

And it is really quite interesting that the end of the cold war has marked an upsurge in ethnic and racial and tribal and religious hatred and conflict around the world and that even in our own country we see countless examples of hate crimes from people who believe that others are different and, therefore, to be distrusted and feared and dehumanized.

You have the power to put science and technology at work advancing the human condition as never before. Always remember to keep your values at the core of what you do. And tell every one of your fellow citizens, and indeed people with whom you come in contact all across the world, that every single scientific advance confirms over and over again the most important facts of life—our common humanity.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at Beckman Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Gordon Moore, chair, board of trustees, and David Baltimore, president, California Institute of Technology; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom; Eric Lander, director, Whitehead/MIT Center for Genome Research; physicist Stephen W. Hawking; and Dean Ornish, founder, Preventive Medicine Research Institute, and author of several health and diet books. The President also referred to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's JPL, Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Statement on the Geneva Protocol on Child Soldiers

January 21, 2000

Today the United States joined a consensus in Geneva on the text of a Protocol that addresses the problem of child soldiers. I am very pleased with the final result, and I look forward to the early adoption of the Protocol by the United Nations.

The forcible recruitment of very young children—some no more than 9 or 10 years old—into an increasing number of civil wars and other conflicts shocks the conscience and shames humanity. By addressing forced recruitment and the conduct of armed rebel groups, this agreement strikes at the heart of the problem of child soldiers. Countries

that become parties to the Protocol would prohibit the use of soldiers under 18 by non-state forces and would cooperate in rehabilitating and reintegrating child soldiers into society.

The Protocol also deals in a realistic and reasonable way with the issue of minimum ages for conscription, voluntary recruitment, and participation in hostilities by national armed forces. The Protocol would establish an 18-year minimum age for compulsory recruitment; require parties to raise their minimum age for voluntary recruitment to an age above the current 15-year international standard; and require parties to take all feasible measures to ensure that armed forces personnel who are not yet 18 do not take a direct part in hostilities.

This Protocol is an important advance for human rights. At the same time, it fully protects the military recruitment and readiness requirements of the United States. I am committed to a speedy process of review and signature and to working with the Senate on this historic achievement to protect the world's children.

NOTE: The Protocol was entitled the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts, adopted on January 21 by a working group of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Statement on Indications of a Third Consecutive Federal Budget Surplus

January 21, 2000

Today we received further evidence that our economic strategy of fiscal discipline is working. The tough choices we made on deficit reduction have turned a deficit of \$290 billion in 1992 into a surplus of \$124 billion in 1999—the largest surplus in history and the second consecutive surplus in more than 40 years. The latest financial numbers from the Department of the Treasury indicate that we are on track this year to reach a third consecutive annual budget surplus. In the last 2 years, we have paid down more than \$140 billion in debt and these numbers confirm that we are continuing to pay down even