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Europe and the world. It is at the heart of what we have been trying to do in our efforts to reverse ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and to build a southeastern Europe in which all people can live together in dignity and freedom.

Now, Mr. President, normally when I propose a toast to a visiting head of state, I say something like, ''cheers.'' I have been advised by the State Department that the Hungarian word for ''cheers'' is, and I want to quote from the memo I got—[*laughter*]—''practically impossible to pronounce correctly.'' [*Laughter*] I have accepted their considered judgment. [*Laughter*] So, instead, I would like to salute you and Mrs. Goncz with the words that greeted Kossuth on streamers all across New York City on the day he arrived in America: *Isten Hozta.* Welcome.

I ask all of you to join me in a toast to President and Mrs. Goncz and to the people of Hungary. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Maria Zsuzsanna Gonter, wife of President Goncz. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Goncz.

## Opening Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on Increasing Trust Between Communities and Law Enforcement

*June 9, 1999*

Thank you very much. Madam Attorney General, Secretary Slater, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Greg Meeks, Mayor Williams, and other distinguished panelists in the gathering. Let me say I will try to be brief because I want to get to the roundtable discussion, but there are one or two things that I want to say.

First, I thank all of you for coming here. This is a truly extraordinary group of Americans, people who don't always see eye to eye on issues, sitting down for a real heart-to-heart conversation about something that is profoundly important to all of us. And I thank you for that.

Second, before we get into this whole issue about the safety and security of our communities, I'd like to say a few words about another important law enforcement issue that is breaking today in Washington, involving our efforts to keep guns out of the wrong hands. Just before the Memorial Day recess, the United States Senate passed a bill designed to close the dangerous gun show loophole, to require that safety locks be sold with every handgun, to ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips, and to ban violent juveniles from owning handguns as adults. Now the House of Representatives will take up such legislation.

According to reports in the morning paper, the House leadership has decided to bypass the Judiciary Committee and just report out a bill that dramatically waters down the provisions in the Senate. It is a bill plainly ghostwritten by the NRA. I think it is wrong to let the NRA call the shots on this issue. They've been calling the shots on this issue for decades now, and we have failed to do what is manifestly in the interest of our children and our community.

Now, I don't know what else to say about this. But if the American people care about it, if we can still remember Littleton—it hasn't even been 2 months—then we ought to speak up and be heard. This is a classic, horrible example of how Washington is out of touch with the rest of America, and it is time that the rest of America corrected it.

Now, why are we here? For several years now, crime has been going down in nearly every category, in virtually every community in America. In the areas where it is highest, or was highest several years ago, there is no question that one of the reasons, and perhaps the principal reason, that crime has dropped so much is that communities all across our country have put more dedicated community police officers on the street, working the neighborhoods, knowing families, knowing children, going the extra mile to help prevent crime in the first place.

Now, that has worked very well on the whole. But we also know that we have a major problem, which in some places has gotten worse as our communities have grown increasingly diverse. While public confidence in the police has been growing steadily overall, people of color continue to have less confidence and less trust and believe that they

are targeted for actions by the police not because of their illegal conduct but because of the color of their skin.

We have to restore the trust between community and police in every community in America. It is the only way that community policing can really work to make our streets safe. The vast majority of police officers do great honor to the badges they wear with pride. But we must continue to hold accountable those who abuse their power by using excessive or even deadly force. These cases may be relatively rare, but one case can sear our hearts forever.

We also must stop the morally indefensible, deeply corrosive practice of racial profiling. Last year I met with a group of black journalists, and I asked how many of them had been stopped by the police, in their minds for no reason other than the color of their skin, and every single journalist in the room raised his hand—every one.

People of color have the same reaction wherever you go. Members of Congress can tell this story. Students, professors, even off-duty police officers, can tell this story. No person of color is immune from such humiliating experiences. A racial profiling is, in fact, the opposite of good police work, where actions are based on hard facts, not stereotypes. It is wrong; it is destructive; and it must stop.

As a necessary step to combat it, we, too, need hard facts. Today I am directing my Cabinet agencies to begin gathering detailed information on their law enforcement activities. The Justice Department will then analyze this data to assess whether and where law enforcement engage in racial profiling and what concrete steps we need to take at the national level to eliminate it anywhere it exists. We are committed to doing this, and we hope that all of you will support us in this endeavor.

Of course, we must also recognize that only a fraction of our law enforcement officers work under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. So today I ask all State and local police forces and their agencies to make the same commitment to collecting the same data. And I ask Congress to provide them with the resources they need to take this vital step, as the bill sponsored by Representative Conyers would do.

We all have an obligation to move beyond anecdotes to find out exactly who is being stopped and why. We all have an obligation to do whatever is necessary to ensure equal protection under the law.

Some say police misconduct is an inevitable byproduct of the crackdown on crime. I don't believe that's so. As a society, we don't have to choose between keeping safe and treating people right, between enforcing the law and upholding civil rights. We can do both. Everybody in this room knows it, and you know we have to do both.

We have seen this happen in city after city: In Boston, where the community is involved at every level of problem solving, where crime has fallen and trust in the police and minority communities has grown; we see it in communities in Chicago and San Diego and Houston; we can see it in every community in America.

We have our models. We need to work on them. We need to find out what is going on. We need to talk freely. We need to listen carefully. One of the things I have learned, much to my surprise, since I moved to Washington is that there are probably more words spoken and fewer heard here than any place I have ever lived. [*Laughter*]

So let us listen to each other, as well as speak our piece. Let us emerge from this conference with a concrete plan of action for keeping up the work. We can do it, we must start today.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:08 p.m. in the Cotillion Ballroom at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC.