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Mugabe of Zimbabwe. Prime Minister Brown referred to Secretary of State for Defense Desmond Browne and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband of the United Kingdom; King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; and Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland. Reporters referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland in Belfast, Northern Ireland

June 16, 2008

President Bush. Mr. First Minister, Mr. Deputy Minister, thank you for your hospitality. I'm excited to be here in Northern Ireland. And one of the reasons why is because I'm impressed by the progress that is being made toward peace and reconciliation. As a matter of fact, the world is impressed by the progress being made toward peace and reconciliation. And that obviously takes a commitment by leadership. And I want to thank you all for giving me time to hear your thoughts and to visit with you.

We talked about a lot of issues. We talked about the devolution of police and justice. We talked about the successful investment conference that took place here. And I want to thank my fellow citizens for coming, and I want to thank those from around the world who are paying attention to Northern Ireland. The truth of the matter is this, is, you know, people who have come here and looked at the Government, looked at the situation and gotten to know the people realize this is a good place to invest. And ultimately, investment is going to help Northern Ireland realize its full potential.

And then finally, I was able to thank the leaders for their work in helping others reconcile their differences. The interesting thing about the progress being made here in Northern Ireland is that it's attracted the attention of societies around the world that wonder whether reconciliation is possible for them. And Martin was telling me about his talks with some of the Iraqi leaders, about his—sharing his stories about how folks can reconcile. Northern Ireland is a success story. Obviously there's more work to be done, but the progress made to date has been unimaginable 10 years ago.

And I want to congratulate you, thank you for serving your communities. And I wish you all the very best as you continue your journey.

First Minister Robinson. Thank you very much, indeed. Can I say that I'm delighted that President Bush, of his own choice, has recognized that Belfast is one of the major cities of Europe and has included it in this tour. It is a personal commitment that the President has shown towards Northern Ireland. And we are really grateful, not just for him coming today but for the work that has been done by the President and his ambassadors over the previous years, and particularly the work that has been done most recently for the investment conference.

The endorsement of the President for our investment conference goes a long way, and it lets people throughout the world know that Northern Ireland truly is open for business.

Deputy First Minister McGuinness. Can I say, just to echo what Peter has said, that this is an opportunity for us to express our thanks and appreciation for the tremendous work that has been done, in terms of the United States of America, and what is now undoubtedly one of the most successful peace processes in the world today. Beginning with the work of President Clinton, the contribution of Senator George Mitchell, the envoys that were sent by President Bush, such as Richard Haass and Mitchell Reiss and now Paula Dobriansky, all of whom have played a very important role in contributing to our process, which I do believe is, as the President has identified, a role model for how other conflicts can be resolved in other parts of the world.

And really we're having a tremendous amount of interest in our work. We've had two delegations of Iraqi Parliamentarians to Parliament Buildings here in Belfast, just a few yards up the road. And there is no doubt whatsoever that other places that have suffered from conflict are anxious to learn from our experiences. We don't believe that we have got all of the answers, but what we can

certainly do is outlay our experiences for others to consider.

We also are very appreciative of the width of support that has been put behind the economic investment conference by the President and by Paula Dobriansky as Ambassador. And we're very hopeful in the time ahead. And, in fact, I think we're confident that jobs, much needed jobs, will flow from that. And I think providing good jobs, a decent standard of living, facing up to the economic difficulties that are—people have to endure is a very important part of the workload which Peter and I, as First and Deputy First Minister, need to take forward in the time ahead.

President Bush. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:14 p.m. at Stormont Castle. In his remarks, Deputy First Minister McGuinness referred to former Senator George J. Mitchell; former Special Envoys for Northern Ireland Richard N. Haass and Mitchell B. Reiss; and Ambassador Paula J. Dobriansky, the President's Special Envoy to Northern Ireland.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Flooding in the Midwest

June 17, 2008

I've just assembled my—many people in my domestic policy team to discuss the current flooding in the Midwest. First, our hearts and thoughts go to those who lost life. And of course, we're concerned about those whose—who've lost their homes or lost their businesses.

I've been briefed by Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Schafer and Director Paulison about the response. First task at hand is to deal with the flood waters, to anticipate where the flooding may next occur, and to work with the State and local authorities to deal with the response.

For example, in the case of Iowa, one of the issues was the need for fresh drinking water—or drinking water, and so Director Paulison informed me that we've provided about 2 million liters of drinking water. When I was overseas, I spoke to the Governor, and he said, "Listen, I—the Federal—we need Federal help on drinking water." So I sent the word to David, and he responded well.

My only point to you is, is that we're in constant contact with people on the ground to help make sure that we save lives. Now that the water is beginning to recede, the question is, how do we help with the recovery? And Secretary Chertoff briefed me on plans, particularly when it comes to housing. A lot of people are going to be wondering, is there short-term help for housing? And there is, and we'll provide that help.

And secondly, what's going to happen in the long term to the homes? And so Michael's going to set up a housing task force, similar to the kind we set up in California for the wildfires, to work with State and local authorities to have an orderly strategy to help people get back in their homes.

I fully understand people are upset when they lose their home. A person's home is their most valued possession. And we want to work with State and local folks to have a clear strategy to help people find—get back into a place they—that—where they can live.

Secondly, we're worried about farmers and ranchers. The country that's being affected by these floods has got a lot of farm country, a lot of people raising livestock. And the Secretary of Agriculture has briefed me on the conditions—and we're still assessing how widespread the damage is on the farmlands—and assures me that his team's in place to help farmers and ranchers with the Federal aid available.

And finally, Director Nussle's here from the Budget Office. We've got what we called a Disaster Relief Fund. There's enough money in that fund to take care of this disaster, but what we're concerned about is future disasters this year. And therefore, we're going to work with the Congress—Jim Nussle is going to go up to work with Congress to get enough money in the upcoming supplemental to make sure that fund is—has got enough money to deal with a potential disaster—another disaster this year.

Congress doesn't need to worry about working with the White House on this, because we think the supplemental is the way to go. What they do need to worry about is making sure that there is enough, but not