Message to the Senate Transmitting the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption and Documentation

April 1, 1998

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (''the Convention''), adopted and opened for signature at the Specialized Conference of the Organization of American States (OAS) at Caracas, Venezuela, on March 29, 1996. The Convention was signed by the United States on June 27, 1996, at the twenty-seventh regular session of the OAS General Assembly meeting in Panama City, Panama. In addition, for the information of the Senate, I transmit the report of the Department of State with respect to the Convention.

The Convention was the first multilateral Convention of its kind in the world to be adopted. The provisions of the Convention are explained in the accompanying report of the Department of State. The report also sets forth proposed understandings that would be deposited by the United States with its instrument of ratification. The Convention will not require implementing legislation for the United States.

The Convention should be an effective tool to assist in the hemispheric effort to combat corruption, and could also enhance the law enforcement efforts of the States Parties in other areas, given the links that often exist between corruption and organized criminal activity such as drug trafficking. The Convention provides for a broad range of cooperation, including extradition, mutual legal assistance, and measures regarding property, in relation to the acts of corruption described in the Convention.

The Convention also imposes on the States Parties an obligation to criminalize acts of corruption if they have not already done so. Especially noteworthy is the obligation to criminalize the bribery of foreign government officials. This provision was included in the Convention at the behest of the United States negotiating delegation. In recent years, the United States Government has sought in a number of multilateral fora to persuade other governments to adopt legislation akin to the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. This Convention represents a significant breakthrough on that front and should lend impetus to similar measures in other multilateral groups.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention, and that it give its advice and consent to ratification, subject to the understandings described in the accompanying report of the Department of State.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
April 1, 1998.

Letter to the Speaker of the House on the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program

April 1, 1998

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On March 28, 1998, I sent a letter to the Leadership addressing my concerns regarding H.R. 2400, the Building Efficient Surface Transportation and Equity Act of 1998. As the House prepares to consider this bill, I want you to know that I am adamantly opposed to any attempts to weaken or repeal the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program extension contained in this legislation.

We have seen time and again that women and minorities are excluded from the contracting process when a DBE program is not in place. The DBE program is not a quota. The existing statute explicitly provides that the Secretary of Transportation may waive the 10 percent goal for any reason and that this benchmark is not to be imposed on any state or locality. Rather, the DBE program encourages participation without imposing rigid requirements of any type.

I ask that you oppose efforts to strike the DBE program from the bill.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Cyprus

April 1, 1998

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

In accordance with Public Law 95–384 (22 U.S.C. 2373(c)), I submit to you this report on progress toward a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus question covering the period December 1, 1997, to January 31, 1998. The previous submission covered events during October to November 1997.

International efforts on the Cyprus issue slowed during this period in anticipation of the February 1998 Cypriot Presidential election, which President Clerides won. It was, however, an active period for developments that affect Cyprus, including those in the area of EU-Turkish relations. Turkey perceived the Luxembourg EU Summit as a setback to its goal of closer integration with Europe. When I met Prime Minister Yilmaz here in December, I urged him to remain focused on Turkey's long-term interest in Europe.

There were negative developments on the island during this period. On December 27, the Turkish Cypriots indefinitely suspended bicommunal contacts between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In January, the Greek Cypriot National Guard assumed control of the Paphos airbase, which was upgraded to serve as a base for fighter aircraft. We reiterated to the Greek Cypriots our concerns about proceeding with the purchase of the S–300 antiaircraft missiles, which present a serious obstacle to achieving a settlement based on a bizonal, bicommunal federation.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Interview With Sam Donaldson of ABC News for "Prime Time Live" in Dakar

April 1, 1998

Jonesboro Incident

Mr. Donaldson. Mr. President, thanks very much for coming. Why do you think it happened the other day in Jonesboro? I mean, the police have taken into custody two young boys, 13 and 11, and that's just stunning.

The President. I don't know why it happened. And I think we're going to have to wait until we hear something from those young men or their spokespeople, their lawyers or their parents or somebody, to know more than we now know.

But it is troubling that this has happened, this school-related violence now, 3 times in three States, resulting in the deaths of children in the last few months. For me, this was especially hard because I spent a lot of time in my life in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and the people there have been very good to me, and we've done a lot of things together.

I could barely look at that service in the convocation center, because that convocation center was built as a place of joy and celebration. When I was Governor, it was one of the biggest issues in my campaign in 1982 that I would build that convocation center. And to see it housing all those people in all their grief, it was very sad.

But I think we have to work on two things. I think we have to first of all support the people there, moving from their heartbreak to healing and to getting their hope back. And then I think the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education have got to get all the available information on these three incidents and any others like it, and then see if there is a pattern and whether, from that pattern, we can draw some conclusions about what we should do.

Mr. Donaldson. When I was a little kid I can remember I'd get angry, and maybe you did too, in the schoolyard or something,