

I know that our thoughts and our prayers, indeed, those of all the American people, are with them tonight. And I wanted to say that what they are doing is important. It will make the world a safer, more peaceful place for our children in the 21st century.

I'd also like to say a word now about the Special Olympics. More than 30 years ago Eunice Kennedy Shriver had an idea as simple as it was revolutionary, to give young people with disabilities the chance to know the thrill of athletic competition, the joy of participation, the pride of accomplishment. Out of that powerful idea, dreamed up at a kitchen table and launched at a backyard in Rockville, Maryland, Special Olympics grew and grew and grew.

Just think of it—if you can remember back to the time before the Special Olympics, many people actually believed that people with disabilities were incapable of performing the most basic, every day activities, let alone competing in sports. But this year, 30 years later, there are more than one million Special Olympic athletes throwing the javelin, swimming the 500-meter butterfly, walking the balance beam—something most of the rest of us cannot do—[laughter]—and inspiring hope all over the world.

So tonight I ask all of you to stand and join me in toasting Eunice Kennedy Shriver; her wonderful family, who have supported her every step of the way; to all the people who work so hard year-in and year-out to make Special Olympics possible, and to the athletes who are an inspiration to us all; to Eunice Kennedy Shriver and the Special Olympics. Ladies and gentlemen, Eunice Shriver.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8 p.m. in a pavilion on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder, Special Olympics. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Remarks at the Conclusion of the Special Olympics Dinner

December 17, 1998

Thank you. This has been a wonderful night. Hillary and I want to thank all the artists who have graced this stage. They have brought something special to this part of the White House lawn and this beautiful tent that we've never had before. They certainly have helped to put us all in the holiday spirit, including our good friend, Whoopi, who I thought was terrific tonight, even in the breaks.

I feel very proud to be a part of this special evening, to pay tribute to Special Olympics. Tonight we celebrate 30 years of breaking down barriers and building up hope, 30 years of widening the circle of opportunity, 30 years of helping Americans with disabilities to reach their highest potential. Tonight we celebrate the victory of the human spirit. We see the power of that spirit every single time an athlete like Loretta runs a race, every time a young person realizes the wonder that he can swim faster than almost anybody else in the pool, every time a parent's heart fills with pride as her child steps with confidence onto the winner's block, and every time a volunteer learns the joy of helping people with disabilities to make the most of their abilities.

As Special Olympics enters its fourth decade, this legacy is being passed from generation to generation, in a circle of hope, as the children of Special Olympics volunteers take their place in the dugouts and on the sidelines and as former competitors become coaches and mentors to new young athletes. The Special Olympics torch, which began as a small flicker of light in 1968 in Chicago, now burns brightly all around the world as a symbol of acceptance and pride.

Tonight, we thank all of you, every single one of you who have made this possible: the Shriver and Kennedy families, without whose vision there would be no Special Olympics; the thousands of supporters and volunteers whose dedication sustains that vision; the

millions of athletes whose courage inspires and challenges all of us. And we salute the next generation of Special Olympics heroes who will keep that flame alive in the 21st century.

Now, I'd like to ask all the artists here with us tonight to come back on stage and sing just one more song for you. Eunice, and all the rest of us, and for Special Olympics.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:10 p.m. in a pavilion on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to comedian Whoopi Goldberg; Special Olympics athlete Loretta Clairborne; and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder, Special Olympics. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of First Lady Hillary Clinton.

United States-European Union Joint Statement on Cooperation in the Western Balkans

December 18, 1998

Political, civil, and economic instability in some areas of the Western Balkans threatens peace and prosperity in all southeastern Europe and poses serious challenges across Europe and beyond. During the past six months, we have achieved notable successes and are agreed on further cooperative steps in the Western Balkans.

Our envoys in Kosovo, Ambassadors Chris Hill and Wolfgang Petritsch, are working as a team to conclude successfully negotiations on an interim political settlement for Kosovo. In Kosovo, the U.S. and EU are collaborating to ensure implementation of the October 16 OSCE-FRY Agreement, notably in the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM). We are extremely concerned that recent acts of violence in Kosovo could spiral out of control, and call on all parties to preserve the cease fire and cooperate fully with KVM.

We remain committed to enhancing quickly confidence-building and to supporting civil society in Kosovo. The EU welcomes the U.S. initiative to begin quick impact efforts in Kosovo immediately. The U.S. welcomes the European Union's intention to play the leadership role in organizing the inter-

national community's response on reconstruction issues, and pledges its full support. The EU intends to organize an expert-level meeting in January 1999, following the conclusion of the ongoing damage assessment mission. Once a political agreement is in place, further concrete steps on assisting reconstruction and on democratization and civic development will be taken, including convening a donors' conference. We look to the international community to contribute substantially towards the speedy implementation of these endeavors. At present, humanitarian aid should continue, responding to the most urgent needs, in close cooperation between the U.S. and EU and under the coordination of UNHCR, which is the lead agency for humanitarian aid as well as for the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.

We expect the Albanian, as well as the Bosnian, authorities to take primary responsibility for stabilizing their respective countries and leading them towards full democracy and economic development.

In Albania, we worked together to form the Friends of Albania, which the EU co-chairs with the OSCE; we are both making a substantial political and material commitment to stabilization, democratization and economic reform. We have taken note of the new Government's pledges at the Tirana Conference October 30 to move towards those goals. We welcome the adoption of the new Constitution, which is a fundamental first step in that direction. We strongly urge all political parties to cooperate in the democratic process in the interest of all Albanian people.

We have furthered our cooperation in support of Dayton implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Croatia. The Bosnian national elections in September further advanced democracy and pluralism in that country. The U.S. and EU continue to provide resources to assist Dayton implementation efforts. We call on the authorities in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia to consistently support Dayton implementation efforts and contribute to the process of stabilization and national reconciliation, including by supporting the return of refugees and displaced persons to their previous homes as