without outside interference, and guaranteed by international observers. The implementation of UNSCR 1559 is essential to the organization and success of these elections. The people of Lebanon deserve this opportunity, and we stand with them in their aspirations for freedom, sovereignty, and security.

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

Remarks Following Discussions With President Jacques Chirac of France and an Exchange With Reporters in Brussels February 21, 2005

President Bush. It's my honor to be joining Jacques Chirac for dinner. I thank you for coming, sir. I've really been looking forward to this moment.

Every time I meet with Jacques, he's got good advice. And I'm looking forward to listening to you. We've got a lot of issues to talk about: Middle Eastern peace, Lebanon, Iran, helping to feed the hungry, and working together to help spread medicines necessary to cure illness.

So, Mr. President, thank you very much for your—coming by for dinner, and thank you for your time.

President Chirac. Thank you. It's, of course, a great pleasure. It always is great pleasure to meet with President Bush. And let me take this opportunity to thank him for his very warm welcome to me today as always.

Now, President Bush and I have always shared very—always had very warm relations, which in fact translate, to a certain extent, of relations—of warm relations that have always been characterized—the links between our countries and the relations, be they bilateral or transatlantic ones, which have always been excellent between France and the United States.

Indeed, we have struggled for some two centuries, 200 years now, to uphold and keep alive these values which we share, and which our people share and hold very dear to their hearts, and which we are very attached to.

We are present together, that is to say France and the United States, in some of the world's hotspots. I'm thinking of Af-

ghanistan. I'm thinking of the Balkans, of course, but I'm thinking also of what we're doing in Haiti and in Africa. I'm thinking also of our excellent cooperation over the tragedy in Asia; I'm talking about the tsunami here. And let me take this opportunity to thank the President for all the help that was extended to our military by the American military, for instance, the making available to our military of American helicopters, which made our work that much easier.

So we do share many, many ideals and values. We have many things in common. For instance, we, together, are struggling against the scourge of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. And we adopted—we have the same approach to the situation which is prevailing in Lebanon, especially following the murder of former Prime Minister Hariri, who, of course, was a man who enshrined the ideals of democracy, independence, and liberty of that country.

Therefore, I am looking forward to a very constructive discussion, and I welcome this new opportunity to meet with the President and in a broader context, which is that of the continuing dialog, ongoing dialog between the United States and the rest of Europe.

President Bush. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Russia

Q. For both Presidents: You talked about Russia, Mr. President, in your speech. What practical things can you do to pressure Russia to go back to a path towards