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Mr O'Hara

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dublin, Ireland)

For Immediate Release
December 12, 2000

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT CLINTON
AND PRIME MINISTER BERTIE AHERN
TO GOVERNMENT LEADERS,
MEMBERS OF THE OIREACHTAS

Guinness Storehouse
Dublin, Ireland

2:00 P.M. (L)

PRIME MINISTER AHERN: Mr. President, First Lady and Senator-elect, Chelsea, friends. We're gathered here today to pay our tribute to President Clinton and to say a warm thank you to him for eight years of strong leadership which has helped bring the benefits of peace and prosperity to people in Ireland, and to people all over the world. (Applause.)

We're gathered for this tribute to President Clinton in St. James' Gate in the heart of the Liberties of the greatest city in the world. (Applause.) The Liberties are one of Dublin's great communities, and it's here that a great Irish businessman, Arthur Guinness, started the brew Guinness over 250 years ago, which in time became a global brand with strong links to Ireland.

And the Guinness story, ladies and gentlemen, reminds us that innovation and trade are very much part and parcel of the heritage of Dublin and this community. And we're working hard to make sure that innovation remains a hallmark of this country into the future. For example, here in the Liberties, plans are underway to develop a digital hub as part of our strategy for this country to be a leader in the new Internet-enabled economy. At the heart of this district will be Media-lab Europe, a unique partnership between my government and the world-famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It will bring two global names together -- Guinness and Media-lab, symbols of the strong partnership across the Atlantic, which is the grounds for our confidence about the future.

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We will build a future here, using the creativity of researchers and students, entrepreneurs and artists from Ireland to the whole world. And we renew the fabric of this historic community and cherish its heritage. And as evidence of the same spirit of partnership in the new technologies, I'm pleased to announce the result of the work of the National Research and Education Network provider, the HEAnet. Broad-band links are set to increase over 20 times between Irish and U.S. research institutions. It will mean closer research cooperation in Internet, too, and next-generation initiatives between our higher institutes of learning, going forward.

Mr. President, in the eight years of your presidency, Ireland has changed, and changed very fast. We've a new economy and a modern society. The economy is now in its seventh year of sustained growth, has grown by over 9 percent per annum in the last three years. A key part of that success has been the social partnership model which has underpinned strong economic and social development.

But we have also been fortunate to benefit from a positive international economic environment, including a very positive and a dynamic relationship with a strong U.S. economy during the Clinton years. In your term of office the U.S. has led the new technologies and U.S. business has globalized. Ireland has proved exceptionally attractive as location for them in Europe. Ireland has captured up to 10 percent of all U.S. foreign direct investment into the EU in recent years, and up to 40 percent of greenfield investment in electronics.

Many of the companies represented here today have invested hugely in Ireland in the past eight years. Among these are Dell and Gateway, Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, IBM and Intel, and many more. And the pattern of investment has continued. This year Intel announced that it is building a third microprocessor plant in Dublin, at a cost of $1.8 billion U.S. American Home Products, Wyeth Medica are making the largest investment of bio-pharmaceuticals ever in the world, also here in Dublin. And yesterday, Cardinal Health announced a massive new European center in Longford, involving investment of over $100 million U.S. and resulting at over 1,300 new jobs.

We greatly value, President, these companies and their contribution to our country. Truly it can be said that the United States has repaid the role of the Irish in building America in an earlier age. (Applause.)

Mr. President, our economic success owes much to the great wave of prosperity and progress which America has enjoyed under your stewardship. But you've also worked to ensure the prosperity is shared by all. You've led the debate about the need to make sure that the global economy brings economic, social, as well as political benefits to communities around the world.

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Mr. President, you also brought the skills and energy you so generously gave to us to other troubled parts of the world. This richer work in Ireland, your term as President has been marked by a clear desire to understand the complexities of each conflict, to help where you could, and above all, to make the world a better place. You fundamentally understood that the world is now one place.

We cannot look at the face of hunger and ignore it, because the poor and the hungry will come to us. We cannot see the scenes of ecological or natural devastation and say it has nothing to do with us, because it inevitably will affect us. We cannot say that disease elsewhere is not our problem, because it will eventually come to everyone unless it is stopped early in its tracks.

As an island with an open economy, President, as a society with people of Irish ancestry in every corner of the world, as a people who have had our own share of human catastrophe, we in Ireland know instinctively that the world is a single village, as vulnerable or as strong as the human bonds within it.

And you've understood, too, Mr. President, you've helped shape and define America's responsibility in the world of today. You've engaged with the cause of Africa. You've given global leadership in the fight against diseases, particularly HIV-AIDS, which are undermining development in Africa. And the peace agreement signed today in Algiers between Ethiopia and Eritrea would not have come about without the mediation efforts of your Special Envoy, Tony Lake. (Applause.)

Mr. President, I don't really need to say it because I heard all of the parliamentarians, all the members of both houses of the Oireachtas, as they had the honor of meeting you and the First Lady, but you approached the situation in Northern Ireland with an open but a determined mind -- open to all views; determined to make peace and make peace work. You brought the authority of your office to the peace process. But more important, you brought the credibility of your skills and expertise.

And for those of us involved in the negotiations, before your involvement, we often found that mistrust and suspicion could be early and fatal enemies of progress. We had so many talks about talks, and meetings about meetings, that further, I think people, in particularly historians into the future, will be dizzy following them, much less understanding them.

But your involvement, aided by so many of your colleagues and under the man that you sent us, Senator Mitchell and his excellent chairmanship, parties divided by suspicion could find the necessary assurance to take meaningful steps forward. They came to believe and trust that what was banked with you was good and safe and secure. And because of Washington's engagement, we could pile up the agreed pieces until we had

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the makings of a deal.

And America's record as honest broker and plain speaker helped us all to force an historic compromise in the Good Friday agreement. That settlement should rightly be regarded as part of your legacy, President, as peacemaker, and we'll never forget it in this country. (Applause.)

The Good Friday agreement is the common ground on which both traditions can stand, for that is uniquely historic and uniquely valuable. More than that, it's the common ground for all Irish men and women, wherever they are, however near or distant their ancestry.

Mr. President, relations between our two countries have blossomed under your presidency. Ireland has changed profoundly. But I have confidence that Ireland and the United States will continue to develop the common bonds of friendship, family, of commerce and shared values of ancestry and heritage. And today, it is my honor to say a profound thank you for all that you have done to make hope and history rhyme as never before in silent.

President, I want to say personally, thank you for all of the time, all of the calls, all of the meetings. It never ceased to amaze me and all of my colleagues, and I think here I speak for everybody in this country, that you could try to involve yourself in the world's economic and business and cultural heritage and the issues of the day. But every time that we needed you, that you had time to make a call. You never seemed to be busy; you always seemed at that time to talk a true. (Laughter.)

But I know, President, when I read the paper the following day that the President was here, he was there, he was in India, he was in Pakistan, he was in Korea, he was wherever. He was moving through the world, dealing with the issues, meeting the world leaders, and still he had time to give to a country that has, North and South, about 5 million people. And that, we'll never forget.

And then I say to the First Lady, she has been here so many times; even, I think, President, more times than you. (Laughter.) And I want to say to her that we appreciate all of that. She's had a huge, huge effect on Irish people, men and women, young people, giving them encouragement of what to do at North and South. And if I can say, First Lady, that we really wish you well, and a friend we know that we'll have in the next Senate. Give them hell. (Applause.)

Mr. President, you and your family will always be welcome here. I'm delighted that Chelsea is here today, because back in September Chelsea promised me that she'd get the President and First Lady here. (Laughter and applause.) So if we can, on behalf of everybody here, President, and to the extended community all over Ireland, that I assure you would love to be here, we wish you Godspeed and happiness, as you all go forward now to a

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new phase of your important work. Go raibh mile maith agaibh (thank you). (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much. First, let me say to the Taoiseach, I am delighted to be back in Ireland, glad to be with him and Celia, glad that Hillary and Chelsea and I could all come together at once. We've all been here sometimes together, sometimes at different times. I thank you for your friendship and the work we have done. I thank your predecessors who are here and all the members of the Dail. I thank the ministers of the government and members of our Congress who are here, and the citizens of Ireland.

I have often wondered how I got involved in all this. (Laughter.) I have pondered all these deep explanations. For example, less than a month ago we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the White House. And you may know that America's most famous home was designed by an Irish architect named James Hoban, who defeated and anonymous design presented by Thomas Jefferson. (Laughter.) Maybe there's something in Hoban's spirit in the house that infected me.

In the Oval Office of the President on the mantle, there is a beautiful ivy plant which has been there for almost 40 years now. It was given to President Kennedy by the then-Irish Ambassador to the United States as an enduring sign of the affection between our two people. Maybe I got the political equivalent of poison ivy. (Laughter and applause.)

When I started come here, you know, I got a lot of help in rooting out my Irish ancestry. And the oldest known homestead of my mother's family, the Cassidys, that we've been able to find is a sort of mid 18th century farmhouse that's in Rosleigh and Fermanagh. But it's right on the -- literally right on the border. And in my family, all the Catholics and Protestants intermarried, so maybe I was somehow genetically prepared for the work I had to do. (Laughter.) Maybe it's because there are 45 million Irish Americans, and I was trying to make a few votes at home. (Laughter and applause.) The truth is, it just seemed to me the right thing to do.

America has suffered with Ireland through the Troubles, and even before. And we seemed paralyzed and prevented from playing a constructive role when I became President. I decided to change America's policy in the hope that, in the end, not only the Irish, but the British, too, would be better off. I think it is unquestionable, after eight years of effort, thanks to the people and the leaders of Northern Ireland, of the Republic and of Great Britain, that the people of Ireland and the people of Britain are better off for the progress that has been made toward peace. (Applause.)

So when the Taoiseach and our friends in Northern Ireland, the leaders of the parties, and the British Prime Minister asked me to come back to Ireland one more time, Hillary and Chelsea said, yes -- (laughter) -- and I said a

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grateful, yes.

I also want to say to all of you, with reference to the comments Bertie made about the Irish economy, I think every one of you that has played any role in the remarkable explosion of economic opportunity in Ireland, and the outreach and impact you're having beyond the borders of your nation, is also a part of the peace process, because you have shown the benefits of an open, competitive, peaceful society.

And nobody wants to go back to the Troubles. There are a few hills we still have to climb and we'll figure out how to do that, and I hope that our trip here is of some help toward that end. But as long as the people here, as free citizens of this great democracy, and as long as their allies and friends in the North increasingly follow the same path of creating opportunities that bring people together instead of arguments that drive people apart, then the political systems will follow the people.

So it is very important that all of you recognize that whatever you do, whether you're in politics or not, if you are contributing to the present vitality of this great nation, you are helping to make the peace hold. And for that, I am very grateful.

Let me just say in closing, when I started my involvement with the Irish peace process, to put it charitably, half the political experts in my country thought I had lost my mind. (Laughter.) In some of the all-night sessions I had making phone calls back and forth over here through the whole night, after about the third time I did that, to put it charitably, I thought I had lost my mind. (Laughter.) But I can tell you that every effort has been an honor. I believe America has in some tiny way repaid this nation and its people for the massive gifts of your people you have given to us over so many years, going back to our beginnings. I hope that is true.

For me, one of the things I will most cherish about the eight years the American people were good enough to let me serve as President is that I had a chance to put America on the side of peace and dignity and equality and opportunity for all the people in both communities in Northern Ireland, and for a reconciliation between the North and the Republic.

I don't know how I happen to have such good fortune, and even though it gave me a few more gray hairs, I'm still grateful that I did.

Good luck, stay with it, and God bless you.

END 2:26 P.M. (L)

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Cc: Sec. O'Ceallaí
Counsellors A-E
First Secs. A-I
Mr O'Hara

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dublin, Ireland)

For Immediate Release
December 12, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND PRIME MINISTER BERTIE AHERN AT PHOTO
OPPORTUNITY

Office of the Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Dublin, Ireland

12:15 P.M. (L)

Q Mr. President, why do you keep coming back to Ireland?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I got invited. And, you know, I've had a special interest in my tenure here and the peace process, and the Taoiseach and Prime Minister Blair have worked hard, as the parties in Northern Ireland have, and there's still a little work to be done. So I thought maybe if I came back, I could help a little, and I hope I can.

Q What's your message to the politicians, to the people of Northern Ireland and, indeed, to the paramilitaries?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first, I think the people, by and large, have embraced the peace, and are in some ways leading the process. And I don't think they want to go back. I think the leadership of the Irish government, the Taoiseach particularly, and the support of the British government have helped. I think the incredible success of the Irish economy has helped.

I think people can see the benefits of peace. So my message is, to those parties which aren't involved in the process, they ought to join and not wreck it; there's too much to be gained and too much has already been gained. And to those who are part of the process and have disagreements, I hope they'll try to work them out.

Q Mr. President, do you care to comment on the suggestion that after you leave the White House, you might be prepared to become a special peace

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envoy to Ireland?

THE PRESIDENT: (Laughter.) Well, I think the new president, whoever it may be, will want to have a new team in place, and I will support that. I want to support whatever decisions the new administration makes on foreign policy. And if I can be a resource, I will. If I can ever help the Irish, of course I will.

But I think in terms of my government's representation, that will be entirely up to the new president, and I will support whatever decisions are made on that.

Q Taoiseach, do you expect the President's visit, and especially the visit to Belfast tomorrow, to move the process forward? At the moment, it's caught up in the old difficulties over demilitarization -- and all the rest of it. Do you expect the President --

PRIME MINISTER AHERN: Well, first, I say it's a great honor for us in the Irish government and I think everybody in Ireland, that the President is here. He is more and more welcome than I think even his other two visits. We're so pleased, and I think everybody in this country is pleased, and all of you in the media know that from the reaction over the last number of weeks since it was confirmed.

Of course I think the President can help. To expect all of the problems to be resolved in one go, of course is impractical. But the very fact the President's coming has helped in the last few weeks for people to focus on still what are difficulties and to try to narrow down those difficulties and to look at the possibilities -- and they are only possibilities -- of what we can do.

I know that the talks we'll have now, the talks during the course of the day and tomorrow and the visit to Dundalk tonight will allow people to see all that we have achieved. And I think now, what we're doing is, we're dealing with some of the side issues that are still residual issues out of the Good Friday Agreement and we still have to deal with those. And we are dealing with them, and this visit will help that.

Q Taoiseach, will you miss Bill Clinton when he steps down?

PRIME MINISTER AHERN: I will, yes. No doubt about that.

Q Mr. President, when you were here, you called on the parties to take a risk for peace. Are we now at a situation where you will call on the parties again to take a further risk?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we have to keep going. I don't think there's -- I don't think reversal is an option. And as I said, the people are not there. It's obvious to me, from all the human contact, just the increasing

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cross-border contacts, that the people want this thing to go on. And I think the leaders just have to find a way through the last three or four difficult issues, and I think it can be done.

I'll do what I can to be helpful.

Q You really care about this, don't you?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I do. I always have. You know -- let me just say, the Americans -- you know, the American people, about 40 million of us have some Irish blood. And we also have had a unique relationship with Great Britain. It's been -- I mean, they burned the White House in 1814, but since then it's been pretty good. (Laughter.) You know, we fought two World Wars together, we stayed through the Cold War together, and the way it used to be was a source of immense pain to a lot of Americans.

Many of the American people who have wanted to be involved, had no constructive way to do that. And I hope and believe we've changed that over the last eight years. So, to me, it's just a question of you've just got to keep going and keep bringing more and more and more people in. Because the Irish have proved that you can do this.

I said something before when I was here, I'll say again -- I don't think you can possibly imagine the impact of a success in the Irish peace process on trouble spots throughout the world. That's another thing that's been very important to me as the President of the United States, because I have to be involved in Latin America and Asia and Africa, the Balkans.

And so I care a lot about this. But I also -- I want you to know how much people around the world look to your and draw courage from what you do here.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END 12:20 P.M. (L)

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Cc: Sec. O'Ceallaigh
Counsellors A-I
First Secs A-I
Mr. O'Hara

12 December 2000

Transcript: Clinton Speaks in Dundalk, Ireland to 60,000

(Dec. 12: Says Ireland can prove that "peace can prevail") (3610)

Speaking to a crowd estimated at more than 60,000, President Clinton told the people of Dundalk, Ireland, December 12 that he came to their country "to ask you to protect this [peace] process, to cherish it, and to build on it."

"Stand up for peace today, tomorrow and the rest of your lives," Clinton said to fervent applause.

The President was introduced by Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, who said that Dundalk, "as a meeting point between Dublin and Belfast, has played a central role in the origin and evolution of the peace process," and that the people "are already seeing the difference...that peace has made." Dundalk is six miles (10 kilometers) from the border with Northern Ireland.

Ahern praised Clinton's efforts to help secure the 1998 peace deal known as the Good Friday agreement, adding that the U.S. President had again come to the island "at a time when we need to recall how much has been achieved, and to be encouraged to persevere in the achievement of what remains to be done."

"There's no alternative on this island to the Good Friday agreement; no other way forward than the road of peace," Ahern said.

The two leaders both noted that with peace has come prosperity to Ireland: "You have turned deficit to surplus, slashed debt, seen employment grow four times the rate of Europe, and seen your economy grow faster than any other nation in the entire industrialized world," Clinton said.

Clinton quoted Irish poets William Butler Yeats and Seamus Heaney -- both Nobel laureates -- and told the crowd that Ireland has won "approximately 66 times the number of Nobel Prizes in literature you would be entitled to, based on your percentage of the world population."

The Irish have also had an impact far beyond their numbers in the areas of peacemaking and support for humanitarian causes, he said.

But "I can tell you nothing -- nothing -- will compare to the gift Ireland gives the world if you make peace here permanent. You can give people all over the world desperately needed hope and proof that peace can prevail; that the past is history, not destiny."

Following is a transcript of Clinton's and Ahern's remarks:

(begin transcript)

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THE WHITE HOUSE Office of the Press Secretary (Dundalk, Ireland) December 12, 2000

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT CLINTON AND PRIME MINISTER BERTIE AHERN TO THE PEOPLE OF DUNDALK, IRELAND

Courthouse Square, Dundalk County Louth, Ireland

8:52 P.M. (L)

PRIME MINISTER AHERN: Mr. President, First Lady and Senator-elect, Chelsea, Ministers and friends: (remarks continue in Gaelic). (Applause.)

Thank you very much, Joan. You're absolutely right when you say that development and growth are all about people and building strong communities. Your words are an inspiration on this day, which is the symbol of how confident people in Dundalk are about the future of this great community.

It's wonderful for me to be here in Dundalk with President Clinton. And all of the pictures, ladies and gentlemen, that will go across the United States of America will see the warm welcome which awaits visitors to Dundalk and to County Louth from all you good people. (Applause.)

President Clinton, Dundalk, as a meeting point between Dublin and Belfast, has played a central role in the origin and evolution of the peace process. More than most towns in this country, Dundalk, as a border town, has appreciated the need for a lasting and just peace. The people here are already seeing the difference, as Joan has said, that peace has made, and the special contribution which President Clinton, that you have made, to building peace and prosperity in our country.

Here in Dundalk, as Joan has said, the International Fund for Ireland has helped dozens of projects. Back in 1998, one such project, the Xerox Corporation, made a decision to locate here. And going forward at Dundalk Institute of Technology means that Dundalk now offers third-level opportunities for students to train here.

Mr. President, we're deeply grateful for all you and your administration have done to encourage trade and investment. And standing here this evening, I also want to remember, on the people's behalf, the many friends you introduced to us along the way: George Mitchell; Jim Lyons, who is with us this evening; and, of course, Ron Brown, the gifted Secretary of Commerce and your good friend, President, who visited Dundalk almost six years ago to this day and who died so tragically in Bosnia. We also remember Ron's colleagues, Chuck Meissner, and we remember them since early this evening.

Mr. President, when you took office, as Joan has said, in January of 1993, Northern Ireland was in the grip of bitter conflict. We had, at that stage, 25 years of tragedy, frustration and an entire generation had never known peace. There seemed little chance of breaking the vicious cycle of despair.

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All that has now changed. Peace is a living reality in which few could have thought possible. The people of Ireland treasure peace in every part of the island, and we totally reject that tiny minority who seek to destroy it. (Applause.) And this government will not swerve and do all within our power to prevent all attacks on the people's right to peace.

Because in the Good Friday agreement, we have an historic accommodation which brings together Unionists and Nationalists, North and South, as well as British and Irish, on the basis of the shared principle of equality and partnership.

And we now see, all of us, the prospect of radical change in human rights, justice and policing. And the success of the peace process is due to the courage, the vision and hard work of many people, and to the overwhelming desire of the Irish people for a better way.

But it would not have happened, and it would not have been possible, without you, Mr. President. You, Mr. President, moved our relationship to a totally new plane. You made clear that America was a friend to all who wanted peace and agreement. You showed everyone that you could be trusted not to promote a hidden agenda or yield to partisan pressures. Your patience, and can I say, good humor, has been an example to all of us. In the White House itself, you've offered us neutral ground, a listening ear, and wise advice. Your visits to this country have symbolized the many phases of the process.

When you were with us in the beginning of December of 1995, your words in Mackie's factory in Belfast, at the Guildhall in Derry, at the College Green in Dublin, captured the hope, the determination that we all felt. And two years ago, when the island was deeply shaken by the tragedy of Omagh, you and Hillary walked among the heartbroken people of that town, sharing their grief, and bringing them comfort in the wake of the senseless, appalling violence that they had endured.

And now, again, Mr. President, you've come at a time when we need to recall how much has been achieved, and to be encouraged to persevere in the achievement of what remains to be done. There is some way to go. The effective operation of the Good Friday institutions on a fully inclusive basis must be put beyond all doubt. There needs to be a police service in Northern Ireland which can attract the full support of both communities. And more progress needs to be made towards a normal, demilitarized society and weapons must be put totally and verifiably beyond use. (Applause.)

How to resolve any given issue is not always easy, or it's not always clear. But the one thing which we are certain, President, is that there's no alternative on this island to the Good Friday agreement; no other way forward than the road of peace. We will stay on course, no matter how long it takes.

No matter what your future holds, President, I hope, on behalf of everybody here in Dundalk and throughout County Louth and throughout the border region, I hope and believe you'll continue to offer us your support, your valuable advice. You will always be an honored and most welcome guest here. (Applause.)

Mr. President, on behalf of all of the people, and particularly tonight, of the people of Dundalk and all over County Louth, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for being with

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us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States of America, Bill Clinton. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. First let me thank the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, for his leadership and his friendship and his kind and generous words tonight.

Mr. O'Hanrahan, thank you so much for the gift and your words. Joan McGuinness -- it's not easy for someone who makes a living in private business to stand up and give a speech before a crowd this large. If you look all the way back there, there's a vast crowd. You can't see it in the dark, but all the way back here there are just as many people. (Applause.) So I think we ought to give Joan McGuinness another hand for the speech she gave here. (Applause.)

I thank the government ministers, the members of the Congress, and other Americans who are here. I'd like to thank the musicians who came out to play for us tonight, and those who still will. (Applause.) You know, I like music, and so I have to say it may be cold and dark, but I'm back in Ireland, so, in the words of U2, it's a beautiful day. (Applause.)

And I am particularly glad to be here in Dundalk, the ancient home of Cuchalainn. I want to acknowledge some natives of Dundalk who are among our group here -- the Taoiseach's spokesman, Joe Lennon; the White House correspondent for the Irish Times Joe Carroll; a member of our American embassy team in Dublin Eva Burkury, who has been taking late-night calls from us all week to make sure we do the right things in her home town.

Let me also say that for Hillary, Chelsea and me, it's great to be in the home town of the Corrs. (Applause.) Now, we had the privilege of being with them and hearing them sing in Washington just Sunday night. They did you proud. (Applause.) I understand their success has been great for your community, except that in this tight labor market, you haven't been able to replace them down at McManus's Pub. (Applause.)

In a few weeks, I'll have a little free time. (Laughter.) You know, I feel at home here. And so, even though I can't claim to have a granny buried in Castletown, I hope you won't call me a blow-in. (Applause.) In America, over 40 million of us claim Irish roots. And the number keeps going up every year. I'm not sure whether that's because so many millions are green with Irish ancestry or just green with envy of Ireland. (Applause.)

There are so many reasons to admire Ireland -- the beauty of the land, the people, the music, the dance, the movies, the golf -- (laughter) -- the literature. You know, according -- Americans in the audience will understand this -- according to the latest manual count -- (laughter) -- you have won approximately 66 times the number of Nobel Prizes in literature you would be entitled to, based on your percentage of the world population. (Applause.) In so many ways, you have had an impact far beyond your numbers -- especially in your worldwide reputation for compassion and taking on humanitarian causes.

And then there is your amazing Irish economy. Today, we're seeing your economy reaching out across the ocean to us in the United States, with Irish technology firms in

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Boston, New York and Atlanta.

And I want to note, because we're here in County Louth, that the man famous for the ideas behind this prosperity grew up just a short distance from here, in Drogheda -- or Drogheda. (Laughter.) Anybody here from Drogheda? (Applause.) I told them to put you in the front row. (Laughter.)

Listen to this: In a major report in the late 1950s, T.K. Whittaker wrote, "Sooner or later, protectionism will have to go, and the challenge of free trade accepted, if Ireland wishes to keep pace with the rest of Europe." Well, over the last six year, Ireland has outpaced the rest of Europe. (Applause.) Indeed, you have turned deficit to surplus, slashed debt, seen employment grow four times the rate of Europe, and seen your economy grow faster than any other nation in the entire industrialized world. (Applause.)

Earlier this year, as the Taoiseach said today, Ireland was selected by our distinguished Massachusetts Institute of Technology as the European location for its Media-lab research center. The director said he did this because -- I love this -- because of Ireland's anti-establishment attitude to innovation. (Laughter.) The Wall Street Journal says, Ireland enjoys one of the freest economies in the world, and one of the most responsive governments.

With the strong leadership of Prime Minister Ahern as the government, computer science graduates in Ireland have jumped fourfold in just the last four years. Now Microsoft, Intel, Nortel, IBM, Oracle, Lotus, Xerox and Heinz and so many others are in Ireland. And Ireland has now displaced the United States as the number one software exporting country in the entire world. (Applause.) But you enjoyed respect in the world long before this boom, because Ireland has been exporting compassion a lot longer than software.

Probably the saints in heaven don't spend too much time boasting of their achievements. But if they do, I suspect the saints can bare no more bragging from St. Patrick. (Applause.) For no nation has ever lived up more fully to the virtues of its patron saint than Ireland.

Some years ago, when your then President, Mary Robinson, paid a visit to America, she told of a kindness Ireland received and never forgot. During the Potato Famine, the Choctaw Indians in the United States -- who, themselves, were very poor and displaced from their own land -- collected from among themselves $147 and sent it to Ireland to help ease the suffering. One hundred and fifty years later, the President of Ireland remembered that kindness on the South Lawn of the White House, because it so closely mirrors your own compassion.

To know suffering and reach out to others in suffering is woven into the heart of Ireland. And in your rising prosperity, you have not forgotten what it is to be poor. So you continue to reach out to the dispossessed around the world. In your newfound peace you have not forgotten what it is to be at war, so you continue to stand guard for peace around the world. That is a powerful reason that I am very glad Ireland is now on the United Nations Security Council.

You might be interested to know -- and you may not -- that Ireland is so well thought of

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around that world that when the campaign was on for the Security Council members, you found help in surprising places. Your Ambassador to Australia, Dick O'Brien, visited 14 countries in the South Pacific, seeking their votes. In the tiny island nation of Tuvalu, he was met by a local journalist by the name of O'Brien. (Laughter.) He learned then that the Prime Minister of Tuvalu's mother's name was O'Brien. (Laughter.) Turns out, there was an Irish sailor in the 19th century shipwrecked on Tuvalu, named O'Brien. (Laughter and applause.)

He liked it there, stayed on, and now, a full quarter of the population are O'Briens. (Applause.) If the math is right, maybe there are more than 45 million Irish Americans. We are delighted to have you as our partner on the Security Council. But as we look to Ireland and to America, we remember that for all our efforts to heal the world, sometimes the toughest healing problems are right at home.

The story of the United States, I believe, is largely about three things: love of liberty, belief in progress, struggle for community. The last has given us the most trouble, and troubles us still. Matters aren't so different for Ireland. For hundreds of years, and intensely for the last 30, you confronted the challenge of religious difference. You in Dundalk know what it's like to face fear and isolation -- with unemployment rising, the economy stalling and hope failing.

A young businessman once said, now, money isn't everything, but it's up there with oxygen. We know violence suffocates opportunity. We know in the end, there can be no full justice without jobs. Fortunately, the Irish had the courage to grasp the chance for peace and the new beginning.

Those who argued for peace promised a better life. But then, there was no proof. Today, you are the proof of the fruits and wisdom of peace. (Applause.) The border between Ireland and Northern Ireland is now more a bridge than a barrier. Newry, just across that border, is your sister city and economic partner.

Some fear the change won't last; but some of the smartest business people in the world are already betting that it will last. You have a cluster of information technology companies and broadband networks. Here in this community, Xerox is making the second-largest American investment in all of Ireland, and your Institute of Technology is building classes to meet the growing needs of technology-based employers.

I appreciated Prime Minster Ahern mentioning the late Secretary Ron Brown and his trip here in 1994. When he came back, he encouraged us to continue investing in Dundalk through the International Fund for Ireland. I'm very glad we did. I know you haven't solved every problem, but this is now a boomtown. It's a new day in Dundalk, and a new day in Ireland. (Applause.)

My friends, I come here near the end of my eight years of service as President of the United States to ask you to protect this progress, to cherish it, and to build on it. As Pope John Paul said in Drogheda more than 20 years ago, violence only delays the day of justice. The Bible says, there are many parts, but one body. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. It takes some people a long, long time to fully grasp that. But life teaches us over

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and over and over again that in the end, you cannot win by making your neighbor lose.

Unionists and Nationalists, native-born Irish and immigrants, to all of you, I say again, you cannot win by making your neighbor lose. Two years ago, after the horrid bombing in Omagh, you good people filled these streets. Young people came, not wanting to lose their dreams. Older people came because they wanted a chance to live in peace before they rest in peace. You stared violence in the face and said, no more. You stood up for peace then, and I ask you, stand up for peace today, tomorrow and the rest of your lives. (Applause.)

Oh yes, there are still a few hills to climb on the road ahead; the Taoiseach mentioned them. But the people of Ireland have two advantages now. You now know the value of peace; and in the hard moments, you can also still draw strength from the inspiration of your poets. Seamus Heaney once said of William Butler Yeats, "His intent was to clear a space in the mind and in the world for the miraculous." Seamus was born the year Yeats died, and has spent his own life clearing that space, following this instruction to himself: "Walk on air against your better judgment."

As extraordinary as Ireland's efforts are in exporting peace and peacekeepers to troubled areas all around the world, I can tell you nothing -- nothing -- will compare to the gift Ireland gives the world if you make peace here permanent. You can give people all over the world desperately needed hope and proof that peace can prevail; that the past is history, not destiny. That is what I came to ask you to redouble your efforts to do. (Applause.) Every St. Patrick's Day, the Taoiseach comes to the United States and we have a ceremony in the White House. We sing Irish songs, tell Irish stories.-- everything we say is strictly true, of course. (Laughter.) In my very first St. Patrick's Day occasion as President, I said I would be a friend of Ireland not just on St. Patrick's Day, but every day. (Applause.) I have tried to be as good as my word. And every effort has been an honor and a gift. Your kindness to me has brought life to Yeats' wonderful lines, "think where a man's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was, I had such friends." And so, my friends, as I prepare to leave my office, a large part of my heart will always be in Ireland, for all the days of my life. And let me say, I will pray: May the road of peace rise up to meet you. May the wind of prosperity be always at your back. And may the God of St. Patrick hold you in the hollow of his hand. Thank you, and God bless you.

(end transcript)

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