

Remarks Following a Discussion With Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in New Orleans

April 21, 2008

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you, sir, for your personal friendship. Thank you for your leadership. I don't know if the people of Canada understand the leadership role you took in Romania, but it was strong and effective. And I want to congratulate you in front of your media about the job you did. Not only did you represent your country well, you represented universal values, and you spoke clearly about them. And so I thank you for that.

We had a good visit. I'm always interested in making sure that if there's any bilateral tensions or bilateral issues, that I know of them so that we can work collaboratively to deal with them. And in the past, one such issue was whether or not our people could travel back and forth between our respective countries in a way that didn't inconvenience them, or if our borders were—being able to flow smoothly so it didn't inconvenience trade. And I think we've worked through those issues.

I can remember the last time we visited, there was great concern about whether or not the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative would be counterproductive to our friendship and relationship. And I thank your Government, thank your ministers, and the people in your staff for working hard to find a way that meets our laws and didn't inconvenience the people of Canada or the United States. So I'm pleased with that progress.

We also talked about the importance of trade between Canada and the United States, and Canada and Mexico, and the United States and Mexico. And I assured the Prime Minister that I'm a strong advocate for free trade. I believe it's in our nations' interests that we continue to have a free trade agenda. All of us want to make sure we're treated fairly, and we can do that. And this summit comes at an opportune time to reaffirm the benefits of the trading arrangements between our three nations.

Canada and the United States have got a very unique and important relationship, and I really appreciate the chance to spend time

with you and visit about these—about the issues of concern.

Finally, the Prime Minister is very articulate on the subject of climate change. And I assured him that my speech in the Rose Garden was a sincere speech, a speech that laid out a strategy that I think will be effective. And I look forward to continuing to work with you on that issue.

But, thanks; good to see you.

Prime Minister Harper. It's nice to see you again. Thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality.

[At this point, Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and no translation was provided.]

Prime Minister Harper. I'll just say once again, delighted to be here in New Orleans—originally a francophone city, in fact, founded by New France—

President Bush. That's true.

Prime Minister Harper. —my dad's favorite American city, I was telling him. We discussed a lot of things to do with the border, to do with environment, energy, trade, and commercial relations. And as you've mentioned, we've made some considerable progress on some of these things.

That said, what I appreciate most—what I've appreciated in our relationship over the past couple years has been the fact that whether we agree or disagree, we're always able to talk very frankly, very upfront. The President has never promised me anything he couldn't deliver, and that's always appreciative—appreciated.

We have some important joint work going on, not just in this continent but around the world, including in Afghanistan. I appreciate your words about Bucharest, and I can tell you our armed forces look very much forward to working in partnership with your people in Kandahar.

So I'm sure we'll have a great summit. And see you again at the G-8. And I feel we've got a few more of these to go through before it's over. [Laughter]

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:19 p.m. at the Windsor Court Hotel.

Remarks at a United States Chamber of Commerce Reception in New Orleans

April 21, 2008

I want to thank the band for giving me a chance to relive my youth. *[Laughter]* I've had many a fine day here in New Orleans and a pretty good night too. *[Laughter]* And it's great to be back. I want to thank the U.S. Chamber for hosting this reception in honor of the North American leaders' summit between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. And for all of you here from Canada and Mexico, welcome to New Orleans, one of America's greatest cities.

I chose to host this summit in New Orleans for a variety of reasons, one of which is, for centuries, this city has been a place where commerce and culture from across the globe have come together—one of the really great international cities in the United States. And once again, New Orleans now steps on the international scene, where it should be.

I want to thank Tom for hosting the deal, and I want to thank all the members of the U.S. Chamber for being here tonight. I thank members of the North American Competitiveness Council for being here—looking forward to meeting with you in the morning.

I want to thank the Governor of the great State of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, and the first lady for being here. My old buddy the mayor—Mayor Nagin is here. Mr. Mayor, it's great to see you. We have spent some quality time together—*[laughter]*—including on the deck of the USS *Iwo Jima*—yes, nonalcohol beer for me. *[Laughter]*

I thank all the State and local officials. I particularly want to say thanks to the Senators from Louisiana for joining us today. Mary Landrieu—thanks for coming, Senator. David Vitter—Senator, it's good to have you here. Thanks for coming. Congressman William Jefferson—thanks for being here, Jeff. Appreciate you being here. I thank the—thanks for coming.

One thing is for certain: New Orleans has come a long way since Hurricane Katrina hit. It—and we've tried to do our part at the Federal level. We spent over \$120 billion to help the gulf coast recover. The money has helped rebuild a school system, a dilapidated school

system, that is now better than before. The money has helped improve the criminal justice system. The money has helped to rebuild highways. The money has helped to strengthen storm surge protection systems so people can feel comfortable living here.

New Orleans faces immense challenges. There's still a lot of work to be done. But there's a lot of hope in this city. I mean, you can see it in the face of the teachers. You can see hope in the jobs that are being created. There's a lot of entrepreneurial spirit in New Orleans. You can see hope in the fact that people are absolutely determined to rebuild this city better than it was before.

And so for all of you who have contributed to New Orleans's resurgence, I want to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation.

This is an important summit. It gives three friends a chance to come together to discuss our commitment to security and prosperity. It's a chance to reconfirm the need for the three of us to work in harmony together for the good of our peoples. It's a chance to talk about how we can best protect our people and extend prosperity. And one of the best ways to do that is through trade.

The people of Louisiana understand the benefits of trade firsthand. While many sectors of the economy were hit hard by Katrina, exports were a source of strength. And they continue to be in the years since. I don't know if a lot of people know this, but exports from Louisiana surpassed \$30 billion in the year 2007—that would be \$30 billion for the first time ever. And a lot of these exports come through New Orleans, which is a source for jobs and hope.

And the fundamental question is, will we continue to be a nation that believes in free and fair trade? Canada and Mexico are our two most important trading partners. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement took effect, an agreement I strongly support, trade between the United States, Mexico, and Canada has more than tripled, and our economies have grown by more than 50 percent.

One of the challenges for the North American Competitiveness Council is to find unnecessary regulations that prohibit the free flow of trade. And so tomorrow the leaders at the Council will come forth with specific