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contracts be honored, that when a person makes an investment, that there is not certainty of success but certainty that the rules won't change, that when a government fights corruption, that government sends a signal to investors, large and small, that this is a good place to take risk.

I also reminded the President, we wouldn't be having this discussion if our respective economies weren't strong. And the United States economy is strong. It's healthy. We've overcome some serious challenges recently. But the investor climate in the United States, the willingness for people to invest is good. And the fact that Argentina is picking up additional direct foreign investment is positive. It shows that the country is making wise decisions.

We're going to talk about jobs later on, and that's an important subject. We discussed the need to make sure education systems were strong and vibrant, in order to make sure people can take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

I was pleased that the President was talking about a very ambitious education program, in terms of increasing expenditures, the percentage of GDP by, I think he said 2010, to be a significant increase. And that's wise. That's called leadership. And it seems like to me that at this summit, that if you believe in the values we discussed and if you understand how to make rational decisions, we ought to share those concepts with other countries. And that's why I'm glad to be down here. This is an opportunity to positively affirm our belief in democracy, in human rights and human dignity.

And so I want to thank you for being a good host. It's not easy to host all these countries. It's particularly not easy to host, perhaps, me. [*Laughter*] But thank you for doing it; you're doing a fine job. [*Laughter*] I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to our meetings. I'm looking forward to this evening's cultural event and dinner, and I've been looking forward to our discussion. It was a good one.

Mr. President, thank you very much. It's an honor to be here.

President Kirchner. Thank you very much for being here. Again, we had a very clear, open, candid meeting. We clearly expressed our own thoughts. And as President of Argentina, I'm leaving this meeting feeling very satisfied because it wasn't a meeting looking for nice words but to speak the truth, and each of us did just that. Thank you very much for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. at the Hermitage Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Christina Fernandez de Kirchner of Argentina, wife of President Kirchner; and Emanuel D. "Manu" Ginobili, guard, National Basketball Association's San Antonio Spurs. President Kirchner spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the Summit of the Americas and an Exchange With Reporters in Mar del Plata

November 4, 2005

The President. Thank you all for coming. I'll answer a couple of questions in a second. I do want to say how pleased I am to be here in Argentina, advancing an agenda that is based upon my belief and our country's belief that there are certain universal values.

One of those values is that free societies are important to the progress of men and women, but free societies also require institutions that are solid and sound, institutions such as the right to worship freely, the right to write, say what you want in the press freely, the right to campaign and express your opinions freely. It's very important that there be solid rule of law and independent judiciary.

And so I'm pleased to be down here. It's a good place to spend Laura's birthday, which is today. I don't know if you knew that—no, I know you did, okay—but anyway, don't bring it up when you see her. [*Laughter*]

But it's—I just had a meeting earlier with the Central American countries—young democracies, struggling to succeed, making good progress toward making sure institutions are well-rooted. I say Central American, plus Dominican Republic. And we talked about how pleased we were that we got the free trade agreement through, at least

through the United States Congress. Most of the countries have ratified it. We're looking forward to implementing the trade agreement.

I had a good visit with President Kirchner. You know, Argentina is an amazing country. It's a vast land with a lot of natural resources. And he's done a very good job of helping to—helping this economy of theirs and their financial picture improve. And I congratulated him on it. We talked—well, you heard him, I won't repeat what we talked about. We talked about a lot of subjects. It was a good, honest discussion.

And finally, I just met with our friends from the Andean nations. Good, young democracies, again struggling to fight narcotrafficking, and they were very interested in making sure that we didn't forget them and that we continued to pursue a free trade agreement. That was the main topic of discussion. All those countries recognize the importance of having a free trade agreement with the United States, and I assured them that our negotiators are negotiating in good faith and will continue to negotiate in good faith. That's what I've done so far today.

Nedra [Nedra Pickler, Associated Press].

CIA Employee's Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Hi, Mr. President. Thank you. Did Karl Rove tell you the truth about his role in the CIA leak case? And do you owe the American people an apology for your administration's assertions that Karl Rove and Scooter Libby weren't involved?

The President. We're going through a very serious investigation. And I will—have told you before that I'm not going to discuss the investigation until it's completed. And we have got a—my obligation is to set an agenda, and I've done that. And the agenda is fighting and winning the war on terror and keeping the economic vitality and growth alive, dealing with the energy problem, nominating people to the Supreme Court that adhere to the philosophy that I can depend on—Judge Alito being such a person. I noticed today that they've got a date. I'm disappointed in the date but happy they do have a firm date for his confirmation hearing. We've got to recover from the hurricanes. So I've got a lot to do and will continue to focus on the people's business.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. You've taken a beating in recent weeks, sir. What are you going to do for a fresh start? Are there going to be any staff changes? Would it help if the special prosecutor would wrap up his probe quickly?

The President. Well, again, you're trying to get me to comment on the investigation, which I'm not going to do. And I hope you understand that. It's a serious investigation, and it's an important investigation, but it's not yet over.

I think it's important for the American people to know that I understand my job is to set clear goals and deal with the problems we face. Now, look, we've got an ongoing war on terror, and my administration is working with friends and allies to find these terrorists and bring them to justice before they strike us again. We're fighting the terrorists in Iraq. And as you know, we've got a two-pronged strategy, an important strategy, that one—on the one hand, has a political solution to it, on the other hand has a security solution to it. And we're working hard to achieve those objectives. We're laying what I have called the foundation for peace, because democratic nations don't war; democratic nations will be allies with each other in fighting off an ideology that is dark and grim in its vision and is willing to use murder as its tool.

Elisabeth [Elisabeth Bumiller, New York Times].

Q. Okay, this is not a question about the investigation, but it's about Karl.

The President. It sounds like one, though.

Q. Are there discussions in the White House about whether or not Karl will remain in his job?

The President. Elisabeth, the investigation on Karl, as you know, is not complete. And therefore, I will not comment upon—about him and/or the investigation. Again, I understand the anxiety and angst by the press corps to talk about this. On the other hand, it is a serious investigation, and we take it seriously, and we're cooperating to the extent that the special prosecutor wants us to cooperate.

President's Agenda

Q. The American people, though—sir, the American people, though, are beginning to question your honesty, according to the polls, 58 percent. And your approval rating is at an alltime low, primarily because, it seems, of this investigation. They are wondering whether you can keep on track and whether to believe you, sir.

The President. Well, no, I understand there is a preoccupation by polls and by some. I think this may be—I think we've got—this is maybe the fourth or fifth consecutive semi-press conference—press conference or semi-press conference that I've been asked about polls. The way you earn credibility with the American people is to declare an agenda that everybody can understand, an agenda that relates to their lives, and get the job done. And the agenda that I'm working on now is one that is important to the American people.

First of all, it's to protect our country; it's to understand that we're at war with a radical ideology that wants to inflict harm on America and, at the same time, use that harm they inflict to achieve territorial ambition. I've talked a lot recently about the Zawahiri letter to Zarqawi, which is a clear statement of purpose by these terrorists. It should be viewed for what it is, an open warning to the free world that this is a very vital war, and we need to win it. So I spend a lot of time talking about that—and more than talking about it, acting on it.

Secondly, you know, our economy has shown amazing resilience in the face of natural disaster, as well as rising energy prices. But we've got to have policies in place that make it possible for the economy to continue to grow. You know, we're down here talking about trade. It's hard to trade with somebody if they're broke. And I've told our partners that we've got good economic growth now. But what we need to do is to work with Congress to make sure that we deal with the energy crisis—what can we do to deal with the energy crisis? Well, we can expand refinery capacity in the United States. I mean, it should be apparent to the Members of Congress that when the Katrina hit, there was massive disruptions of our own capacity to make gasoline, which put us in a precarious position for the consumers, which would affect the economy, by the way.

And so we'll be talking to Congress about a further energy initiative to make sure we've got economic growth. We've obviously got work to do with Katrina and Rita, the damage from those hurricanes.

And I mentioned the Supreme Court. This is a very vital issue for the United States Senate and for the country. Sam Alito, Jr., is an incredibly intelligent, well-qualified person who should be on the Court. I told the leadership I thought it would be best to have the hearings before Christmas. They didn't feel like they could get the job done. I talked to Chairman Specter, and the reason why, at least he explained to me, that he couldn't get the hearings done before Christmas is because Alito had written so many opinions, and he wanted to make sure he had time to read them. And they made that decision. Fortunately, there is a firm date, and we look forward to working on that date.

And finally, an issue that is of concern to the American people is the border—is border security. I signed an appropriations bill for border security and during that signature ceremony talked about our strategy to use technology and border patrol and wise policies to do our job, which is to prevent people from illegally—not only people but, by the way, contraband, guns and drugs—from coming into our country illegally. And so that's the agenda before us, and that's the agenda that I will continue to work on.

One more. Yes, Matt [Matt Cooper, Time].

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, you're likely to cross paths with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez at this summit. How should Americans think about this President, who has said many hostile things about you and your administration? Do you think of him as another Castro? And if you see him this afternoon, do you have any words for him?

The President. Well, I will, of course, be polite. That's what the American people expect their President to do, is to be a polite person. And I will—if I run across him, I will do just that. My attitude toward any leader—toward leaders, and I judge leaders

based upon their willingness to protect institutions that will—for a viable democratic society. And to the extent that any leader undermines the free press, we will speak out. To the extent that any leader makes it difficult to worship freely, we will make our positions known. To the extent that the judiciary is not an independent organization—in other words, to the extent that there's not proper checks and balances, we will express our positions.

And there's ways to do so. We can do so through our embassies. We can do so in forums—not necessarily singling out a particular country or person but talking on the positive about how important it is to have checks and balances in society, about how important it is to have these institutions so that a single person cannot become the ruler of all people. I will remind people today at this important summit that—as we talk about poverty and minority rights, which is of concern to many countries here, that one—such concerns are our concerns, and that if you're interested in minority rights, the best way to allow minorities to have rights is in a democratic society, where the people actually make the decisions for government.

And so it's a—I think this is a good forum and a good opportunity to express—for me to express our country's values. But they're not American values, I keep telling you, these are universal values that are true. That's why my meeting with President Kirchner was—one of the reasons it was so positive is because Argentina shares the same values that America shares. They've been through some difficult experiences and making sure that those values are rooted in their societies. Of course I've reminded others, we went through difficult experiences in the past. And we had a Constitution that said everybody is free, but they weren't.

And so it's a—so what I'll search for in the world, as I think about world leaders, is that commitment, firm commitment to values and institutions that make democracy viable.

Thank you all very much. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. at the Sheraton Mar del Plata. In his remarks, he referred to President Nestor Kirchner of Argentina; Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois and Department of Justice CIA leak investigation Special Prosecutor; Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Launch of a Nationwide Effort To Respond to Hurricanes That Struck Central America

November 4, 2005

Three distinguished private-sector leaders have agreed to launch a nationwide effort to encourage private donations for relief and reconstruction in response to the three recent hurricanes that struck Central America. These leaders will work with other Americans to raise awareness and resources to help those in need as a result of these disasters.

The business leaders are: Steve Reinemund, chairman and CEO, PepsiCo, Inc.; Bob Lane, chairman and CEO, Deere & Company; and Maria Lagomasino, former chairman and CEO, JPMorgan Private Bank. On behalf of our country, I am grateful to these leaders for their readiness to take on this important effort.

In the coming days, they will ask Americans to donate directly to a fund set up to provide help to the disaster victims.

Message on the Observance of Eid al-Fitr

November 4, 2005

I send warm greetings to American Muslims and Muslims around the world observing Eid al-Fitr, the Festival of Breaking the Fast.

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, a time of prayer, reflection, and fasting. It is the holiest month of the Muslim year. To celebrate this holiday, many Muslims gather in their homes and mosques to thank God for His blessings and His help in keeping the fast. Muslims also demonstrate their compassion by reaching out to the less fortunate and