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and build a better life in all the villages of this country.

Thank you very, very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the main market square. In his remarks, he referred to Chief Alhaji Mohammadu Baba of Ushafa Village. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Health Care Providers in Abuja, Nigeria

August 27, 2000

Thank you very much. Mr. President, John, and Tayo, thank you very much. I would also like to acknowledge the presence here of the Minister of Women's Affairs Ismail; Dr. Agary, the director of the center; Dr. Resemane, who came to the White House last year and spoke movingly about her battle for women's health. I want to thank the members of the American delegation, and especially the Members of Congress, for joining us here, and say that I am particularly honored to be welcome by John Ibekwe because he is the leader of the Network for People Living With AIDS. That is—they have brought a lot of help and hope to Nigeria.

And let me say I want to thank Tayo again for telling us her story and speaking so powerfully for the young people of Nigeria. I'd like to hear them both on a regular basis again. I thought they were terrific, and I know you're proud of them.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions in particular of one Member of the American Congress who is here, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who along with Representative Jim Leach—[*applause*]—thank you, Barbara. Along with Representative Jim Leach of Iowa, she sponsored the historic bipartisan global AIDS act I signed last week. And I thank her and the Congress for their support of the worldwide battle against AIDS.

This program today is a sober reminder that while it is wonderful that the people of Nigeria are finally free, to be free does not mean to be free of all burdens or all challenges. Indeed, there are challenges so serious that if they are left unmet, your democracy will not mean very much. The fight against infectious diseases is one such challenge.

Believe it or not, for all our modern medical advances, infectious diseases still account for one out of every four deaths around the world, and half the victims—that's why it's good this baby is crying; it will remind us of this—half the victims of infectious diseases are under 5 years of age. Chiefly because of malaria, mosquitoes will be responsible for the death of more than one million people this year.

And of course, there is no greater challenge than AIDS. No child should come into the world with such a deadly disease when it could have been prevented. Yet that is happening to millions of African children. No community should go without a teacher, yet teachers are dying and schools are actually closing because of AIDS. No country should struggle to rise out of poverty while fighting a disease that can cut life expectancy by as much as 30 years. Yet that already had happened—already—in some countries on this continent.

It hasn't happened in Nigeria, thank goodness. But that should not be a cause for complacency but instead a call for action. Already there are almost 3 million Nigerians living with AIDS. President Obasanjo has spoken eloquently today and before today about the challenge and his determination to meet it. The only thing I can say to the rest of the people of Nigeria is that you must join with the President and with all the public health advocates and all the citizens' groups and all the people that are present here and the people you represent to help. AIDS can rob a country of its future. I know you are not going to let that happen to Nigeria.

I also want to acknowledge that this is not just Nigeria's fight or Africa's fight. It is America's fight and the world's fight, too.

I hope the wealthier countries will do their part, first by supporting our initiative to speed the development of vaccines for AIDS, malaria, and TB. Just a month ago, at the G–8 summit in Japan, at which President Obasanjo appeared, we mobilized billions of dollars to fight infectious diseases with the development of vaccines. In addition, we have to do more to support the efforts you

have going now. This year the United States will provide $10 million to support your efforts against AIDS, three times more than last year; nearly $9 million for polio eradication; $2 million to help you protect your children from malaria by distributing bed nets. I must say, that bed net that I saw outside this building when I came up, it has to be the biggest one in the world—[*laughter*]—but it certainly made the point. And I congratulate you on it.

I'd also like to thank the president of the Packard Foundation, Richard Schlosberg, and the others who are here from the Packard Foundation. Where are they? Stand up here. [*Applause*] There you go. Thank you. Over the next 5 years, Packard will make $35 million in grants to improve the reproductive health of Nigerian women, and I thank them.

We will also continue to support other education and development initiatives including microenterprise loans and greater access for technology and education that will help to develop the capacity and the willingness and the understanding among children and among women to do what is necessary to avoid the most dreaded diseases.

We know, as your President has just said again, that it will also take leadership from Africa. Last April President Obasanjo convened a malaria summit, bringing together 44 nations to Nigeria and mobilizing the private sector, and next year, as he said, he will host African leaders for the summit on AIDS. Later this year, Nigeria will join 17 African countries for three polio national immunization days. Millions of children will be immunized in the largest synchronized health event in the history of Africa. Thank you for that.

I'd also like to thank Rotary International, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the U.N. Foundation, and most of all, the volunteers for helping in this cause. And I see we have a lot of people from Rotary here today; thank you very much. That is the kind of volunteer organized help we need in the fight against AIDS.

Someday a vaccine will come. We must help it come faster. Yes, there must be more done by the wealthy countries to get you medicines, especially those that will keep AIDS from being transferred from mothers when they're pregnant to their newborn babies. And we will help you do that.

But let's remember something. There is one thing quite different from AIDS and most killer diseases. AIDS is 100 percent preventable if we are willing to deal with it openly and honestly. In every country, in any culture, it is difficult, painful, at the very least embarrassing, to talk about the issues involved with AIDS. But is it harder to talk about these things than to watch a child die of AIDS who could have lived if the rest of us had done our part? Is it harder to talk about than to comfort a child whose mother has died? We have to break the silence about how this disease spreads and how to prevent it, and we need to fight AIDS, not people with AIDS. They are our friends and allies.

I admire profoundly the strength of Nigeria's religious traditions. But the teachings of every faith command us to fight for the lives of our children. I would like particularly to thank the Muslim Sisters Organization for recognizing that and for their many good works in this regard.

Let me say that the good news is, we know this can be done. AIDS infection rates have dropped dramatically in our country, but they also have dropped dramatically in some places in Africa. If Uganda and Senegal can stem the rising tide of infection, so can Nigeria and every other African country.

I am amazed at the courage of the people of Nigeria in struggling against the oppression that you endured for too long until you got your democracy. I urge you now to show that same kind of courage to beat the tyranny of this disease so you can keep your democracy alive for all the children of Nigeria and their future.

You can do this. We will help you. We know we have to do more, but so do you. We must not let all the gains that have happened in Nigeria and throughout Africa be destroyed by a disease we can prevent if only we can get over our reluctance to deal with the uncomfortable aspects of it. These children's lives are at stake, and they are worth a little discomfort by those of us who have already lived most of our lives.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. at the National Center for Women Development. In his remarks, he referred to President Olusegun Obasanjo and Minister of Women Affairs and Youth Development Hajia Aisha Ismail of Nigeria; Timiebi Koripano-Agary, director general, and Tayo Akimuwagun, peer educator, National Center for Women Development; and Richard T. Schlosberg III, president, David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

Remarks to Business Leaders in Abuja

August 27, 2000

Thank you. Thank you very, very much. I am delighted to be here. I want to thank Mr. Moorman and Mr. Ndanusa and Reverend Jackson for their remarks. I want to thank the First Lady of Nigeria for joining us today. Thank you very much. I thank the members of the American delegation who have joined me from the United States Congress, from local government, the leaders of our Export-Import Bank and our AID operations, and many others. They're all over here to my right, and they are a part of what we are trying to do. And I thank the members of the Nigerian and American business communities for being here.

As is usually the case when I get up to speak, everything which needs to be said today has already been said by the previous speakers—[*laughter*]—and I might add, said very well. I would just like to talk a moment about the American response and what I hope will be the Nigerian response.

After working so long to restore democracy and, in a way, to genuinely have it for the first time, there must be a dividend to democracy for the people of Nigeria. Now, what will the role of trade and investment be in that dividend? What will the role of the explosion in information technology be and communications on the Internet be? How will this totally new world change what Nigeria has been through in the last 30 to 40 years? And what things depend entirely on what the Nigerian people and business leaders decide to do themselves?

From the 1970's to the 1990's, developing countries that chose growth through trade grew at least twice as fast as those that were not open to the world. Nonetheless, there are clearly new challenges. What does all this mean for you? That is what I would like to talk very briefly about—first, what you have to do; secondly, what we have to do.

It really is a very different world now. For more than 100 years, we've been moving toward more global trade, but the information revolution has changed everything. In 1993, in January, when I became the President of the United States, there were, in total in the whole world, only 50—50—sites on the World Wide Web. Today, there are 20 million or so and rising—in 7½ years.

Even when we were having increases in trade, they were due largely to old, traditional sorts of things. You had oil; somebody else needed oil and didn't have it, so you would take it out of the ground and sell it to them, and they would send you the money. And the geographic facts dictated that. Or, you made beautiful cloth or pottery, and you sold it to somebody near you who made something else, and they sold that to you.

Now, if you have ideas and imagination, the information technology has virtually collapsed the meaning of distance, and it's made the human mind and ideas even more important than riches in the ground. So what does that mean? What does it mean for you? What does it mean for us?

Well, first of all, government policy still matters. So your government, any government of any nation that wants to grow wealthier, has to have the basics right—managing the economy well, keeping the markets open, establishing the rule of law, creating a good climate for investment—Reverend Jackson talked about that; President Obasanjo knows all that.

Look at the record. Nigeria has turned a fiscal deficit into a surplus. Its growth is up, and it is moving to cut tariffs. I also hope it will follow through with planned economic reforms, including some privatization that will encourage some investment from abroad and at home, and improve services for Nigerian citizens.

Now, if Nigeria does its part, then Nigeria's trading partners and the wealthier countries of the world, especially, must do their part, as well. You are America's important