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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row:</th>
<th>Section:</th>
<th>Shelf:</th>
<th>Position:</th>
<th>Stack:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests: This week, the United Nations is fifty years old. The dreams of its founders have only been partly realized. But its promise endures. The United Nations is the product of faith and knowledge: faith that people from different backgrounds can work together for tolerance and peace; knowledge that this faith will forever be challenged by the forces of intolerance and aggression. Now, we must summon that faith -- and that knowledge -- to meet the challenges of a new era.

The United Nations’ value can be seen the world over: in the nourished bodies of once-starving children... in the full lives of those immunized against disease... in the eyes of students exposed to human knowledge... in the environment sustained... in refugees saved... in peace kept.

In the United States, some people ask -- why bother with the UN? America is strong. We can go it alone. Yes, if America’s vital interests are at stake, we will act, if we have to, alone. But our values and our interests are also served by working with the UN. The UN helps the peacemakers, the care providers, the defenders of freedom and human rights, the architects of economic prosperity and the protectors of our planet spread the risk, share the burden, and increase the impact of our efforts.
Last year, I pledged that the United States would continue to contribute substantially to the UN’s finances. Historically the United States has been -- and today it remains -- the largest single contributor to the United Nations. I am determined that we fully meet our obligations. And I will work closely with Congress on a plan to free up the funding America owes the United Nations.

But all who contribute to the UN’s work and care about its future must be committed to reform... to ending bureaucratic inefficiency and outdated priorities. The UN must be able to show that the money it receives supports services that save or enrich peoples’ lives -- not unneeded overhead.

Reform requires breaking up bureaucratic fiefdoms... eliminating obsolete agencies... making programs do more with less. The UN must reform to remain relevant... and to play a still stronger role in the march of peace, freedom and prosperity sweeping the globe:

In the Middle East and Northern Ireland, people are turning the page on the past and embracing a future of peace. In South Africa and Haiti, long nights of fear have given way to new days of freedom. In Europe, the goal of an integrated, peaceful and democratic continent is within our grasp.

And in the Balkans, NATO’s resolve and the international community’s determination have made the prospects for peace brighter than they have been in four years. Let me salute the UN’s efforts on behalf of the people of Bosnia. The nations that took part in UNPROFOR kept the toll of this terrible war -- in lives lost... in wounds left unhealed... in children left unfed -- from being far graver still.
Next week, the parties to the war in Bosnia will meet in Dayton, Ohio, under the auspices of the United States and our Contact Group partners -- the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Russia -- to intensify the search for peace. Many fundamental differences remain. But I urge the parties to seize this chance for a settlement. If they achieve peace, the United States will be there with our friends and allies to help secure it.

All over the world people yearn to live in peace... to build a better life than their parents had -- and to pass on an even better one to their children. Today, that dream is becoming a reality for more people than ever before.

But our time is not free of peril. As the Cold War gives way to the global village, too many people remain vulnerable to poverty, disease and underdevelopment. And all of us are exposed to the organized forces of intolerance and destruction: ethnic and religious hatred... the reckless aggression of rogue states... terrorism... organized crime... drug trafficking... and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These forces would spread darkness over light... disintegration over integration... chaos over community. They are the enemies of our time and we must defeat them -- together.

Today, information, products and money flash across our planet at the stroke of a computer key. They bring extraordinary opportunities to build a safer and more prosperous future... to protect our planet... to better share humanity's genius for progress.
But in our global village, trouble on the far end of town soon becomes a plague on everyone’s house. We can’t free our own neighborhoods from drug-related crime without the help of countries where drugs are produced or transported. We can’t track down foreign terrorists without assistance from foreign governments. We can’t prosper or preserve our own environment unless sustainable development is a reality for all nations. And our vigilance alone can’t keep nuclear materials stored half a world away from falling into the wrong hands.

Nowhere is cooperation more vital than in fighting the increasingly interconnected groups that traffic in terror, organized crime, drug smuggling and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. No one is immune:

Not the people of Japan -- where terrorists unleashed nerve gas in the subway and poisoned thousands of commuters.

Not the people of Latin America or Southeast Asia -- where drug traffickers wielding imported weapons have murdered judges, journalists, police officers and innocent passers-by.

Not the people of Israel and France -- where hatemongers have blown up buses and trains full of children with suitcase bombs made from smuggled explosives.

Not the people of the former Soviet Union and Central Europe -- where organized criminals seek to weaken new democracies and prey on decent, hard working men and women.
And not the people of the United States -- where homegrown terrorists blew up a federal building in the heart of America... and where foreign terrorists tried to topple the World Trade Center and plotted to destroy the very hall we are gathered in today.

These forces jeopardize the powerful global trend toward peace and freedom. They undermine fragile new democracies. They sap the strength from developing countries. They threaten our efforts to build a safer, more prosperous world for our children. Today, I call upon all nations to join in the fight against them. And I pledge to you that the United States will remain an vigorous leader in this fight. Our common efforts are yielding results:

To reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction, the United States is working with Russia to cut our nuclear arsenals by two-thirds from their Cold War height. We supported Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus in their farsighted decision to remove the nuclear weapons left on their land when the Soviet Union dissolved. We are working with the states of the former Soviet Union to safeguard nuclear materials and to convert them to peaceful use. We persuaded North Korea to freeze its nuclear program under international monitoring. We helped achieve the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. These actions have made it less likely that weapons of mass destruction will be used -- or will wind up in the wrong hands.

To stem the flow of narcotics and stop the spread of organized crime, we are cooperating with many of the governments in this room -- sharing information, providing military support, initiating anti-corruption programs. And we’re getting results: with Colombian authorities, we’ve cracked
down on the cartels that control the world cocaine market. Two years ago, the cartels' leaders lived as billionaires beyond the law -- now, many are living as prisoners behind bars.

To take on terrorists, we are maintaining strong sanctions against states that sponsor terrorism and defy the rule of law -- such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and Sudan. We have increased funding, manpower and training for our law enforcement agencies and we are cooperating with other nations more closely than ever before.

Nothing we do will make us invulnerable. But we can all become less vulnerable if we constantly intensify our efforts to defeat the forces of destruction.

That is why, today, I am announcing new initiatives to fight international organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. These initiatives have two parts. First, steps the United States will take -- and which we hope others will join. Second, an international Declaration that sets out a plan of action to promote the safety of the world's citizens.

First, the steps America will take.

- Yesterday, I directed our government to identify and put on notice nations that tolerate money laundering. Criminal enterprises are moving vast sums of ill gotten gains through the international financial system with impunity. We must not allow them to wash the blood off profits from the sale of drugs, from terror or organized crime. Nations should bring their
banks and financial systems into conformity with international anti-money laundering standards. We will work with them to help them do so. If they fail to comply, we will consider appropriate sanctions.

- I also directed our government to identify the front companies and freeze the assets of the largest drug ring in the world: the Cali Cartel. We want to cut off its economic lifelines and stop our own people from dealing unknowingly with companies financed by blood money. Cali and the other major cartels are a grave threat to everyone's security. We must stop them.

- Finally, I instructed our Justice Department to prepare legislation to provide other government agencies with the tools they need to better respond to international organized crime.

To succeed, we know that we must work with others. Today, to strengthen all our citizens' basic safety, I invite every country to join in negotiating and endorsing a Declaration on International Crime and Citizens' Safety.

That Declaration should include:

- A "No Sanctuary" Pledge. Organized criminals, terrorists, drug traffickers and smugglers should have nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. They won't if we convince more nations to track down international fugitives, deny them sanctuary, seize their assets and extradite them or bring them to justice.
• A Counter-Terrorism Pact: We will urge more states to ratify existing anti-terrorism treaties and to work with us to shut down the gray markets that outfit terrorists and criminals with firearms and false documents.

• An Anti-Narcotics Offensive: The international drug trade poisons our people. It breeds violence. It tears at the moral fabric of our societies. We must step up the investigation and prosecution of drug cartels and the destruction of drug crops -- even as we work to decrease the demand for drugs in consumer nations like the United States.

• An "Effective Police Forces" Partnership: International criminal organizations target nations whose law enforcement agencies lack the resources and experience to stop them. To help police in the new democracies of Central Europe, the United States and Hungary established an International Law Enforcement Academy in Budapest. Now, we should consider creating a network of centers around the world to teach the latest crime fighting techniques and share technology.

• A "Illegal Arms and Deadly Materials" Control Effort: A package the size of a child's lunch bag held the poison gas used to terrorize Tokyo. A lump of plutonium no bigger than a soda can is enough to make an atomic bomb. Building on efforts already underway with the states of the former Soviet Union and with our G-7 partners, we will seek to better account for, store and safeguard materials with mass destructive power. We should strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention... pass the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty... and eliminate the scourge of landmines. We will press other countries -- and our own Congress -- to ratify...
the Chemical Weapons Convention. And we will intensify our efforts to combat the global illegal arms network that fuels terrorism, equips drugs cartels and prolongs deadly conflicts.

This is a full and challenging agenda. But we must complete it. Our first responsibility as heads of state is to protect and enhance the safety of our citizens. To do that, we must confront the new challenges of our time -- and we must do it together.

Fifty years ago, as the conference that gave birth to the United Nations got underway in San Francisco, a young American war hero recorded his impressions for a newspaper. “The average G.I. in the street... doesn’t seem to have a very clear-cut conception of what this meeting is about,” young John F. Kennedy wrote. “But one bemedaled marine sergeant gave the general reaction when he said: ‘I don’t know much about what’s going on -- but if they just fix it so that we don’t have to fight any more -- they can count me in.’”

The United Nations has not ended war. But it has made war less likely and helped many nations turn from conflict to cooperation. The United Nations has not stopped human suffering. But it has healed the wounds and lengthened the lives of millions. The United Nations has not banished repression or poverty from this earth. But it has advanced the cause of freedom and prosperity on every continent. The United Nations has not been all that we wished it would be. But it has been a force for good and a bulwark against evil. In the twilight of our century -- marked by so much progress and too much bloodshed... witness to humanity’s capacity for the best and its weakness for the worst -- we need the United Nations. And so, for another fifty years and beyond, you can count the United States in.