

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Hume, leader, Social Democratic and Labor Party, and David Trimble, First Minister, Northern Ireland Assembly, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates; Sinn Fein leader and Northern Ireland Assembly member Gerry Adams; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Prime Minister Tony Blair and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam of the United Kingdom; Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon of the Northern Ireland Assembly; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty peace talks in Northern Ireland.

**Statement Announcing the Award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany**

*October 16, 1998*

I am very pleased to announce my intention to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Medal of Freedom is this Nation's highest civilian honor, and it is a fitting tribute to the extraordinary accomplishments of Chancellor Kohl.

Throughout his 16-year tenure as leader of Germany, Chancellor Kohl has made historic contributions to the cause of peace and freedom in Europe and around the world. With uncommon vision and unstinting courage, he led the reunification of Germany while pushing deeper European integration, bolstered transatlantic solidarity, and promoted the cause of democracy everywhere. Americans are grateful for the untiring efforts of this inspiring leader, who will rank among those who changed the course of history.

Helmut Kohl has been a lifelong friend of the United States and has personally committed himself to the enduring partnership of our two countries. On behalf of all Americans, it is my profound pleasure to honor him with this symbol of our Nation's high esteem and deep appreciation.

**Proclamation 7142—National Forest Products Week, 1998**

*October 16, 1998*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

Our Nation has been blessed with abundant natural resources, and among the most precious of these are our forests. Because forests cover about one-third of the land area of the United States, their splendor is not limited to one region, but is shared by our entire country. All Americans can experience the variety and beauty of our forests, parks, and woodlands and share the joys of hiking, camping, bird watching, and other recreational activities. Likewise, all Americans benefit from the essentials for life that forests provide: clean water, clean air, soil stability, pollution reduction, and a rich habitat for plants and animals. Forests also supply us with products vital to our society and economy, from building materials to paper products to medicines.

Maintaining the health of our Nation's forests is an important and delicate task. As we continue to grow, both in terms of population and in land developed, we put increased pressure on our forests and woodland areas. In the past, such growth occurred without regard to its impact and often threatened the very existence of our forests and the diverse wildlife they support. Learning from our mistakes, today we use wise forest management strategies and careful stewardship to ensure that our forests will remain both healthy and productive.

Such management requires strong cooperation among private citizens, government agencies, and the forestry industry. Half of our Nation's forestlands belong to private landowners, the Federal Government and State governments own 40 percent, and the forest products industry owns the remaining 10 percent. All three groups have been working together to ensure the sustainable development of our forests and woodlands. State Foresters and Cooperative State Extension Agents, with assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, play a vital