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The third thing I would like to mention is the lady who talked about cultural diversity. I think we think about culture in two different ways. One is popular culture—you know, not just art and theater, but movies and music. My view is that countries should preserve their popular culture but not shut out other countries' culture. But in the deeper sense that you mentioned, it seems to me that we're not seeing the abolition of culture, but what we are in danger of is either people losing their culture or protecting it in an exclusive way that leads them into hostility with others—that's what you see in Kosovo or Bosnia.

And what I think we have to find a way to do is to actually preserve in multiethnic, multiracial settings the language, the culture, the history, the uniqueness of people in a way that is unifying, not divisive. I said this last night—I will close with this: People crave coherence in life. We want to believe that we can work hard and provide in a material sense for our families and still be animated by higher impulses. We want to believe we can be proud of being Irish or Brazilian or French or whatever and still know it's more important that we're members of the human race.

And I think the answer is not to get rid of cultural diversity but to extol it, to protect it, to preserve it, to celebrate it as a particular manifestation of our common humanity. I still think—and I will end with this—that's our most important responsibility.

We haven't talked much about that, but it seems to me that the real essence of what we're saying is if you want a unifying approach to politics, then every person who advocates that has a far higher level of personal responsibility for citizenship than we on the left of the political equation have traditionally acknowledged. And the good news is that we'll have more fulfilling lives if we can pull it off.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. in the Room of Five Hundred at the Palazzo Vecchio. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema of Italy; Prime Minister Lionel Jospin of France; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the 1999 Uniform Crime Report

November 21, 1999

The preliminary 1999 Uniform Crime Report released by the FBI today shows that we are making enormous progress in our national strategy to fight crime. America continues to experience the longest continuous decline in crime on record. Overall crime fell another 10 percent in the first 6 months of this year as compared to the first half of 1998—twice as much as any other 6-month period over the last decade. We have the lowest crime rate in 25 years. We have the lowest homicide rate in over 31 years. In every region of our Nation, neighborhoods are safer now, and American families are more secure than they have been in a generation.

But to keep crime rates down we must remain vigilant. Since I took office, my administration has focused on a simple but effective crime-fighting strategy: 100,000 more police officers and fewer guns in the hands of criminals. Today's report shows that our strategy is making a difference. That is why I am pleased that the budget agreement reached last week will extend our successful COPS initiative into the 21st century—helping put up to 50,000 more police officers on our streets, creating new community prosecutors, and providing more resources for crime fighting technologies. Congress must now do its part to reduce gun violence and crime, by making the passage of commonsense gun laws the first order of business when it reconvenes.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 19 but was embargoed for release until 6 p.m., November 21.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Petar Stoyanov of Bulgaria in Sofia

November 22, 1999

President Clinton. Good morning.

Q. How are you, Mr. President?

President Clinton. I'm fine. I'm delighted to be here, very pleased.