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President Bush Meets with President Yar'Adua of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Oval Office

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10:50 A.M. EST

PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. President, it's been my honor to welcome you here to the White House. We just had a very extensive and fruitful discussion on a variety of issues, and that's what you would expect when friends meet together.

The President is committed to democracy and rule of law. He was very articulate in his desire to make sure that the people of Nigeria understand that their government will be fair and transparent, and will be a government of the people. Mr. President, I am impressed by your commitment to reform, your adherence to the concept of rule of law, and your belief in transparency. And I congratulate you for being a strong leader.

We also talked about social justice issues, the issue of education. The President is committed to seeing to it that compulsory education is followed through on in his country throughout the country, and I admire that. And we want to help you. The United States has got a program that is dedicated to making sure every child gets a good education. It's in our national interests that that be the case.

It's also in our national interests, Mr. President, to help you if you so desire on issues like HIV/AIDS and malaria. The President is strongly committed to helping the Nigerian families affected by these diseases get treatment and help. He understands that there needs to be a comprehensive program of prevention, distribution of antiretrovirals, and then a capacity to help the orphans who have been left behind as a result of this terrible disease. And we're committed, through what we call PEPFAR, Mr. President. I'm going to the United States Congress and ask them to double our commitment, because we believe it's in our interests to help you if you so desire. It's in our interests from a security perspective; it's in our interests from a moral perspective.



So we've had a good visit. I'm proud you're here, and I welcome you and thank you for your time and

for your heart.

PRESIDENT YAR'ADUA: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I feel highly honored and privileged to be here and have the opportunity to share these few moments with you. This is a moment that I'll never forget in my life.

I have briefed Mr. President on the situation in Nigeria, our efforts to anchor democracy on the rule of law; to help a credible electoral process; and to ensure that the principles of justice, equity will guide the conduct of affairs in Nigeria -- transparency, accountability and the fight against corruption. And Mr. President has expressed the support of himself and the government of the United States as the people of the United States assist Nigeria to ensure that we continue to uphold -- (inaudible) -- democracy, the rule of law, zero tolerance for corruption, and the development of a free market economy through economic reforms that we have been effecting for the last eight years.

Now this will set the principles upon which we'll build and develop a free society capable of growing an economy that will cater for the development and needs of the people of Nigeria. And in this great effort we are making we find great friendship and assistance from the government and people of the United States. And we are very grateful for this expression of support, confidence and trust.

We have discussed a wide range of issues beside democracy and the rule of law and the economic reforms. We have discussed about the problems of HIV/AIDS, the problem of malaria, challenges in education. And the United States government will help us to meet these challenges as we go along. And I think this is an excellent humanitarian gesture for which I, personally, and the people and government of Nigeria are extremely grateful.

We have discussed security issues and the security within Nigeria, itself, within the Niger Delta region and within the Gulf of Guinea. And we have also discussed security issues -- peace and security on the African continent. And we shall partner with (inaudible) to assist not only Nigeria, but also the African continent to actualize its peace and security (inaudible) initiative, which is an initiative to help standby forces of brigade-size in each of the regional economic groupings within the African continent.

I think what we have discussed has given me hope, and myself, the government and people of Nigeria are inspired by the United States of America's achievement and the principles which guide it. And this is a posit we are trading, and the friendship and understanding of the United States will propel Nigeria with this inspiration to make the transformations that we need to do into a modern nation from an underdeveloped nation, capable of meeting the development and needs of its people.

I thank you very much, Mr. President, this is a rare opportunity.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you, sir.

END 11:05 A.M. EST

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