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For Immediate Release

April 21, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN EARTH DAY SPEECHU.S. Botanical Gardens
Washington, D.C.

11:50 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, for being here in the wonderful Botanical Gardens. I must say there's a lot I have to learn about this town, as you can tell if you follow events from day to day. And I didn't know that the Botanical Gardens was a branch of the Congress until I showed up here. (Laughter.) Just one more thing I'm not responsible for -- I'm glad to be here. (Laughter.)

I also think that we should introduce a guest from another country who is here with us -- the Environmental Minister from Australia, Roz Kelly. Would you stand up? We're glad to have you here. (Applause.)

Al Gore introduced Katie McGinty, and you were all good enough to clap. And I don't know if you could hear through the clapping that her parents are here. And what you may not know is that the real reason we appointed her is that she's one of 10 children and we'd like to carry Pennsylvania in 1996. (Laughter.) We think that there's a significant likelihood now because of that.

I want to say a special word of thanks to the Vice President for two things -- first of all, for the wonderful trip that he has just concluded, going to Poland to represent our country on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, and the wonderful remarks he gave in New York on the eve of that departure and the way that he represented the United States in Poland. And secondly, notwithstanding what he said in the introduction, which was true -- (laughter) -- one of the reasons I did ask him to join the ticket is that he knew more about the subject of the environment than I did and I thought I had something to learn from him. And I have learned a great deal, and it has been an immensely rewarding experience and one which I hope will benefit the United States in many ways over the course of the next four years.

That's worth clapping for -- I agree with that, don't you think? (Applause.)

It's a good thing to have this celebration in the springtime, a time when our spirits are renewed and we are reminded by nature of new beginnings and forgotten beauty. This has been an astonishingly beautiful spring in Washington, D.C., and something for which I will always be grateful -- my first springtime here that I see every morning as I go out and jog around in it and try to breathe in it -- something that is a continuing challenge. (Laughter.)

A little more than a week ago, most Americans celebrated holy days of freedom and renewal. Today, we still nurture the faith that helps us to understand more clearly that we can do better. This is a time of new beginnings, a time when there is anguish and anxiety all around us, but we still must yearn once again to succeed in our common purposes to reach our deepest goals.

overwhelming determination to change our course, to offer more opportunity, to assume more responsibility, to restore the larger American community, and to achieve things that are larger than ourselves and more lasting than the present moment. We seek to set our course by the star of age-old values, not short-term expediences; to waste less in the present and provide more for the future; to leave a legacy that keeps faith with those who left the Earth to us.

That is the American spirit. It moves us not only in great gatherings, but also when we stand silently all alone in the presence only of nature and our Creator.

If there is one commitment that defines our people, it is our devotion to the rich and expansive land we have inherited. From the first Americans to the present day, our people have lived in awe of the power, the majesty and the beauty of the forest, the rivers, and the streams of America. That love of the land, which flows like a mighty current through this land and through our character, bursts into service on the first Earth Day in 1970.

When I traveled the country last year, I saw and spoke of how much had been accomplished by the environmental movement since then and how much still remains to be done. For all that has been done to protect the air and the water, we haven't halted the destruction of wetlands at home and the rain forest abroad. For all that has been learned, we still struggle to comprehend such dangers to our planet's delicate environment as the shroud of greenhouse gases and the dangerous thinning of the ozone layer. We haven't done nearly enough to protect our forest communities from the hazards, such as lead poisoning, which is believed to cause mental retardation, learning disabilities, and impaired growth.

Unless we act, and act now, we face a future where our planet will be home to nine billion people within our lifetime, but its capacity to support and sustain our lives will be very much diminished. Unless we act, we face the extension of untold numbers of species that might support our livelihoods and provide medication to save our very lives. Unless we act now, we face a future in which the sun may scorch us, not warm us; where the change of season may take on a dreadful new meaning; and where our children's children will inherit a planet far less hospitable than the world in which we came of age. I have a faith that we will act, not from fear, but from hope and through vision.

All across this country, there is a deep understanding rooted in our religious heritage and renewed in the spirit of this time that the bounty of nature is not ours to waste. It is a gift from God that we hold in trust for future generations. Preserving our heritage, enhancing it, and passing it along is a great purpose worthy of a great people. If we seize the opportunity and shoulder the responsibility, we can enrich the future and ennoble our own lives.

Just as we yearn to come together as a people, we yearn to move beyond the false choices that the last few years have imposed upon us. For too long we have been told that we have to choose between the economy and the environment; between our jobs; between our obligations to our own people and our responsibilities to the future and to the rest of the world; between public action and private economy.

I am here today in the hope that we can together take a different course of action, to offer a new set of challenges to our people. Our environmental program is based on three principles. First, we think you can't have a healthy economy without a healthy environment. We need not choose between breathing clean air and

bringing home secure paychecks. The fact is, our environmental problems result not from robust growth, but from reckless growth. The fact is that only a prosperous society can have the confidence and the means to protect its environment. And the fact is healthy communities and environmentally sound products and services do best in today's economic competition.

That's why our policies must protect our environment, promote economic growth, and provide millions of new high-skill, high-wage jobs.

Second, we want to protect the environment at home and abroad. In an era of global economics, global epidemics and global environmental hazards, a central challenge of our time is to promote our national interest in the context of its connectedness with the rest of the world. We share our atmosphere, our planet, our destiny with all the peoples of this world. And the policies I outline today will protect all of us because that is the only way we can protect any of us.

And, third, we must move beyond the antagonisms among business, government and individual citizens. The policies I outlined today are part of our effort to reinvent government -- to make it your partner and not your overseer -- to lead by example and not by bureaucratic fiat.

In the face of great challenges, we need a government that not only guards against the worst in us, but helps to bring out the best in us. I know we can do this because our administration includes the best team of environmental policymakers who have ever served the United States: the Vice President, Interior Secretary Babbitt, EPA Administrator Browner -- and I hope that the EPA will, soon, by the grace of Congress, be a Cabinet-level department -- and Energy Secretary O'Leary, Commerce Secretary Brown, Transportation Secretary Pena, the Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, our Environmental Policy Director Katie McGinty, and our Science and Technology Advisor Jack Gibbons. All of them share an unshakable commitment to a healthy environment, a growing economy and a responsive government.

Our economic plan will create new job opportunities and new business opportunities, protecting our natural environment. The reductions in the interest rates which we have seen already will free up tens of billions of dollars for responsible investments in this year alone.

The jobs package I have asked the Congress to pass contains -- this is hardly been noticed, but it actually contains green jobs from waste water treatment to energy efficiency, to the restoration of our national parks, to investments in new technologies designed to create the means by which we can solve the problems of the future and create more jobs for Americans.

Our long-term strategy invests more in pollution prevention, energy efficiency, and solar energy, in renewable energy, and environmental restoration, and water treatment -- all of which can be found in the five-year budget that we have presented to the Congress.

These investments will create tens of thousands of new jobs, and they will save tens of thousands more. Because when we save energy and resources we will have more to invest in creating new jobs and providing better living standards. Today every other advanced nation is more energy efficient than we are. That is one of the reasons why over the last couple of years, for example, the

because that economy uses one-half the energy we do to produce the same amount of goods. We can do better and we will.

I believe we can develop the know-how to out-conserve and out-compete any one else on Earth. All over the world people are buying products that help them to protect their environment. There's a \$200-billion market today for environmental technologies. And by the turn-of-the-decade in the century, it will be \$300 billion.

Let me just share one example with you -- something we all know and use and something some of us are still trying to learn how replace: light bulbs. Long-lasting energy-saving light bulbs didn't even exist in 1985. Now American companies sell over \$500 million worth of these products, with sales expected to reach \$2 billion by 1995 and \$10 billion by the year 2000, creating thousands of new jobs. American scientists have taken the lead in developing these technologies, and it's time to help our companies take the lead in bringing out products and services to market.

I've asked the Energy Department, the Commerce Department, and the EPA to assess current environmental technologies and create a strategic plan to give our companies the trade development, promotional efforts and technical assistance they need to turn these advances into jobs here in America, as well as to help promote a better environment. America can maintain our lead in the world economy by taking the lead to preserve the world environment.

Last year, the nations of the world came together at the Earth Summit in Rio to try to find a way to protect the miraculous diversity of plant and animal life all across the planet. The Biodiversity Treaty which resulted had some flaws, and we all knew that. But instead of fixing them, the United States walked away from the treaty. That left us out of a treaty that is critically important not only to our future, but to the future of the world. And not only because of what it will do to preserve species, but because of opportunities it offers for cutting-edge companies whose research creates new medicines, new products, and new jobs.

Again, just one recent example makes the point. A tree that was thought to have no value, the Pacific Yew, used to be bulldozed and burned. Now we know that that tree contains one of our most promising potential cures for ovarian cancer, breast cancer and other forms of cancer. We cannot walk away from challenges like those presented by the Biodiversity Treaty. We must step up to them.

Our administration has worked with business and environmental groups toward an agreement that protects both American interests and the world environment. And today, I am proud to announce the United States' intention to sign the Biodiversity Treaty. (Applause.)

This is an example of what you can do by bringing business and environmentalists together, instead of pitting them against each other. We can move forward to protect critical natural resources and critical technologies. I'm also directing the State Department to move ahead with our talks with other countries which have signed the convention so that the United States can move as quickly as possible toward ratification.

To learn more about where we stand in protecting all our biological resources here at home, I'm asking the Interior Department to create a national biological survey to help us protect endangered species and, just as importantly, to help the agricultural and biotechnical industries of our country identify new sources of food, fiber and medication. (Applause.)

hospitable and more hostile to human life. Today, I reaffirm my personal, and announce our nation's commitment, to reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases to their 1990 levels by the year 2000. (Applause.)

I am instructing my administration to produce a cost-effective plan by August that can continue the trend of reduced emission. This must be a clarion call, not for more bureaucracy or regulation or unnecessary costs, but instead, for American ingenuity and creativity, to produce the best and most energy-efficient technology.

After the Cold War, we face the challenge of helping Russia achieve a healthy democracy, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment. Our Russian aid package includes \$38 million to clean up pollution and promote better uses of energy. As with the full range of our investments in Russia, this is truly an investment not only in promoting our own values, but in protecting our national security. To protect the environment at home and abroad, I am committed to a government that leads by example, brings people together, and brings out the best in everyone. For too long our government did more to inflame environmental issues than to solve them. Different agencies pursued conflicting policies. National leaders polarized people. And problems wound up in the courts or in the streets instead of being solved.

We seek to bring a new spirit to these difficult issues. Three weeks ago in Portland, Oregon, we brought together business people, timber workers, and environmentalists from throughout the Northwest to discuss how best to preserve jobs and to protect the old-growth forests and the species which inhabit them. People sat down in a conference room, not a court room, and in the words of Archbishop Thomas Murphy of Seattle, we tried to find common ground for a common good. At the close of that forest conference, I asked my Cabinet and our entire administration to begin work immediately to craft a balanced, comprehensive long-term policy that is also comprehensible.

Before I ask our companies and our communities and our families to meet any challenge, it seems to me we have to set that standard for the government. The American people are entitled to know where the United States stands on this issue and many other issues. And it is time to bring an end to the time when issues like this wind up in court and there are five different positions from the United States government itself. We can never solve problems in that fashion. We can only undermine the security and stability of people's lives.

That's one reason I am proud that yesterday the United States Army announced its plan to clean up a large number of sites where we learned recently that chemical weapons materials may be buried, in some places from as long ago as World War I. Working with the EPA, the Army will clean up this problem safely and in an environmentally-sound manner.

This is a legacy of America's efforts to defend our people and the community of free nations. Now, we are taking steps to defend our people and our environment and the environment of the world. In that same spirit, I plan to sign an executive order requiring federal facilities that manufacture, process or use toxic chemicals, to comply with the federal right-to-know laws, and publicly report what they are doing. (Applause.)

I might add that it is time that the United States government begins to live under the laws it makes for other people. With this executive order, I ask all federal facilities to set a voluntary goal to reducing their release of toxic pollutants by 50 percent by 1999. This will reduce toxic releases, control costs

associated with cleanups, and promote clean technologies. And it will help make our government what it should be -- a positive example for the rest of the country. (Applause.)

Poor neighborhoods in our cities suffer most often from toxic pollution. Cleaning up the toxic wastes will create new jobs in these neighborhoods for those people and make them safer places to live, to work, and to do business.

Today, I am also signing an executive order that directs federal agencies to make preliminary changes in their purchasing policies, to use fewer substances harmful to the ozone layer. Here, too, we must put our actions where the values are. Our government is a leading purchaser of goods and services. And it's time to stop not only the waste of taxpayers' money but the waste of our natural resources.

Today I am signing an executive order which commits the federal government to buy thousands more American made vehicles, using clean, domestic fuels such as natural gas, ethanol, methanol, and electric power. This will reduce our demand for foreign oil, reduce air pollution, promote promising technologies, promote American companies, create American jobs, and save American tax dollars. To demonstrate my commitment to this issue, Energy Secretary O'Leary is creating a task force led by the Land Commissioner of Texas, Gary Mauro, who is here in the audience today, who has headed a successful effort in his own state. I hope we can do as well in America as they have done in Texas. (Applause.)

In that same spirit, I plan to sign an executive order committing every agency of the national government to do more than ever to buy and use recycled products. This will provide a market for new technologies, make better use of recycled materials, and encourage the creation of new products that can be offered to the government, to private companies, and to consumers. And again, it will create jobs through the recycling process.

We must keep finding new ways to be a force for positive change. For example, the federal government is the largest purchaser of computer equipment in the world, and computers are the fastest growing area of electricity use. That's why I am also signing an executive order today requiring the federal government to purchase energy-efficient computers. We're going to expand the market for a technology where America pioneered and still leads the world, and we'll save energy, saving the taxpayers \$40 million a year, and set an example for our country and for the world.

For as long as I live and work in the White House, I want Americans to see it not only as a symbol of clean government, but also a clean environment. That's why I'm announcing an energy and environmental audit of the White House. We're going to identify what it takes to make the White House a model for efficiency and waste reduction. It might mean fewer memos and less paper. (Laughter.) And then we're going to get the job done. I want to make the White House a model for other federal agencies, for state and local governments, for business, and for families in their homes. Before I ask you to do the best you can in your house, I ought to make sure I'm doing the best I can in my house. (Applause.)

I ask that all of us today reaffirm our willingness to assume responsibility for our common environment, and to do it willingly, hopefully, and joyously. We are challenged here today not so much to sacrifice as to celebrate and create. I've challenged Americans who are young in years or young in spirit to offer their time and their talent to serve their communities and their country. I've asked them to help in teaching our children, healing the sick, policing our streets.

But equally important are efforts to protect our environment -- from our largest cities to our smallest towns to our suburbs. Our National Service Plan will ask thousands of Americans to do their part, from leading recycling drives to preventing lead poisoning.

The challenge to shoulder responsibility and seize opportunity extends to each of us in business, communities, and homes. In our own lives, in our own ways, each of us has something to offer to the work of cleaning up America's environment. And each of us surely has something very personal to gain.

On a colder day in the middle of winter, just three months ago, a poet asked us to celebrate, not only the marvelous diversity of our people, but the miraculous bounty of our land. "Here on the pulse of this new day," Maya Angelou challenged us to look at, "the rock, the river, the tree, your country." Now, it is a season of new hope and new beginnings. And as we look anew at our neighbors, our children and our own communities, as well as the world around us, we must seize the possibilities inherent in this exhilarating moment; to face our challenges, to exercise our responsibilities, and to rejoice in them.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

12:16 P.M. EDT