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international community for the procurement of the financial resources that are needed in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction of our devastated economies.

We have explained to President Clinton, and we surely think that he is convinced, that in order for Central America to rebuild, it is crucial that not only debt relief be granted but, more important, that new financial resources and concessionary credits are available in the magnitude that permits that we shall not reverse what we have so heartily fought for and accomplished in terms of economic growth, our political and institutional stability, peace, and a dignified life for our people.

Second, we touched on the negative effects that may result in the aftermath of this tragedy, where tens of thousands of people uprooted from their lands and their jobs, with no homes and no economic security for themselves and their families, if left with no hope or possibility of rapidly procuring their own means of a decent life in their own homeland. We do not wish to see repeated the unfortunate exodus that occurred in Central America in the past when the cruel consequences of war and internal political problems robbed thousands of the security of their jobs and opportunities in their own countries.

For us, a rapid means of providing back to our people the possibilities which have been taken by the devastating effects of this hurricane, which, by the way, are much more graver than those inferred in the worst times of the Central American War, is by strengthening trade, open markets, and commerce opportunities. The enhancement of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, which originated as a bipartisan endeavor some years ago, would greatly increase these possibilities.

Third, we spoke about our profound concern, specially at this point where thousands have been left homeless and without jobs, that there be not only temporary measures but a definite solution to the immigration status of the many Central Americans now living and working in the United States.

We Central Americans have paid a very high price for upholding the principles of democracy and for insisting that our people live in freedom. We have made a commitment to ourselves and to the world to continue strengthening peace at home and to continue playing an important role in the stability and the security of the hemisphere, with a strength that surely comes from the most admirable determination of our people not to let themselves be defeated. We are committed to hard work and superior attitudes, so that this blow which we have had to endure is not a terminal one but a starting point for a more promising future for Central America.

Your hospitality, Mr. President, honors us and engages our commitments. We will be eagerly awaiting your visit to our Central American countries. We pray that God will continue to bless us all. And for you, Mr. President, on behalf of our people and our governments, we wish you the greatest success and strength as you lead your great and admirable country.

Thank you so much.

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Miguel Rodriguez of Costa Rica; President Carlos Roberto Flores of Honduras; President Arnoldo Aleman of Nicaragua; President Armando Calderon Sol of El Salvador; and Vice President Luis Flores and President Alvaro Arzu of Guatemala.

Remarks Prior to the House Judiciary Committee Vote on the First Article of Impeachment

December 11, 1998

Good afternoon. As anyone close to me knows, for months I have been grappling with how best to reconcile myself to the American people, to acknowledge my own wrongdoing, and still to maintain my focus on the work of the Presidency.

Others are presenting my defense on the facts, the law, and the Constitution. Nothing I can say now can add to that. What I want the American people to know, what I want the Congress to know, is that I am profoundly sorry for all I have done wrong in words and

deeds. I never should have misled the country, the Congress, my friends, or my family. Quite simply, I gave in to my shame.

I have been condemned by my accusers with harsh words. And while it's hard to hear yourself called deceitful and manipulative, I remember Ben Franklin's admonition that our critics are our friends, for they do show us our faults.

Mere words cannot fully express the profound remorse I feel for what our country is going through and for what members of both parties in Congress are now forced to deal with.

These past months have been a tortuous process of coming to terms with what I did. I understand that accountability demands consequences, and I'm prepared to accept them. Painful though the condemnation of the Congress would be, it would pale in comparison to the consequences of the pain I have caused my family. There is no greater agony.

Like anyone who honestly faces the shame of wrongful conduct, I would give anything to go back and undo what I did. But one of the painful truths I have to live with is the reality that that is simply not possible. An old and dear friend of mine recently sent me the wisdom of a poet, who wrote, ''The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on. Nor all your piety, nor wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line. Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.''

So nothing, not piety, nor tears, nor wit, nor torment, can alter what I have done. I must make my peace with that. I must also be at peace with the fact that the public consequences of my actions are in the hands of the American people and their Representatives in the Congress. Should they determine that my errors of word and deed require their rebuke and censure, I am ready to accept that.

Meanwhile, I will continue to do all I can to reclaim the trust of the American people and to serve them well. We must all return to the work, the vital work, of strengthening our Nation for the new century. Our country has wonderful opportunities and daunting challenges ahead. I intend to seize those opportunities and meet those challenges with all the energy and ability and strength God has given me.

That is simply all I can do: the work of the American people.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. At approximately 4:25 p.m. the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives voted the first article of impeachment.

Proclamation 7159—National Children's Memorial Day, 1998

December 11, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

There is nothing more devastating to a family than the death of a child. Each year, thousands of America's families face this tragedy, losing their children to illness, injury, or accident. Our whole society experiences this loss as well, for we are all diminished by the death of every one of our young people, whose love, laughter, talents, and achievements bring so much joy to our lives and so much promise to our future.

The holiday season is an especially painful time for parents who have lost a child, so it is fitting that we set aside a special day during this month to acknowledge the grief of these families and to pay tribute to the lives and memories of their children. On National Children's Memorial Day, let us all reach out, whether as individuals or as members of caring communities, to offer bereaved families the compassion, support, and understanding they need to begin the process of healing.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 13, 1998, as National Children's Memorial Day. I call upon the American people to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities in remembrance of the infants, children, teenagers, and young adults who have died and to bring comfort to their families.