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**Remarks at the Opening of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Summit in Istanbul**

*November 18, 1999*

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. President Demirel, Chairman Vollebaek, Mr. Secretary-General, Miss Degn, distinguished leaders, it's a great honor for me to be able to say a few words on behalf of the United States.

First, I thank President Demirel, his government, and the people of Turkey for a wonderful reception and for the heroic example they have set in their recovery from the earthquakes. I thank the Norwegian Chairman-in-Office for remarkable leadership in a very challenging year.

We come together for many reasons, first, to reaffirm our commitment to the OSCE, a unique institution grounded in the principle that the root of human insecurity is the denial of human rights. Here today are leaders of more than 20 countries that were not even in existence when the Final Act was signed in Helsinki in 1975 because they were not free.

In country after country, the OSCE's ideas of human rights and the rule of law are now ascendant. A quarter century after Helsinki, the question is not whether democracy will survive but when it will be embraced in every European country and how it will work in every country.

Clearly, we must adapt the OSCE to meet new realities. The charter we've negotiated recognizes that the greatest threats to our security today are as likely to come from con-

flicts that begin within states as between them.

The OSCE has responded to this challenge with courage and distinction, from the Balkans to the Baltics, organizing elections, monitoring human rights, reducing ethnic and religious tensions. We must give the OSCE the tools to respond even more effectively. I am pleased the OSCE is endorsing the REACT concept, which will enable it to deploy experts in elections, law, media, and administration rapidly to nations seeking to prevent or recover from conflict. That way, time and lives won't be lost while we organize from scratch to meet every crisis.

I'm pleased we're endorsing the achievements of the Stability Pact, and pledging to support its work, for there must be a magnet of unifying force more powerful than the forces of division and fear in order for southeastern Europe to reach its full potential.

I'm pleased we have recognized the needs to fill the gap that civilian police forces must fill between unarmed monitors and military forces, and I hope that all of us will be willing to strengthen the OSCE's capacity to meet that need.

Now, in addition to making the OSCE more operational, we have to uphold its principles in hard cases. In that spirit, I would like to say a few words about the situation in Chechnya. First of all, I associate myself with the previous remarks of the German Chancellor, which I think made the case very well. But I think I speak for everyone here when we say we want Russia to overcome the scourge of terrorism and lawlessness. We believe Russia has not only the right but the obligation to defend its territorial integrity. We want to see Russia a stable, prosperous, strong democracy with secure borders, strong defenses, and a leading voice in world affairs.

I have often asked myself, as I hope all of you have, what I would do if I were in President Yeltsin's place. I think before any of us sit in judgment, we should be able to answer that question.

Russia has faced rebellion within and related violence beyond the borders of Chechnya. It has responded with a military strategy designed to break the resistance and

end the terror. The strategy has led to substantial civilian casualties and very large flows of refugees.

The first thing I would like to say is that most of the critics of Russian policies deplore Chechen violence and terrorism and extremism, and support the objectives of Russia to preserve its territorial integrity and to put down the violence and the terrorism. What they fear is that the means Russia has chosen will undermine its ends, that if attacks on civilians continue, the extremism Russia is trying to combat will only intensify, and the sovereignty Russia rightly is defending will be more and more rejected by ordinary Chechens who are not part of the terror or the resistance. The strength Russia rightly is striving to build, therefore, could be eroded by an endless cycle of violence. The global integration Russia has rightly sought to advance, with our strong support, will be hindered.

Russia's friends are united, I believe, in what we think should happen: appropriate measures to end terrorism, protection of innocent civilians, a commitment to allow refugees to return in safety, access for relief groups, and a common effort to rebuild. In other words, in order to isolate and undermine the terrorists, there must be a political dialog and a political settlement, not with terrorists but with those who are willing to seek a peaceful resolution.

The OSCE and others can play a role in facilitating that dialog, as they did once before, and that is the role the OSCE was meant to play. Meanwhile, I think we should all make it clear that we are prepared to do more, through the United Nations, through this organization, and through any other available forum, to combat terror wherever it exists.

Finally, let me say I have to respectfully disagree with my friend President Yeltsin in his characterization of U.S.-led NATO aggression in Yugoslavia. Consider Bosnia, where the world community waited 4 years, and we saw 2½ million refugees and 250,000 deaths placed on the altar of ethnic cleansing. I honor and praise the courage of the Secretary-General and the United Nations for acknowledging just a few days ago the grievous error of the U.N. in waiting so long to

act, and that wait being responsible in part for the travesty of Srebrenica.

Consider Kosovo, where the world community did not wait, but there were still thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees. But unlike Bosnia, because we acted more quickly, they are almost all home today, coming to grips with the challenge of the coming winter. So I believe we did the right thing. And I do not believe there will ever be a time in human affairs when we will ever be able to say, we simply cannot criticize this or that or the other action because it happened within the territorial borders of a single nation.

President Yeltsin, one of the most thrilling experiences of my life as a citizen of the world before I became President was when you stood up on that tank in Moscow, when they tried to take the freedom of the Russian people away, and you're standing there on that tank, said to those people, "You can do this, but you'll have to kill me first."

If they had put you in jail instead of electing you President, I would hope that every leader of every country around this table would have stood up for you and for freedom in Russia and not said, "Well, that is an internal Russian affair that we cannot be a part of." I don't think we have any choice but to try to work for common objectives across lines. And I certainly associate myself with any efforts that we can make together to fight terrorism within any nation's borders.

Let me just say this in closing. We are here in Turkey, and it's an appropriate place to say this, thinking of Chechnya, thinking of all these issues, thinking of the trouble in the Caucasus, and the trouble in the Balkans. So much of the future of the 21st century will turn on developments in the vast region that lies between traditional notions of Asia and Europe, between the Muslim world and the West, between the parts of our community that are stable and prosperous and democratic and those still struggling to build basic human security and freedom.

The people who live in these crossroads face truly momentous challenges, and we're dealing with some of them today. They are trying to preserve their unique heritage and participate fully in the modern world. And there is no single, simple answer to all their

problems, but there is a guidepost: this OSCE and its principle that human differences should be resolved democratically, with respect for diversity and the basic rights and freedom of every individual. That was true in 1975. It is even more true today.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. at the Ciragan Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey; Chairman-in-Office Knut Vollebaek, OSCE; United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan; Helle Degn, Chair, Foreign Policy Council, Denmark; Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

### **Remarks on the Budget Agreement and an Exchange With Reporters in Istanbul**

*November 18, 1999*

**The President.** I am very pleased that our administration and the Congress have reached agreement on the first budget of the 21st century. This budget is a victory, and a hard-won victory, for the American people. It is a victory for our children who now will have better education; a victory for our families who deserve the safer streets and cleaner environment this budget will bring; a victory for farmers, for veterans, for our soldiers in uniform. It is a victory for all who agree that America should meet our responsibilities and maintain our leadership in the world. Simply put, it's a budget that meets our priorities, supports our values, and invests in our future.

The budget makes progress on several important fronts. The first budget of the 21st century puts education first, as it should. That's why I stood firm for our commitment to hire 100,000 highly qualified teachers to lower class size in the early grades. I am pleased that Congress is going to fulfill that promise, and I am also pleased that this budget doubles funds for after-school and summer school programs and supports greater accountability for results by helping communities turn around or shut down failing schools.

The budget makes America a safer place. It invests in our COPS program, which already has funded 100,000 community police

officers for our streets and helped to give us the lowest crime rate in 25 years. This agreement will help to hire up to 50,000 more community police officers targeted to neighborhoods where crime rates are still too high.

It strengthens our efforts to preserve natural areas and protect our environment. I am very pleased we successfully opposed anti-environmental riders that put special interests above the national interest.

The budget will also make it possible for millions of Americans with disabilities to join the work force without fear of losing their health care, a terrific advance in the quality of our national life.

Finally, this budget strengthens America's role of leadership in the world by paying our dues and arrears to the United Nations, by meeting our commitments to the Middle East peace process, by making critical investments in debt relief for the poorest countries of the world, by funding efforts to safeguard nuclear weapons and expertise in Russia.

When I insisted that Congress keep working until it finished the job, I hoped and believed we could make progress in all these areas. I believe we can maintain our fiscal discipline, continue to pay down our national debt, and still make the investments we must in our people and our future. That is what we have achieved, and we have done so by working together.

I want to thank the leaders of both parties for their roles in this agreement, and I want to say a special word of thanks to the Democratic leaders and the members of my party in both Houses without whom my struggle for 100,000 teachers, 50,000 police, greater investments in the environment, and paying our U.N. dues could simply not have succeeded. I thank them very much.

**Q.** Mr. President—

**The President.** Now, let me just say one other thing, then I'll answer the questions. We are about to start the holiday season, and then we'll begin again. And in the months ahead, I think we have to stay focused on the critical business of this Nation that is still undone, from commonsense gun safety legislation to meaningful hate crimes legislation, from a real raise in the minimum wage to