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speeches*

UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

799 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

PRESS RELEASE

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Press Release USUN 103-(88)
October 25, 1988

REMARKS BY

MRS. NANCY REAGAN

FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES

TO THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AT ITS FORTY-THIRD SESSION

OCTOBER 25, 1988

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be here as a member of the United States Delegation to speak before the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on a matter of urgent importance to all of us. The Third Committee is now considering agenda items on youth, families, and crime prevention. I want to talk to you about the illegal use of drugs and the direct impact it is having on families, and especially children.

I come before the United Nations today as a wife and a mother, and one who has had a unique opportunity to see the impact of the drug problem, not only in the United States, but in many areas of the world. I have worked on this problem with many distinguished people represented on this Committee. I have had the opportunity to travel to many parts of the world and have seen the problem first hand.

I have also been privileged to work on two occasions with Mrs. Perez de Cuellar. In 1985, she joined me and 29 other First Ladies from around the world when we gathered at the United Nations to discuss the drug issue. Our message was this: As mothers we are concerned, as First Ladies we are committed, and as citizens of the world we pledge to do all that is possible to stop this scourge.

Last year, Mrs. Perez de Cuellar and I prepared a videotaped message for the first international conference on drug abuse and illicit trafficking. At that Conference, held at the initiative of the Secretary-General, 138 countries joined together in declaring that stopping drug abuse and illicit trafficking is a universal priority.

I am deeply heartened that the United Nations has nearly completed deliberations on a new anti-drug trafficking convention that will affirm what every mother, every parent knows: That drug traffickers are international criminals who deserve no rest or sanctuary.

The international efforts against drugs are of vital importance and must be expanded. And I would add that even though I have some harsh things to say about illegal drug consumption in the United States, I also intend to speak very plainly about the countries that supply this demand.

However, let me state at the outset that it is the United States alone which bears responsibility for its own drug problem. I am not blaming other nations for America's drug problem. While most of the illegal drugs are imported, the drug users are home-grown. To find

America's drug problem, we have had to look no further than our own communities, our neighbors, our sons and daughters. To get serious about stopping illegal drugs, there can be no substitute for focusing on the user and that means confronting all those citizens who use drugs.

Now, frankly, it is far easier for the United States to focus on coca fields grown by 300,000 campesinos in Peru, than to shut down the dealer who can be found on the street corners of our cities.

It is often easier to make strong speeches about foreign drug lords or drug smugglers, than to arrest a pair of Wall Street investment bankers buying cocaine on their lunch break.

Yes, we need to break the back of the drug cartels, we need to eradicate coca fields, and interdict narcotics in transit. But we will not get anywhere if we place a greater burden of action on foreign governments than on America's own mayors, judges, and legislators. You see, the cocaine cartel does not begin in Medellin. It begins in the streets of New York, Miami, Los Angeles and every American city where crack is bought and sold. It is the drug user who makes the cartel possible, who provides the market, who funds the enterprise. And the drug user is an accomplice to every criminal act, every murder, every terrorist attack carried out by the narcotics syndicates.

If we lack the will to fully mobilize the forces of law in our own country to arrest and punish drug users; if we cannot stem the American demand for drugs, then there will be little hope of preventing foreign drug producers from fulfilling that demand. But if we can control the demand and curtail the drug consumption in our own country, then our other efforts can succeed and the international narcotics rings can and will be defeated.

Now let me state clearly--notwithstanding a few voices on the fringes--I do not believe the American people will ever allow the legalization of drugs in our country. The consensus against drugs in the United States has never been stronger.

We clearly understand that drugs must remain illegal at every step in the chain. If it is illegal to grow coca in Peru, to process it into cocaine in Colombia, to ship it through the Caribbean, then it must be illegal to buy or use cocaine in the United States and that is the way it must and will remain.

I have seen the terrible harm that drugs inflict on families. I could tell you of lives ruined, anguished parents, children dying at a young age. And as tragic as drugs are for the individual family, I would tell this distinguished committee that drugs are equally destructive of the family of nations.

The same drugs that threaten the self-determination of the user, also threaten democratic government and national sovereignty. Drug traffickers, with their love of violence, their disregard for law or

borders, their caches of guns and ill-gotten money, and their cynical partnership with terrorists have become a threat to world peace.

In many countries, there is a heroic struggle being waged to preserve a free and independent nation. Colombia, one of the oldest democracies in the Hemisphere, is a good example. The drug cartels assassinated the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice. They supported the takeover of the Palace of Justice and the massacre of most of Colombia's Supreme Court. In all, hundreds have been killed in a war in which drug lords seek to win for themselves the power of the state, to turn a proud nation into a private criminal enterprise.

Those countries which think that they can dabble in the drug trade, that they can make easy money by cultivating coca plants, or opium, or marijuana, yet somehow remain immune to their harmful influence, are making the same deadly mistake of the person who thinks he or she can dabble in illegal drugs without being destroyed. No nation is immune.

Though the industrialized countries are the basis of the world drug market, it doesn't take long before the people in drug producing countries themselves become addicted to heroin or cocaine.

In truth, a whole nation can become poisoned by drugs and addicted to the narcotics trade. Drug money undermines and corrupts political institutions. A new order based on violence emerges. The Constitution becomes a scrap of paper, civil government becomes a front for drug-running, the armed forces become little more than hired killers in the employ of drug gangsters. Surely, this is a fate that no civilized country wishes to undergo.

In fact, at the White House, at the United Nations, and elsewhere, I have met with representatives of dozens of countries and visited eight nations, as well as the Vatican, to discuss the drug problem, and I have found that there is a powerful, unified international resistance to illegal drugs that is developing. This is a different type of international conspiracy, a conspiracy of compassion.

The countries of the world face this problem together. And, ultimately, we must find the solution together. I have no doubt that the war against illegal drugs will be won. It is a global battle, and we will win it one child at a time.

We need to educate a generation to "just say no" to drugs. And in the meantime, we must continue our fight against the production, processing, financing, importation, sale and use of illegal drugs. We must develop greater levels of international cooperation, and keep the pressure on the governments who have been unable to curb their drug production and trafficking.

In my own country, there are signs of improvement, but drug use still remains too high. This illegal use is our own responsibility and we are working to stop it.

My chief concern is for the children--the children of America and of the world--that they will say "no" to drugs, that they will choose life, and learn to live in the world that God made, not in the nightmare world of drugs. The children need our help; and as you carry out your important responsibilities, what better guide can there be than what is best for our children will also be best for our nations.

In your deliberations, I urge you not to be diplomatic for the sake of diplomacy, but to speak the truth about the effects of drugs on our peoples and our governments. I urge you to be tough and firm in the recommendations you make.

Thank you all very much for the privilege of speaking before you today.

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*OK
Speech*

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borders, their caches of guns and ill-gotten money, and their cynical partnership with terrorists have become a threat to world peace.

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In truth, a whole nation can become poisoned by drugs and addicted to the narcotics trade. Drug money undermines and corrupts political institutions. A new order based on violence emerges. The Constitution becomes a scrap of paper, civil government becomes a front for drug-running, the armed forces become little more than hired killers in the employ of drug gangsters. Surely, this is a fate that no civilized country wishes to undergo.

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We need to educate a generation to "just say no" to drugs. And in the meantime, we must continue our fight against the production, processing, financing, importation, sale and use of illegal drugs. We must develop greater levels of international cooperation, and keep the pressure on the governments who have been unable to curb their drug production and trafficking.

In my own country, there are signs of improvement, but drug use still remains too high. This illegal use is our own responsibility and we are working to stop it.

My chief concern is for the children--the children of America and of the world--that they will say "no" to drugs, that they will choose life, and learn to live in the world that God made, not in the nightmare world of drugs. The children need our help; and as you carry out your important responsibilities, what better guide can there be than what is best for our children will also be best for our nations.

In your deliberations, I urge you not to be diplomatic for the sake of diplomacy, but to speak the truth about the effects of drugs on our peoples and our governments. I urge you to be tough and firm in the recommendations you make.

Thank you all very much for the privilege of speaking before you today.

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REMARKS FOR THE ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1988

-- THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN, I'M PLEASED TO BE HERE AS A MEMBER OF THE U.S. DELEGATION TO SPEAK BEFORE THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON A MATTER OF URGENT IMPORTANCE TO ALL OF US. THE THIRD COMMITTEE IS NOW CONSIDERING AGENDA ITEMS ON YOUTH, FAMILIES, AND CRIME PREVENTION. I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE ILLEGAL USE OF DRUGS AND THE DIRECT IMPACT IT'S HAVING ON FAMILIES, AND ESPECIALLY CHILDREN.

-- I COME BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS TODAY AS A WIFE AND A

2

MOTHER, AND ONE WHO HAS HAD A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE IMPACT OF THE DRUG PROBLEM, NOT ONLY IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT IN MANY AREAS OF THE WORLD. I'VE WORKED ON THIS PROBLEM WITH MANY DISTINGUISHED PEOPLE REPRESENTED ON THIS COMMITTEE. I'VE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL TO MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD AND HAVE SEEN THE PROBLEM FIRST HAND.

-- I'VE ALSO BEEN PRIVILEGED TO WORK ON TWO OCCASIONS WITH MRS. PEREZ DE CUELLAR. IN 1985, SHE JOINED ME AND 29 OTHER FIRST

LADIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD WHEN WE GATHERED AT THE UNITED NATIONS TO DISCUSS THE DRUG ISSUE. OUR MESSAGE WAS THIS: AS MOTHERS WE ARE CONCERNED, AS FIRST LADIES WE ARE COMMITTED, AND AS CITIZENS OF THE WORLD WE PLEDGE TO DO ALL THAT IS POSSIBLE TO STOP THIS SCOURGE.

-- LAST YEAR, MRS. PEREZ DE CUELLAR AND I PREPARED A VIDEO-TAPED MESSAGE FOR THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING. AT THAT CONFERENCE, HELD AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, 138 COUNTRIES JOINED TOGETHER IN DECLARING

4

THAT STOPPING DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING IS A UNIVERSAL PRIORITY.

-- I'M DEEPLY HEARTENED THAT THE UNITED NATIONS IS NEARLY COMPLETED ON A NEW ANTI-DRUG TRAFFICKING CONVENTION THAT WILL AFFIRM WHAT EVERY MOTHER, EVERY PARENT KNOWS: THAT DRUG TRAFFICKERS ARE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINALS WHO DESERVE NO REST OR SANCTUARY.

-- THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS AGAINST DRUGS ARE OF VITAL

IMPORTANCE AND MUST BE EXPANDED. AND I WOULD ADD THAT EVEN THOUGH I HAVE SOME HARSH THINGS TO SAY ABOUT ILLEGAL DRUG CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED STATES, I ALSO INTEND TO SPEAK VERY PLAINLY ABOUT THE COUNTRIES THAT SUPPLY THIS DEMAND.

-- HOWEVER, LET ME STATE AT THE OUTSET THAT IT IS THE UNITED STATES ALONE WHICH BEARS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS OWN DRUG PROBLEM. I'M NOT BLAMING OTHER NATIONS FOR AMERICA'S DRUG PROBLEM. WHILE MOST OF THE ILLEGAL DRUGS ARE IMPORTED, THE DRUG USERS ARE

HOME-GROWN. TO FIND AMERICA'S DRUG PROBLEM, WE HAVE HAD TO LOOK NO FURTHER THAN OUR OWN COMMUNITIES, OUR NEIGHBORS, OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS. TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT STOPPING ILLEGAL DRUGS, THERE CAN BE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR FOCUSING ON THE USER AND THAT MEANS CONFRONTING ALL THOSE CITIZENS WHO USE DRUGS.

-- NOW, FRANKLY, IT IS FAR EASIER FOR THE UNITED STATES TO FOCUS ON 300,000 CAMPESINOS (KAM-PAH-SEE-NOHZ) IN PERU, THAN TO SHUT DOWN THE DEALER WHO CAN BE FOUND ON THE STREET CORNERS OF

OUR CITIES.

-- IT'S OFTEN EASIER TO MAKE STRONG SPEECHES ABOUT FOREIGN DRUG LORDS OR DRUG SMUGGLERS, THAN TO ARREST A PAIR OF WALL STREET INVESTMENT BANKERS BUYING COCAINE ON THEIR LUNCH BREAK.

-- YES, WE NEED TO BREAK THE BACK OF THE DRUG CARTELS, WE NEED TO ERADICATE COCA FIELDS, AND INTERDICT NARCOTICS IN TRANSIT. BUT WE WILL NOT GET ANYWHERE IF WE PLACE A GREATER BURDEN OF ACTION ON FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS THAN ON AMERICA'S OWN MAYORS, JUDGES,

8

AND LEGISLATORS. YOU SEE, THE COCAINE CARTEL DOESN'T BEGIN IN MEDELLIN (MEH-THE-YEN). IT BEGINS IN THE STREETS OF NEW YORK, MIAMI, LOS ANGELES AND EVERY AMERICAN CITY WHERE CRACK IS BOUGHT AND SOLD. IT'S THE DRUG USER WHO MAKES THE CARTEL POSSIBLE, WHO PROVIDES THE MARKET, WHO FUNDS THE ENTERPRISE. AND THE DRUG USER IS AN ACCOMPLICE TO EVERY CRIMINAL ACT, EVERY MURDER, EVERY TERRORIST ATTACK CARRIED OUT BY THE NARCOTICS SYNDICATES.

-- IF WE LACK THE WILL TO FULLY MOBILIZE THE FORCES OF LAW

IN OUR OWN COUNTRY TO ARREST AND PUNISH DRUG USERS; IF WE CANNOT
STEM THE AMERICAN DEMAND FOR DRUGS, THEN THERE WILL BE LITTLE HOPE
OF PREVENTING FOREIGN DRUG PRODUCERS FROM FULFILLING THAT DEMAND.
BUT IF WE CAN CONTROL THE DEMAND AND CURTAIL THE DRUG CONSUMPTION
IN OUR OWN COUNTRY, THEN OUR OTHER EFFORTS CAN SUCCEED AND THE
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS RINGS CAN AND WILL BE DEFEATED.

-- NOW LET ME STATE CLEARLY -- NOT WITHSTANDING A FEW VOICES
ON THE FRINGES -- I DON'T BELIEVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WILL EVER

10

ALLOW THE LEGALIZATION OF DRUGS IN OUR COUNTRY. THE CONSENSUS
AGAINST DRUGS IN THE UNITED STATES HAS NEVER BEEN STRONGER.

-- WE CLEARLY UNDERSTAND THAT DRUGS MUST REMAIN ILLEGAL AT
EVERY STEP IN THE CHAIN. IF IT'S ILLEGAL TO GROW COCA IN PERU,
TO PROCESS IT INTO COCAINE IN COLOMBIA, TO SHIP IT THROUGH THE
CARIBBEAN, THEN IT MUST BE ILLEGAL TO BUY OR USE COCAINE IN THE
UNITED STATES AND THAT IS THE WAY IT MUST AND WILL REMAIN.

-- I'VE SEEN THE TERRIBLE HARM THAT DRUGS INFLICT ON

FAMILIES. I COULD TELL YOU OF LIVES RUINED, ANGUISHED PARENTS, CHILDREN DYING AT A YOUNG AGE. AND AS TRAGIC AS DRUGS ARE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL FAMILY, I WOULD TELL THIS DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE THAT DRUGS ARE EQUALLY DESTRUCTIVE OF THE FAMILY OF NATIONS.

-- THE SAME DRUGS THAT THREATEN THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE USER, ALSO THREATEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. DRUG TRAFFICKERS, WITH THEIR LOVE OF VIOLENCE, THEIR DISREGARD FOR LAW OR BORDERS, THEIR CACHES OF GUNS AND ILL-GOTTEN

MONEY, AND THEIR CYNICAL PARTNERSHIP WITH TERRORISTS HAVE BECOME A THREAT TO WORLD PEACE.

-- IN MANY COUNTRIES, THERE'S A HEROIC STRUGGLE BEING WAGED TO PRESERVE A FREE AND INDEPENDENT NATION. COLOMBIA, ONE OF THE OLDEST DEMOCRACIES IN THE HEMISPHERE, IS A GOOD EXAMPLE. THE DRUG CARTELS ASSASSINATED THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE. THEY SUPPORTED THE TAKEOVER OF THE PALACE OF JUSTICE AND THE MASSACRE OF MOST OF

COLOMBIA'S SUPREME COURT. IN ALL, HUNDREDS HAVE BEEN KILLED IN A WAR IN WHICH DRUG LORDS SEEK TO WIN FOR THEMSELVES THE POWER OF THE STATE, TO TURN A PROUD NATION INTO A PRIVATE CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE.

-- THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH THINK THAT THEY CAN DABBLE IN THE DRUG TRADE, THAT THEY CAN MAKE EASY MONEY BY CULTIVATING COCA PLANTS, OR OPIUM, OR MARIJUANA, YET SOMEHOW REMAIN IMMUNE TO THEIR HARMFUL INFLUENCE, ARE MAKING THE SAME DEADLY MISTAKE OF THE

PERSON WHO THINKS HE OR SHE CAN DABBLE IN ILLEGAL DRUGS WITHOUT BEING DESTROYED. NO NATION IS IMMUNE.

-- THOUGH THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES ARE THE BASIS OF THE WORLD DRUG MARKET, IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE THE PEOPLE IN DRUG PRODUCING COUNTRIES THEMSELVES BECOME ADDICTED TO HEROIN OR COCAINE.

-- IN TRUTH, A WHOLE NATION CAN BECOME POISONED BY DRUGS AND ADDICTED TO THE NARCOTICS TRADE. DRUG MONEY UNDERMINES AND

CORRUPTS POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS. A NEW ORDER BASED ON VIOLENCE EMERGES. THE CONSTITUTION BECOMES A SCRAP OF PAPER, CIVIL GOVERNMENT BECOMES A FRONT FOR DRUG-RUNNING, THE ARMED FORCES BECOME LITTLE MORE THAN HIRED KILLERS IN THE EMPLOY OF DRUG GANGSTERS. SURELY, THIS IS A FATE THAT NO CIVILIZED COUNTRY WISHES TO UNDERGO.

-- AND, IN FACT, AT THE WHITE HOUSE, AT THE UNITED NATIONS, AND ELSEWHERE, I'VE MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF DOZENS OF

16

COUNTRIES AND VISITED 8 NATIONS, AS WELL AS THE VATICAN, TO DISCUSS THE DRUG PROBLEM, AND I'VE FOUND THAT THERE IS A POWERFUL, UNIFIED INTERNATIONAL RESISTANCE TO ILLEGAL DRUGS THAT IS DEVELOPING. THIS IS A DIFFERENT TYPE OF INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY, A CONSPIRACY OF COMPASSION.

-- THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD FACE THIS PROBLEM TOGETHER. AND, ULTIMATELY, WE MUST FIND THE SOLUTION TOGETHER. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE WAR AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS WILL BE WON. IT'S A GLOBAL

BATTLE, AND WE WILL WIN IT ONE CHILD AT A TIME.

-- WE NEED TO EDUCATE A GENERATION TO JUST SAY NO TO DRUGS. AND IN THE MEANTIME, WE MUST CONTINUE OUR FIGHT AGAINST THE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, FINANCING, IMPORTATION, SALE AND USE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS. WE MUST DEVELOP GREATER LEVELS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, AND KEEP THE PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENTS WHO HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CURB THEIR DRUG PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING.

-- IN MY OWN COUNTRY, THERE ARE SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT, BUT DRUG USE STILL REMAINS TOO HIGH. THIS ILLEGAL USE IS OUR OWN RESPONSIBILITY AND WE ARE WORKING TO STOP IT.

-- MY CHIEF CONCERN IS FOR THE CHILDREN -- THE CHILDREN OF AMERICA AND OF THE WORLD -- THAT THEY WILL SAY NO TO DRUGS, THAT THEY WILL CHOOSE LIFE, AND LEARN TO LIVE IN THE WORLD THAT GOD MADE, NOT IN THE NIGHTMARE WORLD OF DRUGS. THE CHILDREN NEED OUR HELP; AND AS YOU CARRY OUT YOUR IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES, WHAT

BETTER GUIDE CAN THERE BE THAN THAT WHAT IS BEST FOR OUR CHILDREN
WILL ALSO BE BEST FOR OUR NATIONS.

-- IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS, I URGE YOU NOT TO BE DIPLOMATIC
FOR THE SAKE OF DIPLOMACY, BUT TO SPEAK THE TRUTH ABOUT THE
EFFECTS OF DRUGS ON OUR PEOPLES AND OUR GOVERNMENTS. I URGE YOU
TO BE TOUGH AND FIRM IN THE RECOMMENDATIONS YOU MAKE.

-- THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF SPEAKING
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