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Remarks to the People of New Zealand in Christchurch, New Zealand

September 15, 1999

Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Prime Minister Shipley, Burton and Anna and Ben; and Sir Edmund Hillary and Lady Hillary; Ambassadors Beeman and Bolger, and their wives; to Mayor Moore: Dr. Erb, Dr. Benton, Mr. Mace, Dr. Colwell; to all of those who have made our visit here so memorable: Let me begin on behalf of my family and my party by thanking the officials and the people of New Zealand for giving us 5 absolutely glorious days in one of the most beautiful places on Earth. We are very grateful.

Hurricane Floyd

I hope you will all indulge me just one moment. This is my only chance to speak not only to you but to the people of the United States today. And since we're here to talk about the weather, you should know that my country is facing one of the most serious hurricanes ever to threaten the United States, if the predictions of its force and scope hold true.

This morning I signed an emergency declaration for the States of Florida and Georgia to provide for assistance for emergency protective and preventive measures. I have been in close contact with our Vice President, Al Gore, and our Director of Emergency Management, James Lee Witt. They are working around the clock to prepare for the storm. I ask all of you here to remember my fellow Americans, and after we finish the state dinner tonight, I am going to fly home, and we will make the best job of it we can.

Antarctica and Climate Change

Let me say I am particularly honored to be here with Sir Edmund Hillary, referred to in our family as my second favorite Hillary. [*Laughter*] I read that when Sir Edmund turned 50 he resolved to do three things: to build a house on the cliffs above the Tasman Sea; to become a better skier; to do a grand traverse up the peaks of Mt. Cook. I'm wondering what he resolved to do when he turned 80. I hear the All Blacks may have a new fullback. [*Laughter*] I wish you a happy 80th birthday, sir, and I wish all of us might lead lives half so full and productive as yours.

I come here to this beautiful city and to this place to deepen a partnership between the United States and New Zealand that is already long and strong. In this century, young Americans and New Zealanders have fought again and again side by side to turn back tyranny and to defend democracy. We have worked together on peacekeeping missions. We have stood together for expanded opportunity for our people through trade. We even let you borrow the America's Cup from time to time. [*Laughter*] We hope to reverse our generosity shortly. [*Laughter*] We are grateful for your friendship, and we thank you for it.

This magnificent center stands as a symbol of what we can accomplish when we work together, and I would argue is a symbol of what will be most important about our cooperation in the 21st century.

You heard Sir Edmund talk about his trip across Antarctica. When he started it, some people called it the last great journey on Earth. As I was reading about it, I understand that he actually overheard one farmer ask another, ''that there Antarctica, how many sheep do they run to the acre?'' [*Laughter*]

But America believed in his mission and has long been fascinated with Antarctica. Way back in 1820, Nathaniel Brown Palmer was one of the first people to sight it. A few years later, an American exploring expedition mapped more than 1,500 miles of the Antarctic coast, ending a centuries-old debate over whether a big land mass, in fact, existed around the South Pole.

Forty years ago, inspired in part by Sir Edmund's expedition, the United States convened a meeting in Washington to preserve the Antarctic forever as a haven for peace and scientific cooperation. Today, we can all be proud that not a single provision of the Antarctic Treaty has ever been violated. Forty-three nations, representing two-thirds of the world's population, adhere to the treaty. And the Antarctic is what it should be,

a treasure held in trust for every person on the planet.

We are working together to preserve the pristine waters surrounding the continent, and fighting illegal fishing that threatens to destroy species in the southern ocean.

For the United States and New Zealand, our commitments to Antarctica are based right here in Christchurch. Nearly 7 out of 10 United States expeditions to the Antarctic are staged from here. And let me say, the only disappointment I have about this trip is that I didn't stage an expedition from here. [*Laughter*] So I want you to know, I expect that you will let me come back one more time, so I can fulfill my lifelong desire to go to Antarctica.

I think, of all the work being done here, perhaps the most important to us and to the young people here, particularly, over the next 20 years will be the work that tells us about the nature of climate change and what it is doing to the ice cap here, to the water levels around the world, and to the way of life that we want for our children and our grandchildren.

The overwhelming consensus of world scientific opinion is that greenhouse gases from human activity are raising the Earth's temperature in a rapid and unsustainable way. The 5 warmest years since the 15th century have all been in the 1990's; 1998 was the warmest year ever recorded, eclipsing the record set just the year before, in 1997.

Unless we change course, most scientists believe the seas will rise so high they will swallow whole islands and coastal areas. Storms, like hurricanes—and droughts—both will intensify. Diseases like malaria will be borne by mosquitoes to higher and higher altitudes, and across borders, threatening more lives, a phenomenon we already see today in Africa.

A few years ago, hikers discovered a 5,000-year-old man in the Italian Alps. You might think someone would have noticed him before. They didn't because the ice hadn't melted where he was before—in 5,000 years. If the same thing were to happen to the west Antarctic ice sheet, God forbid—it's a remote threat now, but it could occur one day—and if it did, sea levels worldwide would rise by as much as 20 feet. If that happens, not even Augie Auer will be able to save us from the weather. [*Laughter*] Now, I want you to laugh about it because I figure when people laugh, they listen. But this is a very serious thing.

In 1992, the nations of the world began to address this challenge at the Earth Summit in Rio. Five years later, 150 nations made more progress toward that goal in Kyoto, Japan. But we still have so much more to do. America and New Zealand, in no small measure because of our understanding, which the Prime Minister so eloquently articulated a few moments ago, because of our understanding of the significance of Antarctica and the work we have done here to make this a refuge of scientific inquiry, have special responsibilities in this area.

Of course, we have a big responsibility because America produces more greenhouse gases than any other country in the world. I have offered an aggressive program to reduce that production in every area. We are also mindful that emissions are growing in the developing world even more rapidly than in the developed world, and we have a responsibility there.

But I wanted to say today—and if you don't remember anything else I say, I hope you will remember this—the largest obstacle to meeting the challenge of climate change is not the huge array of wealthy vested interests and the tens of thousands of ordinary people around the world who work in the oil and the coal industries, the burning of which produce these greenhouse gases. The largest obstacle is the continued clinging of people in wealthy countries and developing countries to a big idea that is no longer true, the idea that the only way a country can become wealthy and remain wealthy is to have the patterns of energy use that brought us the industrial age. In other words, if you're not burning more oil and coal this year than you were last year, you're not getting richer; you're not creating more jobs; you're not lifting more children out of poverty. That is no longer true.

We now know that technologies that permit breathtaking advances in energy conservation and the use of alternative forms of energy make it possible to grow the economy faster while healing the environment and

that—thank God—it is no longer necessary to burn up the atmosphere to create economic opportunity.

We have somehow got to convince a critical mass of decisionmakers and ordinary citizens in every nation of the world that that is true. It will help to concentrate their attention if the people who know about Antarctica can illustrate, year-in and year-out, in graphic terms, the consequences of ignoring climate change and global warming.

We are committed to doing more at home and to do more to help developing nations bring on these technologies, so they can improve living standards and improve the environment. We can do this. We can do it in the same way that progress is being made in dealing with the ozone layer. Consider that example, something again which we know more about, thanks to the work of scientists here.

Because of chemicals we produced and released into the atmosphere over the past 50 years, every spring a hole appears in the ozone layer above Antarctica. You already heard, and you know more about it than any country in the world, about the unhealthy levels of ultraviolet radiation which pass through. Now, every Kiwi school child who has participated in Block Day knows what it means, why you have to have sunscreen and a hat.

But in 1987, the international community came together in Montreal and agreed to stop the use of chemicals that deplete the ozone layer. Experts tell us if we keep going the ozone hole will shrink, and by the middle of the next century, the ozone hole could actually close, so that, miracle of miracles, we would have a problem created by people, solved by people and their development. This is the sort of thing we have to do with climate change, and the stakes are even higher.

The Antarctic is a great cooling tower for our planet, a great learning tower for our planet's scientists. What happens to it will determine weather all over the globe and will determine the patterns of life of the children here in this audience and certainly of their children and grandchildren. It is a bridge to our future and a window on our past.

Right now, the ice is 2 miles thick and goes back more than 400,000 years. By studying the patterns of the past, scientists will be able to tell us what will likely happen in the future and how we are changing the future from the past based on what we are doing.

So much of what we know today from global climate patterns comes also from satellite images. But scientists have never had detailed images of key parts of the Antarctic to work with until today. So I wanted to come here with one small contribution to the marvelous work that all of our people are doing here. Today America is releasing once classified satellite images of the Antarctic's unique dry valleys. The pictures provide two sets of images taken 10 years apart and provides some of the most detailed and important information we've ever had on these ecological treasures. Last month Vice President Gore did the same thing for the Arctic. Both these releases will help scientists understand changes taking place at the poles and help us take another step toward meeting the challenge of a warming planet.

This is a special challenge for our young people. We have used the Internet, through an initiative called the Globe program, to teach students in more than 50 countries that a grasp of science and ecology is the first step toward a cleaner world. I am pleased that, working with Prime Minister Shipley, we are also going to establish a new Globe program for children right here in New Zealand.

When Sir Edmund Hillary made his trek, the Antarctic was the last new place humanity looked before turning its attention to the stars. In less than 4 months, all humanity will be looking forward to the promise of a new century and a new millennium. When the dawn breaks on January 1st, the international timeline tells us that New Zealand literally will lead the world into a new age.

Let us vow, in this place of first light, to act in the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty, to conquer the new challenges that face us in the new millennium. Let us work with the determination of Sir Edmund Hillary to strengthen our partnership, to keep our air and water clean and our future alive for our children. We owe it to the children of New Zealand, the children of the United States, and the children of the world. And we can do it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:38 p.m. in the courtyard at the International Antarctic Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Jennifer Shipley, her husband, Burton, and their children, Anna and Ben; Sir Edmund Hillary, polar explorer and first man to climb Mount Everest, and his wife, June; U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand Josiah H. Beeman, and his wife Susan; New Zealand Ambassador to the U.S. James B. Bolger, and his wife, Joan; Mayor Gary Moore of Christchurch; Karl A. Erb, Director, Office of Polar Programs, and Rita R. Colwell, Director, National Science Foundation; Richard Benton, General Manager, Visitor Centre, International Antarctic Centre; Christopher Mace, Chairman, Antarctic New Zealand; and New Zealand weather forecaster Augie Auer.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Jennifer Shipley of New Zealand in Christchurch

September 15, 1999

Prime Minister Shipley. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm pleased to report that we have held very successful talks this afternoon in Christchurch. These talks have ranged over many issues, regional issues—urgent regional issues—international issues and, of course, bilateral issues. I view them as extraordinarily satisfactory from New Zealand's point of view.

For me, President Clinton's visit to New Zealand has been an opportunity for this region to make real progress on pressing international issues. This afternoon we were able to discuss the matter of East Timor, and I was able to thank the President for his leadership while in this country in helping to mobilize international support and opinion for restoring order and relieving the humanitarian crisis that exists in Timor. The plight of the displaced people in Timor has and is at the uppermost part of our minds at this time.

New Zealand is making urgent preparations to contribute our defense force capability and personnel to the U.N. force in East Timor. We appreciated the opportunity this afternoon to review the most recent developments in New York, and the President was able to give us his most recent advice.

I would also like to take this opportunity while we're here to publicly say how much we appreciate the leadership role that Australia is playing at this present time in evacuating the refugees from East Timor and also for providing such a major contribution to the U.N. force.

New Zealand's Navy and Air Force are already on hand, working with the Australians. The New Zealand Cabinet will hold a special meeting tomorrow afternoon to review the latest developments and also to consider how and when we will deploy our troops to the area, if requested by the U.N. I've also asked that Parliament be called together on Friday, so that this important matter can be discussed.

In our discussions with the President, we were able to consider where our current position on defense force personnel and our defense relationship was up to. I valued the opportunity for that discussion to take place, and I believe that good progress has been made.

We reviewed the outlook for global trade. I think we felt that there was a real satisfaction in the achievements that the APEC meeting this week were able to make. There has been a clear sign that there is a commitment from the APEC region to see the launch of a highly successful WTO round, and the Auckland Challenge laid down the challenge to the rest of the world to come to the talks in Seattle with something decisive and clear to put on the table.

As you are aware, APEC represents half of the world's population and half of the world's economy. New Zealand particularly values free and open trade, and we believe that strong markets are the most able way in which we can deliver a social dividend to the people within our respective economies.

Mr. President, we wish you well in the preparations for the WTO round. It is a very important next step in achieving free and open trade globally, and many people depend on success being achieved in these talks.

Finally, on the bilateral issue, I believe that the relationship between the New Zealand Government and the U.S. is in very good heart. There are so many shared values which see us working together across such areas of