

This is a historic day for the Palestinian people and for the people of the Middle East.

America and all free nations strongly support the efforts of the Palestinian people to create lasting democratic institutions. These efforts—including today's Presidential elections and the parliamentary elections that will follow in several months—are essential for the establishment of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state that can live alongside a safe and secure Israel. These elections are further proof that, when given a choice, all peoples seek to live in liberty and to choose their own government.

The United States stands ready to help the Palestinian people realize their aspirations. The new Palestinian President and his cabinet face critical tasks ahead, including fighting terrorism, combating corruption, building reformed and democratic institutions, and reviving the Palestinian economy. We look forward to working with him and the Palestinian people to address these challenges and to advance the cause of Middle East peace consistent with the vision I set forth on June 24, 2002, of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Other countries also have constructive and vital roles to play. Israel must help to improve the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza and follow through with the Disengagement Plan. The Arab states must take concrete steps with all parties to create a regional environment conducive to peace, lend financial support to the Palestinian people, and refuse to assist or harbor terrorists. The United States is looking carefully at how we can best organize and fund our own efforts to help the parties achieve a lasting peace.

Statement on the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Comprehensive Peace Agreement

January 9, 2005

I congratulate the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. I thank all the officials of

the United States Government who have worked hard to help achieve this agreement, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, former Special Envoy for Sudan, Ambassador John Danforth, and the Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios. I also thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which sponsored the talks, and the Government of Kenya, which hosted them, and the Governments of Norway and the United Kingdom and the African Union, which played constructive roles for peace.

Both sides should be proud of this accomplishment. The difficult work of implementation must now begin. Only the implementation of this agreement in good faith can result in long-term peace and development.

As we celebrate this positive movement toward peace in the longstanding North-South conflict, we remember the conflict in Darfur and the suffering it causes. This comprehensive peace agreement should serve as an inspiration and model for both sides in their work toward negotiating a peaceful resolution of the Darfur conflict. I call on the Government of Sudan and on all Darfur rebel groups to live up to their cease-fire commitments, to end atrocities, and to allow the free movement of humanitarian workers and supplies. The United States will continue to assist the people of Darfur in reaching a just and lasting peace.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis Disaster Relief and an Exchange With Reporters

January 10, 2005

The President. Mr. Secretary, welcome back. I want to thank Secretary Powell and Andrew Natsios and Mike Brown and Marc Grossman for taking the lead on behalf of our Government and the American people and providing relief for the victims of the tsunamis.

The Secretary has given me a extensive briefing on what he has seen, on the unbelievable damage, particularly in Banda Aceh.