

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

**Remarks at a Luncheon Honoring Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations in New York City**

*September 12, 2002*

**The President.** Mr. Secretary-General, and distinguished members of the United Nations community, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to New York. My country is honored to be the home of the United Nations. And I'm honored to be with you today for the opening week of the 57th Session of the U.N. General Assembly.

We gather in a city that was changed forever by the events of one year and one day ago. Secretary-General, the people of the United States will never forget your leadership in the days following September the 11th. Within a day, the General Assembly strongly condemned the terror, and very quickly the U.N. took strong action to support and strengthen a global coalition against global terror. The United States is grateful to the U.N. and to every person and every nation that has joined this cause.

We gather to address the urgent challenges of a world awakened to danger. Mr. Secretary-General, thanks to your leadership, the U.N. is playing a valuable role in meeting these challenges. The U.N. Charter commits each nation here to promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Today we rededicate ourselves to these ideals.

Mr. Secretary-General, I offer a toast to you to continued cooperation between the United States and the United Nations.

*[At this point, the participants drank a toast.]*

**The President.** Thank you. Let's eat.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:39 p.m. in the U.N. Delegates Lounge at United Nations Headquarters.

**Statement on Proposed Legislation To Implement the Healthy Forests Initiative**

*September 12, 2002*

Just 3 weeks ago, I visited Oregon to see firsthand the devastating effects of the catastrophic wildfires that have burned more than 6 million acres of forests across the West this summer. I also announced a new and commonsense initiative to restore forest health and prevent these unnaturally severe fires. I directed Secretaries Veneman and Norton to work with Congress to develop legislation to address the crisis in forest and rangeland health that has put more than 190 million acres of public land—an area twice the size of California—at risk of catastrophic fires. We have a simple choice: We can act now to protect these forests, or we can stand by and watch them burn. Secretaries Norton and Veneman delivered to Congress a legislative package that meets our responsibility to reduce fire risks quickly in high-priority areas, and I am very pleased that this proposal was introduced in the House of Representatives today. There is bipartisan agreement that public lands of the West are desperately in need of active management efforts to restore forest and rangeland health. I call upon Congress to act upon this urgent priority as quickly as possible.

**Remarks at a Reception for Heads of United Nations General Assembly Delegations in New York City**

*September 12, 2002*

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Laura and I appreciate you all coming. It's an honor to be with you tonight. I want to apologize for the photo line taking so long. I'm the person to blame; I talked too much. But thank you for coming. I appreciate so very much all the Presidents who are here and the Prime Ministers who are here and the Foreign Ministers who are here, the Ambassadors to U.N. who are here. I want to thank my citizens from our country who are here. I appreciate John Negroponte, the Ambassador to the United Nations. I want to