

Our interests are combined, and our interests are now making a significant effort.

And so on behalf of the United States of America, we say, God bless you. And to the Tanzanian Government we say, thank you for your efficient and hard work. And so it's been an honor to be with you. *Asante*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:52 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Aziz Msuya, district medical officer, Meru District Hospital; and Minister of Health and Social Welfare David Homeli Mwakuyasa of Tanzania.

Letter to President Fatmir Sejdiu of Kosovo Recognizing Kosovo as an Independent and Sovereign State

February 18, 2008

His Excellency
Fatmir Sejdiu
President of Kosovo
Pristina

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the American people, I hereby recognize Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state. I congratulate you and Kosovo's citizens for having taken this important step in your democratic and national development.

On this historic occasion, I note the deep and sincere bonds of friendship that unite our people. This friendship, cemented during Kosovo's darkest hours of tragedy, has grown stronger in the 9 years since war in Kosovo ended. Kosovo has since worked to rebuild its war-shattered society, establish democratic institutions, hold successful elections for a new government, and foster prosperity. As an independent state, Kosovo now assumes responsibility for its destiny. As in the past, the United States will be your partner and your friend.

In your request to establish diplomatic relations with the United States, you expressed Kosovo's desire to attain the highest standards of democracy and freedom. I fully welcome this sentiment. In particular, I support your embrace of multi-ethnicity as a principle of good governance and your commitment to developing accountable institutions in which all citizens are equal under the law.

I also note that, in its declaration of independence, Kosovo has willingly assumed the responsibilities assigned to it under the Ahtisaari Plan. The United States welcomes this unconditional commitment to carry out these responsibilities and Kosovo's willingness to cooperate fully with the international community during the period of international supervision to which you have agreed. The United States relies upon Kosovo's assurances that it considers itself legally bound to comply with the provisions in Kosovo's Declaration of Independence. I am convinced that full and prompt adoption of the measures proposed by U.N. Special Envoy Ahtisaari will bring Kosovo closer to fulfilling its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

On the basis of these assurances from the Government of Kosovo, I am pleased to accept your request that our two countries establish diplomatic relations. The United States would welcome the establishment by Kosovo of diplomatic representation in the United States and plans to do likewise in Kosovo.

As Kosovo opens a new chapter in its history as an independent state, I look forward to the deepening and strengthening of our special friendship.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

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

Remarks on Kosovo and an Exchange With Reporters in Dar es Salaam

February 19, 2008

The President. Good morning. Sunday, the people of Kosovo declared their independence. They have asked the United States for diplomatic recognition, and yesterday the United States formally recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent nation.

In its Declaration of Independence, Kosovo committed itself to the highest standards of democracy, including freedom and tolerance and justice for citizens of all ethnic backgrounds. These are principles that honor human dignity; they are values America looks for in a friend. And soon we will establish

full diplomatic relations with the new nation of Kosovo.

We will work with the leaders of Kosovo to carry out a smooth and peaceful transition to independence. America welcomes Kosovo's pledges to fully implement the plan of United Nations Special Envoy Ahtisaari and to accept a period of international supervision. We encourage Kosovo's leaders to quickly adopt the provisions of the Ahtisaari plan, especially those designed to safeguard the rights of Kosovo's non-Albanian communities.

The independence of Kosovo is an historic step for the Balkans region. It presents an opportunity to move beyond the conflicts of the past and toward a future of freedom and stability and peace. The United States and the European Union must seize this opportunity to offer all the nations of this region the prospect of integration into the political, economic, and security structure of the Euro-Atlantic community. In this way, all the people of the Balkans will be able to see the promise of a better life for themselves and for their children.

Thank you. I'll answer a couple of questions. Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Kosovo Independence

Q. Mr. President, isn't this a poke in the eye to Vladimir Putin and the others who say you're approving of secession movements everywhere implicitly?

The President. Actually, we have been working very closely with the Russians, as we have with the Europeans and other nations on the—on Kosovo's independence, because we believe it's the right thing to do. You know, there's a disagreement, but we believe, as do many other nations, that this is—history will prove this to be a correct move to bring peace to the Balkans.

This strategy has been a long time coming. Yesterday, for example, we had a—worked out with our European allies the sequencing of it to make sure that there was a concerted and constant voice supporting this move. The United States supports this move because we believe it will bring peace. And now it's up to all of us to work together to help the Kosovars realize that peace. And it's important for us to remind Kosovo, which I have

just done, that they must honor their commitments to support the rights of non-Albanians, non-Kosovars' rights inside the country.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Excuse me. Hans [Hans Nichols, Bloomberg News].

Kosovo Independence/Russia

Q. Yes, Mr. President, thank you very much. When you talk about the sequencing of events, did you withhold the endorsement, the recognition, and wait until this morning for any particular reasons or as a favor to the Russians?

The President. No. Hans, as I told you, we worked with the European nations. We had—this strategy was well-planned. And the endorsement, by the way, wasn't held until this morning; it was issued last night by the State Department, as I mentioned in my remarks.

But it was a way for us to create an effect that showed that the world was—many in the world were very supportive of the independence of Kosovo. Our position has been very clear all along. At the G-8, for example, I expressed—or in Albania, I expressed my position very clearly, so it shouldn't come as a surprise to anybody.

What you may be interested in knowing is that we have been in close consultation with the Russians all along. This wasn't a surprise to Russia. And, you know, today's announcement is simply putting an exclamation point onto a series of announcements that have been made over the last 24 hours.

Thank you all very much. See you in Rwanda.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:24 a.m. at Kilimanjaro Hotel Kempinski Dar es Salaam. In his remarks, he referred to former President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo. A reporter referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Remarks Following a Visit to Kigali Memorial Centre in Kigali, Rwanda

February 19, 2008

Laura and I have just finished going to a memorial for the—that recognizes the horrors of the genocide that took place here. This is a moving place that can't help but shake your emotions to your very foundation. It reminds me that we must not let these kind of actions take place; that—and that the people of Rwanda need help to reconcile, to move forward, after a brutal period.

It's a—I guess the only thing I can finish saying is that, you know, we ask for God's blessings on those who still hurt and on those who long for help and on the kids whose lives had to have been deeply affected by the trauma of the moment. And we thank the museum officials for their generosity and hospitality and for putting on such an exhibit to remind people that there is evil in the world, and evil must be confronted.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m.

The President's News Conference With President Paul Kagame of Rwanda in Kigali

February 19, 2008

President Kagame. President, it's my great pleasure, it's the pleasure of the whole country to welcome you, Mr. President, and Mrs. Laura Bush and your distinguished delegation. We thank you very much for your visit, your friendship, and your support. These have made a substantive difference to many lives in our country.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Kagame. The bilateral investment treaty that we have just signed is further testimony to your commitment and the good will of the American people. Mr. President, your visit is a reflection that the United States and Rwanda have shared values. We believe in investing in our people. We share a commitment to expanding our people's economic and the democratic aspirations. We believe in strong and effective institutions accountable to our respective citizens.

But as it is well appreciated, different countries begin their democratic and development agenda from different circumstances.

You saw for yourself there is also decades of bad politics and bad leadership when you visited the genocide memorial that you just saw this morning. The country you are visiting today was vastly different 14 years ago, when the very survival of Rwanda as a nation was in question. But the Rwandan people refused to give up hope, and we have instead embarked on the task of healing, reconstruction, and development.

The results of these efforts may be illustrated by our modest achievements in such areas as education, health, and a general improvement towards sustainable economic growth. Rwandans and the more—especially our youth—have hope in a better future. Primary school enrollment has risen to about 96 percent, spurred by tuition-free education. In our concerted effort to invest in our people, we have extended universal education to the very first 3 years of secondary education. And we intend to do more through the entire value chain of trade.

In the field of health, immunization coverage has risen to 95 percent. Thanks to American support and partnership, thousands of Rwandan children and mothers are alive and have hope because of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program. Malaria has almost been eliminated in our country due in large part to the President's Malaria Initiative.

On the economic front, today's agreement will certainly deepen our economic collaboration, Mr. President. Mr. President, we share a deep commitment to democracy and good governance. In this respect, we in Rwanda believe strongly in power sharing and consensus-building as a cornerstone of our political dispensation. This perspective has been made the center piece of our Constitution, informed by our particular history and the circumstances that disenfranchised communities and political expressions—often leading to calamities. We know that governance has both universal and home-grown features to allow for greater relevance. We believe we are making progress towards a balance between these imperatives.