

the past two years. After a dozen years of civil strife, the people of El Salvador were able to reach a political settlement of their differences. This speaks volumes about their commitment and courage. Since the 1992 peace accords, they have worked to build a prosperous and democratic country. This is a people tested well beyond what they should be asked to bear. At each step on the path to recovery they have faced a new challenge, and each time they have responded tenaciously and stepped forward again.

Mr. President, this earthquake is not the first time in recent memory that a natural disaster has brought devastation on such a wide scale to the people of El Salvador. In addition to this terrible earthquake, there has also been a serious outbreak of dengue fever, a serious and debilitating disease. And it was only two years ago that Hurricane Mitch tore through Central America, exacting an unbearable toll on an already fragile region. In the countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, more than 11,000 lives were swept away in the rain, winds, and massive landslides that Mitch wrought. In some areas, more than 70 percent of crops were demolished. The price tag of that devastating hurricane soared to more than \$4 billion once a full accounting was made.

Mr. President, the people of El Salvador did not simply wring their hands in despair at the devastation of Mitch. They worked to improve their lives—they rebuilt roads, and schools, and homes. They began to address the needs of citizens dealing with painful losses and an uncertain future. They began to pull themselves, with the help of international monetary and humanitarian assistance, out of the darkness created by Mitch when they were struck again by another wanton force of mother nature. This earthquake, which registered a thundering 7.6 on the Richter scale, once again threatens to break the back of an already struggling nation.

Mr. President, the story unfolding right now in India is no less compelling and deserves our equal attention and concern. January 26th is traditionally a day of celebration in India, a day when people gather with their families in their homes to celebrate Republic Day, their constitution, and their country. But this January the clamor of parades and cheers was replaced by the roar of collapsing buildings torn down by an earthquake registering 7.9 on the Richter scale, the worst earthquake in India in a half century. Tremors were felt in Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh as the earth shook early that morning.

Hardest hit was Bhuj, a city of 150,000 in the Gujarat state, only 43 miles from the quake's epicenter. The government of India places the official death toll at more than 16,000, but estimates this figure could climb to a ghastly 100,000 in the days and weeks to come. Six hundred thousand people have been left

homeless, many of whom are sleeping out in the open, with too few blankets among them, for fear of returning to unsteady buildings. Many others simply have no place to go. As many as 35 million people have been affected in some way by the earthquake, a figure so staggering it is almost impossible to comprehend. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) places the cost of rehabilitation and reconstruction at \$1.3 billion.

The daunting task that now lies before us is to bring some measure of relief and care to those who were spared, including an estimated 3,000 orphaned children. Tragically, the state of Gujarat was particularly vulnerable to a natural disaster such as this, as one quarter of its citizens live below the poverty line and almost one half of households rely on public food distribution under normal conditions. In an emergency such as this, the situation becomes exponentially more dire than before. In addition to the desperate need for food, medicine, and shelters, many Indian officials now fear epidemics of cholera and typhoid if access to clean, safe, drinking water is not quickly restored. This task has been made all the more difficult because it comes in the midst of a 3 year drought in India which affected almost 3 million people in the state of Gujarat last year. The majority of water supply wells are caked with mud and temporarily out of service, promoting concerns that some who managed to survive the earthquake may instead succumb to disease while they wait for clean water. Certainly, the survivors of this earthquake should not be exposed to further suffering and injury.

Mr. President, we cannot and should not ask the governments of El Salvador and India, or their people, to walk the path toward recovery alone. At a time when these countries seek peace and development, we must be there as both an ally and a partner. We must not turn away from their suffering, but rather must respond swiftly and effectively.

In fact, international relief efforts are already in full operation in both El Salvador and India, providing basic necessities such as drinking water, food, blankets and temporary shelter to the quakes' victims. The United States government is actively participating in these international efforts through the work of USAID. At the time of the quake, USAID personnel in El Salvador immediately began meeting with Salvadoran relief agencies to evaluate the extent of the damage and the level of aid necessary. To date, USAID assistance to El Salvador totals more than \$5 million, the majority of which was allocated for temporary shelter programs. In addition, the World Food Programme has provided 900 metric tons of rations, the International Federation of the Red Cross has released \$100,000 of disaster relief funds as well as sent a delegation of relief workers to

assist the 1,200 person Salvadoran Red Cross. Medicines for hospitals and temporary clinics are pouring in from the Pan-American Health Organization, and the International Development Bank is considering a \$20 million emergency loan. Monetary and other contributions from additional organizations continue to arrive as well.

In India, USAID has pledged \$9 million in emergency relief, including emergency food distribution, airlifts, and temporary shelter equipment. Indeed, more than 38 countries have responded to India's cries, as well as several hundred non-governmental organizations including UNICEF, The International Federation of the Red Cross, and the World Food Programme.

It is my hope, Mr. President, that the Bush administration will recognize how desperately our help is still needed in El Salvador and India and will respond not only with continued short-term emergency relief aid, but also with a comprehensive plan for long term reconstruction and development. In the case of India that will require that waiver authority be exercised by the Administration to permit broader categories of assistance to be provided despite existing sanctions against that country. I would urge the Administration to do so.

I am confident that our colleagues in the Senate join with me in extending our prayers and our hands to the people of two nations who must persevere at very difficult moments in their histories. I am confident that with our help the lives of the peoples of these two nations will improve day by day.

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#### PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Peter Winokur be granted the privilege of the floor during today's session of the Senate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Mark Peters be granted floor privileges for the purpose of this debate. He is a fellow from the Commerce Department.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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#### LORETTA F. SYMMS

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me take a few additional moments to speak to the Senate about a friend of ours who has worked with us in the Senate for a good number of years. This week marks the last week of work for the Senate in the career of Loretta Symms. Loretta, as I mentioned, has become a friend of all of us while she has worked in the Senate.

Loretta, who is originally from Coeur d'Alene, ID, moved to Washington in the midseventies and began her career working for then-Congressman Steve Symms as executive assistant and office manager. In 1981, after Congressman Symms was elected to the Senate,