

indicated that his country will work with partners in Europe to help strengthen the governing institutions of the Palestinian administration. We welcome his initiative. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Jordan and Egypt have made clear they're willing to contribute the diplomatic and financial assistance necessary to help these efforts succeed. I'm optimistic that by supporting the forces of democracy and moderation, we can help Israelis and Palestinians build a more hopeful future and achieve the peace in a Holy Land we all want.

Freedom, by its nature, cannot be imposed—it must be chosen. From Beirut to Baghdad, people are making the choice for freedom. And the nations gathered in this chamber must make a choice as well: Will we support the moderates and reformers who are working for change across the Middle East, or will we yield the future to the terrorists and extremists? America has made its choice: We will stand with the moderates and reformers.

Recently a courageous group of Arab and Muslim intellectuals wrote me a letter. In it, they said this: "The shore of reform is the only one on which any lights appear, even though the journey demands courage and patience and perseverance." The United Nations was created to make that journey possible. Together we must support the dreams of good and decent people who are working to transform a troubled region, and by doing so, we will advance the high ideals on which this institution was founded.

Thank you for your time. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the General Assembly Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President, 61st Session of the U.N. General Assembly; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; former President Saddam Hussein and President Jalal Talabani of Iraq; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations in New York City

September 19, 2006

Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished members of the United Nations community, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we're proud to welcome you here to our country.

I'm pleased to be with you at the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly, this year under the President—under the leadership of President Sheikha Khalifa from Bahrain, the first woman from the Middle East to serve in this position. We welcome her presence on the podium.

Mr. Secretary-General, it is appropriate that we offer you a toast today, a toast based upon our gratitude for your 10 years of service to this important body. We need to toast your compassion, when the world saw the United Nations respond to natural disasters. We need to toast your desire for peace. We need to toast the fact that you're a hard worker. For those of you who have had the honor of taking phone calls from Kofi Annan, you know that he's not always calling from the same address. I've talked to him a lot of times during my time as President, and a lot of times my discussions with him came from when he was in faraway places, because he cares deeply about the world.

We need to toast the fact that he loves his wife, and his wife loves him. We need to toast the fact that he is a decent, honorable man. We need to raise our glasses to 10 years of extraordinary service and be thankful that a man such as Kofi Annan was willing to stand up and serve the cause of justice and peace.

And so now if you'll join me in a toast to a good man and a good friend, and we ask for God's blessings on you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. at the United Nations headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President, 61st Session of the U.N. General Assembly; and Nane Maria Annan, wife of Secretary-General Annan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-General Annan. A tape was

not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Jalal Talabani of Iraq in New York City

September 19, 2006

President Bush. I want to thank the President of Iraq for joining us. President Talabani, you and your colleagues here have given us time so we can strategize together to help you succeed, help you become a democracy, a country that can sustain itself and govern itself and defend itself, in the heart of the Middle East.

I want to congratulate the Iraqi people on your courage. These are tough times. There is still violence in your midst because extremists want to stop the advance of a free society. We spent time strategizing on how we can continue to help the Iraqi Government provide security for her people. It's not only security that comes from troops but security that comes from economic vitality.

We had a very good meeting yesterday on the compact for Iraq. The international community came and listened very carefully to the Iraqi Government's proposals and pledged support for this new democracy, and that ought to hearten the Iraqi people. I made it very clear to the President that it's important for the Government of Iraq to continue to make very difficult decisions so that the people of Iraq see progress, to see different political parties capable of working together for the good of the country and for the good of the people. I'm optimistic that this Government will succeed. And I've told the President of Iraq that America has given her word to help you, and we will keep our word. The people of Iraq must know that.

I spoke today at the United Nations, and in my speech, I spoke directly to the people of Iraq. I wanted them to know that we're thinking about them during this difficult period of time. I want them to know we appreciate their courage. And I want them to know that the United States of America stands with them, so long as the Government continues to make the tough choices necessary for peace to prevail.

So, Mr. President, thank you for coming again. I appreciate your time. I appreciate your longstanding courage and support for freedom and liberty. History will judge you kindly, Mr. President, when they look back and realize that under your leadership, a new democracy began to flourish in the heart of the Middle East, called Iraq.

Welcome.

President Talabani. Thank you. Today we were honored to meet President Bush, who we consider him as the hero of liberation of Iraq and who we are—very much appreciate the sacrifice of brave American Army, those who gave their life to liberate our country from the worst kind of dictatorship, which left behind mass graves with hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis in it. And the liberation of Iraq from this kind of dictatorship opened the door for Iraqi people to enjoy democracy, human rights, and all kinds of liberties, and to have free election, the National Assembly then elects the Presidency and Speaker and Prime Minister, and to have national unity, a Government headed by Dr. Maliki.

This Government is representing main portions of Iraqi people, of course Arabs, Sunnis, Shi'as, Turkomans, Christians, Muslims, everyone represented in this Government, and is working well for national reconciliation. I briefed his Excellency, President, about the steps we have taken towards implementing—implementation of national reconciliation program. And also, I told him that we are trying to do our best to remove all obstacles in the way of national reconciliation, to try to review some of those like de-Baathification and look to the amendment of a Constitution and also try to have some kind of discussion, free discussion about federation and some other issues. We have also our roadmap in Iraq, which was decided by a political council of national security for solving other problems of Iraqi people.

We, again, expressed our gratitude to his Excellency, our dear friend, President George Bush, and to American people. We hope that America also understand that we are grateful to them, to the America, and we will never forget those friends who helped us in the difficult days of Iraq, and Iraq will be always in the future in very good relation