

am particularly concerned about the over 200 adoption cases which were already being processed for U.S. parents, and I urge the Government of Romania to resolve these cases quickly, so these children can be placed with the families as promised. I also urge President Basescu to consider revising existing law to allow the resumption of international adoptions with appropriate safeguards.

The Government of Romania enacted a comprehensive antidiscrimination law in 2000 and has in place a national action plan on Roma. Yet the great majority of Roma and Sinti in Romania remain marginalized, living in abject poverty due to severe discrimination in employment, housing, and education. President Basescu should take bold and concrete steps to ensure that Romani citizens have full opportunity to participate in the civil and political life of Romania. The establishment of a fund to implement school desegregation would be an important step toward achieving that goal and would make the Romanian government's participation in the Decade of Roma Inclusion truly meaningful.

Following decades of denial, the Government of Romania has made great strides in the past year in recognizing Romania's role in the Holocaust. I commend the government for taking steps to examine this dark and painful chapter in the country's history. The International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, led by Elie Wiesel, officially issued its findings last November in Bucharest. In addition to the establishment of a national Holocaust Remembrance day, which Romania marks on October 12, the Commission's recommendations include the construction of a national Holocaust memorial and museum in Bucharest, the annulment of war criminal rehabilitations, and the establishment of Holocaust education curricula and Holocaust courses in secondary schools and universities. The government should move quickly to implement that Commission's recommendations.

In a related matter, I hope that the Government of Romania will finally bring to closure the rehabilitation and honoring of World War II dictator, Marshall Ion Antonescu, Hitler ally and war criminal condemned for the mass murder of Jews and Roma. During the past 3 years, government officials publicly condemned efforts to honor Antonescu and removed from public land three statues that had been erected in his honor. One statue remains on public land in Jilava, the site of Antonescu's execution, and important streets in the cities of Cluj, Targu Mures, and Campulung Muscel continue to be named after him. I urge the Government of Romania to remove these remaining vestiges honoring the former dictator.

The process of providing restitution or compensation for property confiscated by former regimes in Romania

has been slow, complicated, and difficult. Government records indicate that more than 200,000 claims for property restitution have been filed by individuals, and more than 7,000 claims have been filed by religious denominations and communal groups. The plight of Romania's Greek Catholic Uniate Church, which was banned by the Communist government in 1948, is particularly troubling. More than 2,500 churches and other buildings seized from the Uniates were given to Orthodox parishes. The government decree that dismantled the Greek Catholic Church was abrogated in 1989, however, of the thousands of properties confiscated from the Greek Catholics, fewer than 200 have been returned. I hope that this government will finally take significant steps toward the restitution of Greek Catholic property as well as that of other religious denominations. Romania's failure to return religious properties to their rightful owners 15 years after Communist rule is inexcusable and, in my view, a destabilizing element in Romanian society.

Trafficking in human beings will continue to challenge the new government. Romania is a source and transit country primarily for women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. While the Romanian Government has made tremendous progress in its antitrafficking initiatives in the past several years, there are still some areas of concern including corruption within the law enforcement community, light penalties for those convicted of trafficking, and proposals to legalize or regulate prostitution.

Greater accountability is needed among members of the law enforcement community in view of allegations that officials have assisted traffickers in obtaining false passports, facilitated illegal border crossings and accepted bribes to tamper with witnesses' testimony. Traffickers are increasingly likely to be prosecuted for their crimes in Romania, however, the penalties imposed by judges are still too low—usually 1 year or less in prison. Penalties should be severe enough to reflect the heinous nature of the crime and to serve as a deterrent to other prospective traffickers. Finally, it is important for the government to take a firm stance against all efforts to legalize or regulate prostitution. Legalized and regulated prostitution is a magnet for human trafficking and provides a shield behind which traffickers hide.

While many challenges remain on the road ahead for President Basescu, his new government, and the people of Romania, I am convinced that, working together, they will move toward a bright and prosperous future. I stand ready to assist our friends in Romania in any way I can.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST SLAUGHTER OF SEALS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, today there will be rallies in 50 cities across

the world calling on the Canadian Government to stop the cruel and needless slaughter of seals. Animal protection and environmental groups in the U.S. and throughout the world have condemned Canada's increased seal hunt, which will allow sealers to kill over 300,000 baby seals this year alone. The hunt officially opened on Nov. 15, 2004, but the bulk of the killing will begin toward the end of March, after the babies have been born. They will be clubbed and shot mainly for their fur.

A recent study was conducted by an independent team of veterinarians which found that the seal hunt failed to comply with basic animal welfare standards and that Canadian regulations with regard to humane killing were not being enforced. The study concluded that up to 42 percent of the seals studied were likely skinned while alive and conscious. The United States has long banned imports of seal products because of widespread outrage over the magnitude and cruelty of the hunt.

Our neighbor to the north is fortunate to have vast and diverse wildlife populations—animals that deserve protection, not senseless slaughter. Americans have a long history of defending marine mammals, best evidenced through our Marine Mammal Protection Act. Not surprisingly, recent polling shows close to 80 percent of American voters oppose Canada's seal hunt, and the majority of those surveyed are willing to make consumer choices that will help put a stop to the slaughter.

On February 1, 2005, Senator COLLINS and I introduced a resolution, S. Res. 33, which urges the Government of Canada to end this senseless, inhumane slaughter. We are pleased that 18 of our colleagues in the Senate have cosponsored this resolution: Senators LUGAR, BIDEN, CANTWELL, JEFFORDS, DODD, DURBIN, FEINSTEIN, JOHNSON, LAUTENBERG, MURRAY, STABENOW, DORGAN, KENNEDY, REED, SCHUMER, WYDEN, FEINGOLD and BOXER.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING THE POPLAR BLUFF MULES

• Mr. TALENT. Mr. President, I want to recognize today the distinguished accomplishments of the Mules, the Poplar Bluff High School Boys Basketball Team of Poplar Bluff, MO, and congratulate them on winning the 2005 Missouri Class 5 State Championship for Boys Basketball.

The team had a truly remarkable season, and their accomplishment was hard fought and well deserved.

Working as a team, these talented young men pulled together to defeat the previously unbeaten No. 1 ranked team in the Nation.

The Mules finished with a record of 27 wins and only 4 losses, with 2 of those losses against teams that were, at the time, ranked in the top 10 in the Nation. The State title win was the