AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

progress in terms of the contents, in terms of the way to build a common market to benefit and integrate all countries.

President Bush. Let me say something about that. First of all, I don't want to dispute, of course, the supposition of your question. But I was asked—I think you asked me at a press conference, would I be pleased to see the date moved up, and the answer is, of course; the sooner we get a free trade agreement for the Americas in place, the better off the continent will be.

However, I recognize reality, and it looks like we're going to be aiming for the date 2005. But big progress has been made. And Ambassador Zoellick went down and met with other leaders in our hemisphere, and we've got the framework for an agreement. And not only that, after the Summit of the Americas, we'll be putting out the agreement, itself, or the framework of the agreement for people to review, so that citizens from all countries—this is the first time this has ever happened—where the citizens will be able to review the contents of the trade agreement.

But I appreciate so very much the President's commitment to free trade. He understands the power of trade, and he understands the promise of free trade. And I believe you're going to hear a strong statement at Quebec City that nations of our hemisphere are bound together by the concept of a free trade agreement. And it will be good for our people.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:02 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Economy Domingo Cavallo of Argentina. President de la Rua spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Flooding in the Upper Mississippi River Basin

April 19, 2001

I know that all Americans share my concern for the displaced families and residents of Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois. Yesterday the Mississippi River engulfed homes and businesses. Even more flooding is predicted in the upcoming days.

Those who live and work along the upper Mississippi are not strangers to the threat of spring floods. Since the 1993 floods, many communities and residents have taken measures to protect themselves and their property. They are to be commended for this preventative work.

At my direction, FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh and his staff are working closely with State and local officials throughout the impacted and threatens areas to closely track the flooding and any further damage. As I travel to Canada for the Summit of the Americas, I will continue to monitor the situation.

Remarks on Departure for Quebec, Canada

April 20, 2001

Summit of the Americas

Good morning. In a few moments Laura and I will depart for Quebec City in Canada to attend the Summit of the Americas. This meeting will bring together leaders from all 34 democratic nations in our hemisphere.

Together we will put forward an agenda to strengthen our democracies, to tackle common challenges, and we will seek to expand our prosperity by expanding our trade. This is an important meeting for the United States. The future of our Nation is closely tied to the future of our hemisphere.

Many Americans trace their heritage to other parts of the Americas, which enriches our culture. Many American businesses are finding growth and trade in the Americas, which expands our economy. And all Americans have an interest in the peace and stability of our closest neighbors.

Our goal in Quebec is to build a hemisphere of liberty. We must approach this goal in a spirit of civility, mutual respect, and appreciation for our shared values. And we must make real progress.

Progress in this hemisphere requires an explicit commitment to human freedom. Only democratic nations can attend the Summit of the Americas. And every nation in our hemisphere, except one, will be there. This is an extraordinary achievement, one that

would have been unthinkable just 15 years ago.

Progress requires a commitment to tearing down the barriers of poverty, disease, and ignorance so that every individual in our hemisphere may realize his or her full potential. The United States wants to work together with our neighbors to find ways to give all our children quality education, because learning and literacy are the foundations for democracy and for development.

Progress requires new efforts against illegal drugs. Our country is committed to bringing down the demand for drugs here at home. And we want to work more closely with countries where drugs are produced and traded so countries can better fight the supply of drugs at their source.

And progress in our hemisphere requires a renewed commitment to creating a Free Trade Area of the Americas. This will make our hemisphere the largest free trade area in the world, encompassing 34 countries and 800 million people.

We already know from the North American Free Trade Agreement that free trade works. Since 1994, total trade among Canada, Mexico, and the United States has more than doubled. NAFTA has created more choices at lower prices for consumers in all three of our nations. And it has created good jobs for our workers. Now is the time to extend these benefits of free trade throughout the entire hemisphere.

Open trade in our hemisphere will open new markets for our farmers and ranchers, workers and service providers, and high-tech entrepreneurs. It will fuel the engines of economic growth that create new jobs and new income, and it will apply the power of the markets to the needs of the poor. It will give new incentives for nations to reform their economies. It will reinforce our hemispheric—democratic gains because people who operate in open economies eventually demand more open societies.

This third Summit of the Americas will take the next steps in creating an entire hemisphere that is both prosperous and free. *Es una tarea importante. Tenemos que aprovechar la oportunidad.* It's a great task and an extraordinary opportunity to make the Americas the land of opportunity. And I look forward to getting started this weekend in Quebec.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Leaders of Andean Nations in Quebec, Canada

April 20, 2001

I want to thank you all for coming. It is my honor to host what I think is a very important meeting between the members of the Andean coalition and my country. I wanted to visit with the leaders face to face. I met President Pastrana before; it's good see him again. I have talked on the phone to some of the leaders. I want to assure the leaders here that our Nation looks forward to working with you, and particularly when it comes to trade and commerce.

I want to assure the leaders that Plan Colombia means more than just the country of Colombia—I know that's of concern to the President of Ecuador—that we've got plans for all the countries in the region. And it's not just on helping to fight drugs. It's on making sure that the economies remain strong, that the infrastructure for education is in place. It is in our Nation's interest that we cooperate together. And so I appreciate the leaders for being here.

It is my honor to host this discussion. I look forward to a very frank and honest exchange of areas where we can cooperate and, if there are some problems, areas that we can work together to solve the problems.

So thank you all for coming. *El honor es mio.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:51 p.m. at the Loews le Concorde Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Andres Pastrana of Colombia and President Gustavo Noboa of Ecuador. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, President Mireya Elisa Moscoso of Panama, President Valentin Paniagua Corazao of Peru, President Hugo Banzer of Bolivia, and President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela also participated in the discussions.