

Statement on Signing the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act

October 8, 2008

I am pleased today to sign into law the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act, which approves the U.S.-India 123 Agreement. The passage of this legislation by the Congress marks another major milestone in achieving the vision that Prime Minister Singh and I set forth on July 18, 2005, to transform the relationship between our two countries and to establish a strategic partnership. This act will strengthen the relationship between the United States and India and deliver valuable benefits to both nations.

The legislation does not change the terms of the 123 Agreement as I submitted it to the Congress. That agreement is consistent with the Atomic Energy Act and other elements of U.S. law. This legislation is important as it enables me to bring the 123 Agreement into force and to accept on behalf of the United States the obligations contained in the agreement.

The agreement grants India advance consent to reprocessing which will be brought into effect upon conclusion of arrangements and procedures for a dedicated reprocessing facility under IAEA safeguards.

In addition, the legislation does not change the fuel assurance commitments that the U.S. Government has made to the Government of India, as recorded in the 123 Agreement.

The passage of this legislation reflects the common view of my administration and the Congress as to the value of nuclear cooperation and is in the interest of the United States and India.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India. H.R. 7081, approved October 8, was assigned Public Law No. 110-369.

Proclamation 8203—Leif Erikson Day, 2008

October 8, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On Leif Erikson Day, we remember that son of Iceland and grandson of Norway for his journey to North America, and we celebrate the influential role Nordic Americans have played in our society.

Leif Erikson was among the world's greatest and most daring explorers. More than 1,000 years ago, he led a crew across the Atlantic to North America. Today, the same desire to explore and open new frontiers inspires our citizens and contributes to the strength of our Nation.

America's friendships with Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are strong, and Nordic Americans have added to our rich cultural diversity and proud ancestry. On this day, we recognize these individuals for their remarkable achievements in all sectors of our society. America is grateful for the many contributions of Nordic Americans, and we continue to draw inspiration from the courage and optimism of the adventurous Leif Erikson.

To honor Leif Erikson and to celebrate our citizens of Nordic American heritage, the Congress, by joint resolution (Public Law 88-566) approved on September 2, 1964, has authorized the President to proclaim October 9 of each year as "Leif Erikson Day."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 9, 2008, as Leif Erikson Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs to honor our rich Nordic-American heritage.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., October 10, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on October 14.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Ivan Gasparovic of Slovakia

October 9, 2008

President Bush. It is my honor to welcome the President of Slovakia to the Oval Office. Slovakia is an ally and friend of the United States. And in my time as President, I have come to admire this President. He's an easy man to talk to. He's got good, strong opinions, and I appreciate his values.

We talked about a variety of subjects. I assured him that the United States will take strong action in dealing with the current economic situation. And I also talked about our common desire to have a—to work with our European friends to develop as best as possible common policy.

During my Presidency, I was pleased to support Slovakia's ascension into NATO. I was confident that Slovakia would be an excellent partner and ally in NATO, and history has proven me correct. And I thank the people of Slovakia for supporting the Government's decision to deploy troops into Afghanistan to help that young democracy never again be a safe haven for terrorists, and to serve as an example of the transformative power of freedom.

Finally, we talked about visa waiver. I told the President that Slovakia has made a lot of progress on visa waiver. And I expect that in mid-November there will be a—you know, a positive decision for the people of your good country, Mr. President. And I congratulate you and your foreign ministry for working hard on this issue. And I'm glad to welcome you to the Oval Office.

President Gasparovic. Mr. President, allow me to start by thanking you for inviting me. This is an extraordinary day for me. And I believe it is also a satisfaction to the people of Slovakia for them to see that Slovakia has a favorable disposition towards our country, and that we have good relations. I believe that in the history of our relations, we are currently at our highest point.

It was during his Presidency that President Bush supported Slovakia on its way to NATO, which in turn, helped Slovakia to become a member of the European Union. These were two very important steps and decisions that allowed Slovakia to build its reputation as a credible country. And it is this credibility that allows Slovakia to attract foreign investment into our country. Slovakia continues to be a prosperous country and a country that has and maintains its credibility in foreign policy as well.

We talked about many difficult issues. We talked also about the financial crisis and about the steps that need to be taken in order to overcome this crisis and to reinvigorate the financial system.

I'm very glad that Slovakia and its economy is currently in a situation where we will not likely be taking a direct hit from this financial crisis. Slovakia is in a position where we're able to mitigate many impacts of this crisis. On the other hand, Slovakia is the world's largest per capita car producer. This means that Slovakia's exports and foreign trade will suffer. However, we believe that we can take steps to mitigate this impact.

I was glad that in my capacity as the President of the Slovak Republic, I was able to reassure the President that Slovakia will continue to stand behind its commitments and its dedication to NATO, and that we will continue to be present in Afghanistan. Moreover, Slovakia will increase the number of troops deployed to Afghanistan by 100 percent.

In closing, I want to say that I believe, Mr. President, our meeting today was a very strong message of the good relations that Slovakia has with the United States, and vice versa.

I believe that this will continue——

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Gasparovic spoke in Slovak, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.