

Remarks Following a Discussion With Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan Kai Eide

April 29, 2008

President Bush. I have just had a very constructive and important dialogue with the United Nations envoy to Afghanistan. Mr. Ambassador, thank you so very much for coming to the Oval Office, and thank you so much for serving the cause of peace.

Ambassador Eide. Thank you.

President Bush. You've been given a very difficult job, which is to help coordinate world—the world's efforts to help this young democracy succeed. And I want to assure you that the United States Government and I personally support you in everything you're going to do.

We've supported this—the creation of this position. We supported your nomination because you're a man of action, a man of determination, and a man willing to sacrifice to help the Karzai Government, but more importantly, help the people of Afghanistan realize the blessings of liberty.

The Afghan theater in this war against the extremists is a vital part of making sure that peace prevails. And no question, there's challenges. As I told the Ambassador, if this were easy, we wouldn't have selected a man of his caliber to—or the U.N. wouldn't have selected a man of his caliber to take on the task.

And so I appreciate your time. This is our first meeting, and I hope that—I know it won't be the last. He's given me good advice. He's given me a picture of what—on how the United States Government can help him accomplish his missions, and we're more than willing to help.

And so I welcome you to the Oval Office. And thank you for your great service.

Ambassador Eide. Thank you very much, Mr. President. For me, it's been an honor to be here and also to feel the support and confidence that you have shown me as I now take on this very difficult assignment. That support is very important to me; that I know that I have the confidence of the international community and also the confidence of the Afghan Government and the President of Afghanistan, which I feel very strongly—

President Bush. Yes, sir.

Ambassador Eide. —after my first few weeks. That's—those are important tools for me in order to perform my duties effectively.

We also discussed one important event that lies ahead of us, which is the Paris conference on the 12th of June, and the importance of doing everything we can to mobilize support, mobilize donors, and also see to it that our efforts are as coordinated and as effective as they possibly can.

So thank you very much, Mr. President, for this occasion and for the support you give me.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Glad you're here.

Ambassador Eide. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Remarks on National Volunteer Week April 29, 2008

Be seated. Welcome. What a great day for the White House. I am pleased to welcome volunteers from the—around the United States who have given of their time to help those who need help. And we're sure glad you're here. Those of you today who perform acts of kindness do so out of love, and you do so out of the desire not to be recognized. But anyway, you're going to be recognized. We have the opportunity today to thank you and the opportunity today to celebrate the difference that volunteers have made all across America.

I want to thank Jean Case, who's the Chairman of the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. And I want to thank the members of the Council who are here.

And I thank David Eisner, the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service; Jack Hawkins, the Director of Volunteers for Prosperity, USAID; Ron Tschetter, Director of the Peace Corps; and other Peace Corps volunteers who are here—about which I'm going to say something a little later. *[Laughter]* This tends to be an enthusiastic bunch, and so I would ask you to—*[laughter]*—keep your enthusiasm in check for just a minute. *[Laughter]*

The spirit of charity that is celebrated here has been a part of our character, our Nation's character, ever since before we were an independent nation. In 1736, for example, Benjamin Franklin organized the citizens of Philadelphia to form a volunteer fire company. Isn't that interesting? A lot of our—a lot has changed since then, but the principle that inspired Benjamin Franklin is still true today all throughout the communities in America.

Those of you who are here today understand the lesson, how you can gain by giving. You can understand how volunteering can transform the souls, both who give and those they help. When you teach a child

to read, for example, you not only improve their chances for success in the world, but you become invested in the progress of a young life. When you visit the elderly, you remind them that they are loved, and you remind yourself of how deeply we all feel the need for compassion. When you help the homeless find shelter, you remove the pain of need and rediscover the resiliency of the human spirit.

While there are many ways that Government can help society's least advantaged—and we try to do our best here in Washington—it can never replicate the private acts of goodness and the ties of affection they create between Americans. And that is why our administration has focused on empowering citizens with open hearts, not just Government programs by opening up checkbooks.

I strongly support the faith-based and community-based initiative. I believe it is in Government's interest to empower those neighborhood healers and helpers, social entrepreneurs to be able to complete their acts of love and compassion. Government is love in—Government is justice and law; it's not love. Love is found in the hearts of our fellow citizens. And the true strength of America truly is found in the hearts and souls of Americans who hear the universal call to love a neighbor.

One of the ways that we have tried to encourage volunteerism is through the creation of the USA Freedom Corps. The Freedom Corps is an attempt—and a successful attempt, I might add—to create a culture of service and citizenship and responsibility. And so one way to be useful in the Government level is to provide a way for citizens to become connected to service opportunities in their communities. And it's working, it really is. Last year alone, more than 60 million—60 million volunteers from all across America provided