

time. I'm committed to address these issues.

At the same time, I've been able to again raise awareness and the political will in addressing global challenges such as climate change. And I need your strong support as we are going through this year, a midpoint year, to realize Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We are going to focus on food situation and agriculture, education, health, and all this, statistical systems, infrastructure of Africa.

In that regard, your visit to African states at this time will be very important and historic. I hope you will be able to discuss with African leaders on how to realize this Millennium Development Goals, how to help people overcome abject poverty and sanitation, access to educational opportunities.

In that regard, I wish you all the best, that this is a very great opportunities. And it would be also very much important for international community to sustain the momentum established in Bali, December last year, in climate change. I'm going to build

up on this Bali roadmap so that we will be able to achieve this globally accepted framework, replacing this Kyoto Protocol.

The United States is the country with the most innovative for technology and financing capacities. I count on your leadership and active participation. I do appreciate your constructive engagement in this, starting from high-level meeting September last year and the major economies meeting in September in Washington and in Honolulu this year. I count on your leadership.

All in all, I need your strong support, because I believe a stronger partnership between the United Nations and United States is the crucial, the important element in carrying out this—my duty as Secretary-General and also making United Nations organization more strengthened in carrying out common challenges we share together.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

*President Bush.* Thank you, sir. Yes, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:09 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

## Remarks on Accepting the Grand Cross of the National Order of Benin in Cotonou, Benin *February 16, 2008*

Mr. President, thank you. Laura and I are honored to be with you and the First Lady. I gratefully accept this on behalf of the American people. I stand here by your side as a friend, a believer in your vision, and a partner in your willingness to confront the disease and poverty and—that affect mankind.

We would not be standing here if you and your Government was not committed to your people. You mentioned some of the dollar—money we're spending with

you, but those dollars come with great compassion from the American people. We care when we see suffering. We believe we're all children of God. And so it's a great honor to accept this award, and the American people send their blessings.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:28 a.m. at Cadjehoun International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to President Thomas Yayi Boni of Benin and his wife Chantal de Souza Yayi.

The President's News Conference With President Thomas Yayi Boni of  
Benin in Cotonou  
February 16, 2008

*President Yayi.* Ladies and gentlemen, journalists, on this day, Saturday, February 16, 2008, His Excellency Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and his wife Laura Bush have honored my Government and the Beninese people as a whole by deciding to conduct a working visit as part of his second trip to Africa. This visit is a follow-up to the meetings that I had at the White House on December 14, 2006, as part of my working trip to the United States.

Today President Bush and myself have had very fruitful exchanges during our bilateral meeting, as well as during an expanded working meeting with our staffs, in order to review the excellent relations of cooperation which unite the United States and my country, Benin. As you know, during his two terms in office, President Bush showed great concern for Africa, its well-being, and of the development of its people.

I should only mention as evidence the various initiatives on behalf of children, youth, and women, such as the initiative against malaria, the emergency plan against AIDS, the initiative for justice and empowerment of women. For all of these initiatives, Benin was selected by the Government of the United States. Likewise, my country is also benefiting from the President's Millennium Challenge Account initiative, as well as the AGOA, whose ultimate goal is to create the conditions favorable to economic growth on a sustainable manner in order to reduce poverty and build an emerging nation.

During our discussions, we talked about all of the issues of cooperation as well as other international topics, such as settlement of conflicts in Africa, Benin's participation in peacekeeping operations, as well as the reform of the United Nations system.

On behalf of the people of Benin, of my wife, and myself, I'd like to express most sincerely my friendship and all my gratitude to President Bush and to Mrs. Laura Bush for this stay filled with cordiality and conviviality. On behalf of the Beninese people, I would like to thank—wish you a good stay in Africa, Mr. President. Thank you very much.

*President Bush.* Thank you, sir. Thank you for your friendship; thank you for your vision. Madam, thank you for your warm hospitality. Laura and I are honored to be here.

You know, we've come to talk about our mutual interests, but we would not be talking about this mutual interest if, Mr. President, you didn't believe in certain truths and certain values: that all human beings have dignity; that people need a government that responds to their desires and wishes.

And so I come bringing the warm friendship of the people of the United States and reaffirm our desire to help strengthen your democracy by helping the people here realize their God-given talents.

We spent a little time talking about the malaria initiative and your deep desire to make sure every child has got a mosquito net to protect them. I mean, we can save lives with an aggressive, comprehensive strategy. And that's exactly what you're putting in place here in Benin. And I want to thank you for your leadership on that very important issue. We will continue to help you.

I thank very much your focus on education. You know what I know, that a nation can't be a hopeful place unless its youth are educated. So I'm very pleased to be working with you to expand educational opportunities for the people of