

to a revitalized United Nations, one that upholds its timeless mission but that adapts to new times.

We had a good discussion. We talked about the need to put the U.N. back on sound financial footing. That will demand far-reaching reform, the elimination of waste, streamlining staff, wiping out overlap and abuse. The Secretary-General and I agree that the U.N. must pursue this course of reform. It's clear to me that he is prepared and determined to get the job done.

As the U.N. moves to reform, it must know also that the United States is prepared to pay its way. In the weeks ahead, I will be working with Congress to reach an agreement through which America can pay our arrears to the U.N., meet our obligations, and continue to spur real progress. We cannot expect to lead through the United Nations unless we are prepared to pay our own way and to pay what we owe as they do what they should along the path of reform. As long as the United States does its part—as long as the United Nations does its part, we simply have to be prepared to pay our debts and to pay our dues.

Today we are proud as Americans to stand as the indispensable nation, the world's leading force for peace and freedom and security and prosperity. But we cannot sustain our leadership or, more importantly, our goals for a better world, alone. And we cannot sustain it by words alone. Our well-being at home depends upon our engagement around the world. We have to have the resources to meet that challenge and to assume the responsibilities of leadership. Meeting our commitment to the United Nations is a crucial part of that task, and I might say also, on Secretary Albright's first day in office, adequately funding our foreign policy operations through the State Department and our other diplomatic missions is also a critical part of that task.

I'm very encouraged that the Secretary-General will be meeting with congressional leaders during his visit here to Washington. I look forward to working with the Congress and with the Secretary-General to renew the United Nations for the century ahead, and I'm very glad that he is the first leader that I have met with after my Inauguration.

Mr. Secretary-General, would you like to say a few words? Welcome to Washington.

[At this point, Secretary-General Annan made brief remarks.]

*The President.* Thank you very much.

#### *U.S. Debt to the United Nations*

*Q.* Mr. President, why did you wait so long to want to pay back your debts? And is it conditional on reforms?

*The President.* First of all, I wanted to pay it back all along. Our budget will actually have a plan to pay it back and to pay it back in a prompt fashion. As a practical matter, I know from consulting with the Members of Congress that we won't be able to secure support in the Congress for paying the arrears unless they're convinced that reform is going forward.

But you know, the United States has been, I think, very fortunate to have hosted the United Nations since its creation, to have supported it and worked with it in ways large and small. And we have been immensely benefited by the burden-sharing and humanitarian work that the United Nations has done. So I am determined to see that we pay our way. And I think it's a part of—I'll say again, it's a part of having the proper attitude toward our foreign policy operations in general.

I'm gratified that Secretary Albright and Secretary Cohen were confirmed yesterday. I hope that Bill Richardson and Tony Lake will be promptly confirmed so we can put our whole foreign policy team on the field and go to work. But we have to recognize that our diplomacy and our leadership cannot be through the defense budget alone. We also have to have an adequate diplomatic budget to do the work that has to be done. And that is—a part of that is paying our U.N. way.

*Q.* Mr. President, what do you think about—

*Q.* Mr. President, if you put the U.N. on a scale of 1 to 10, where would you place it?

*The President.* Rising rapidly. [Laughter]

#### *Canada-Cuba Trade Agreement*

*Q.* What do you think about Canada's trade deal with Cuba?

*The President.* Excuse me?

*Q.* Canada's trade deal with Cuba?

*The President.* What about it?

*Q.* What is your reaction to it? Do you have any?