

on stability in the future. They can't grow crops, or raise livestock, if there is a likelihood-not a chance, a likelihood—that roving government-sponsored militias will beat, rape, or kill them if they wander outside the protection of makeshift camps. And these government-sponsored criminals burn fields the people have managed to grow, and steal or slaughter the livestock the people have managed to keep.

Over 400,000 people have died in the Darfur conflict since 2003, with 3.5 million people driven into hunger, and another 2.5 million displaced due to violence. Imagine if the entire city of Las Vegas had perished at the hands of government-sponsored bandits, the population of Los Angeles was starving, and both the cities of Houston and Atlanta had all relocated due to conflict. The upheaval of the South after Hurricane Katrina is our closest reference to understanding the devastation Sudan is experiencing, and yet the scale in Sudan is overwhelming. We should all be quaking with anger.

Human rights are not for any government to give and take—they are inherent, self-evident, and vital, as our founding fathers understood so well. We should not be complacent when such rights are violated or refused—we must use what power we have to ensure that people are free to live and thrive safely.

We must work to deter any escalation of violence, and provide unwavering assistance to diffuse the current strife. I commend the tireless efforts of United States officials who have helped secure the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Darfur Peace Agreement. And yet there is much to be done, the welfare of a nation lies within our hands.

Our role is clear, and we must do what we can to alleviate the desperation of the civilians caught in the mayhem in Sudan. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I would like to just at this point thank the following congressional staff for their extraordinary work and persistence in shaping this bill. As my colleague from Minnesota pointed out earlier, we did mark this bill up 15 months ago in my subcommittee, and it has been a long, arduous journey to this night on this Hyde-Lantos legislation. So I want to thank Joan Collins, Gregory Simpkins, Pearl Alice Marsh, Noelle LuSane, Ian Campbell, Hannah Royal, Aysha House-Moshi, Greg Adams, Samantha Stockman, Walker Roberts, Jock Scharfen, David Abramowitz, Will Lowell.

And I hope I didn't leave anybody out because there was an extraordinary amount of give and take on this legislation. Again, some of its aspects that we would have liked to have seen dealing with disinvestment was dropped by the Senate. I think that was a setback. But it is still a very solid piece of legislation and deserves the full support of this body to advance our efforts to mitigate and hopefully end the genocide in Darfur.

This now goes to the President, as I have just been reminded, and I think

he will sign it very quickly. I urge its passage.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 3127, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act. This bill imposes sanctions on the government of Sudan and blocks the assets and restricts travel for individuals who are responsible for acts of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity in the Darfur region of Sudan.

More than 450,000 people have died since 2003 as a result of the genocide in Darfur. There are two-and-a-half million displaced people in camps in Darfur and another 350,000 in refugee camps in neighboring Chad. Almost 7,000 people are dying every month in Darfur. There can be no doubt that what is taking place in Darfur is genocide, and the government of Sudan is responsible.

Crimes against humanity in Darfur have escalated in recent months. Over 500 women were raped over the summer in one camp alone. There have been renewed attacks and aerial bombardment, and twelve humanitarian workers were killed, two of them in the last 4 weeks. If the United Nations does not intervene in Darfur now, the death toll could rise dramatically in the next few months.

Earlier this year, I visited the Darfur region with my good friend from California, Congresswoman NANCY PELOSI, and I was deeply disturbed by what I saw. As far as the eyes could see, there were crowds of displaced people who had been driven from their homes, living literally on the ground with little tarps just covering them. It is unconscionable that this should continue.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill and take a firm stand against the crime of genocide in Darfur.

The world stood by and watched the genocide that occurred in Rwanda. The world has noted over and over again the atrocities of the Holocaust. We must take action now to prevent a repeat of these horrific chapters in human history.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I once again rise in strong support of H.R. 3127, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this important legislation, and look forward to it being signed into law.

The scope of the Darfur tragedy is nothing less than horrific. As far as we know, an estimated 400,000 people are now dead and over two million have been displaced as a result of the violence. Thousands continue to die each month as a result of starvation, neglect and sickness. Unfortunately, little has changed since the House first passed H.R. 3127 in April: the Sudanese government has continued to ignore United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for the end of the conflict, the May 2006 peace agreement has largely been ignored and the violence against the people of Darfur has raged on.

As United Nations Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland noted in August, the situation has only gone "from real bad to catastrophic." It is therefore more important than ever that the United States provide the strong moral leadership necessary to spur the world community to act to stop the killings, kidnappings and rapes in Darfur. As our nation continues to work within the United Nations for strong international action on Darfur, passage of this bill, and its enactment into law, will send a clear message to the gov-

ernment of Sudan that the United States will not simply stand by as these atrocities continue.

Two years ago, this Congress and the administration declared the atrocities in Darfur to be genocide and vowed to end the ongoing campaign of violence. It is in that spirit that we must continue to work to ensure that these strong words are not empty ones, that peace can be found in Sudan, and that the people of Darfur are one day free of the threat of genocide. This bill, and the other Darfur measures that we will pass today, are small but important steps towards reaching these goals.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 3127.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate amendment was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMENDING THE MONTENEGRIN PEOPLE ON THE REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 965) commending the people of Montenegro on the conduct of the referendum on independence, welcoming United States recognition of the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Montenegro, and welcoming Montenegrin membership in the United Nations and other international organizations.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 965

Whereas the Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro established provisions and procedures for withdrawal of a member state from the State Union, providing that a decision to withdraw "shall be made after a referendum has been held";

Whereas, in accordance with Article 60 of the Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the Parliament of Montenegro unanimously adopted in March 2006 the Law on the Referendum on the State Legal Status of the Republic of Montenegro, which established the conditions for the conduct of the referendum on state independence, including establishing the standard that 55 percent of voters must support independence to achieve a valid mandate;

Whereas the people of Montenegro in a popular referendum on May 21, 2006, voted to support the sovereign independence of the Republic of Montenegro from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro by a margin of 55.5 percent in favor of independence with over 86 percent of eligible voters participating in the referendum;

Whereas, in accordance with the expressed will of a majority of the people of Montenegro, on June 3, 2006, the Parliament of Montenegro declared the independence of Montenegro, declaring that the Republic is a "multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious society . . . based on the rule of law and market economy";

Whereas countries and international organizations throughout the world, including the United States and the European Union, have formally recognized Montenegro as an independent state and are establishing diplomatic relations with Montenegro;

Whereas Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said as she announced that the United States formally recognized the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Montenegro that “the honor of being counted among the free and independent states of the world brings with it the challenge of protecting and advancing the freedom, rights, and prosperity of all the people of Montenegro, and the responsibility to make a positive contribution to the community of nations”;

Whereas on June 28, 2006, Montenegro was welcomed as the 192nd member of the United Nations, on which occasion, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: “In achieving its independence through a non-violent and democratic process, conducted in a fair and open way, Montenegro showed the entire world not only its patience, but its political maturity.”;

Whereas the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Montenegro have acted responsibly in their bilateral relationship following the decision of the Montenegrin people to withdraw from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro: on June 15, 2006, Serbia recognized the independence of Montenegro, the two countries have established formal diplomatic relations, and the President of Serbia was the first foreign head of state to pay an official visit to Montenegro: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends the people and the Government of the Republic of Montenegro for the free, fair, and responsible way in which the referendum on independence was conducted and acknowledges the broad participation of the citizens of Montenegro in that important vote;

(2) congratulates the people of Montenegro on their decision to establish an independent and sovereign state and welcomes them to the community of nations, to membership in the United Nations, to full participation in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and to membership in other international organizations;

(3) welcomes the decision of the United States to recognize the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Montenegro and urges the expeditious establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries; and

(4) urges the people and Government of Montenegro to continue to embrace the principles of democratic government and to take actions that will encourage respect for human rights, for a free market economy, and for a free, open and democratic society with full respect for all people of Montenegro.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 965. This resolution was introduced by the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS). H. Res. 965 commends the people of Montenegro for conducting their referendum on independence and welcomes the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Montenegro.

Madam Speaker, the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia formally ceased to exist in February of 2003, when the Serbian and Montenegro Parliaments and the Yugoslav Federal Parliament adopted a constitutional charter creating the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. This constitutional charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro established provisions and procedures for the withdrawal of a member state from the State Union, including that a decision to withdraw from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro shall be made after a referendum has been held.

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In accordance with this constitutional charter, the parliament of Montenegro unanimously adopted, in March of 2006, the law on the referendum on the state legal status of the Republic of Montenegro which established the conditions for conducting the referendum on this state independence.

On May 21, 2006, the people of Montenegro conducted the referendum on independence and voted in favor of independence by a margin of 55½ percent, with over 86 percent of all eligible voters participating in the referendum.

And then on May 23rd, 2006, the U.N. Ambassador to Serbia Montenegro congratulated the people of Montenegro for the peaceful, democratic and transparent manner in which the referendum was carried out and stated that the United States fully supports the Organization For Security and Cooperation in Europe, referred to OSCE, and the assessment of the election which determined that the referendum was conducted in line with the OSCE and the Council of Europe commitments and other international standards for a democratic electoral process.

On June 13, 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that the United States has formally recognized the Republic of Montenegro as a sovereign and independent state, following the request of its government and consistent with the provisions of the constitutional charter which establishes the state union of Serbia and Montenegro.

It is important to state for the record that the government of the Republic of Serbia has acted responsibly in accordance with the commitments following the referendum of the Montenegrin people.

On June 5, 2006, the Serbian parliament accepted the independence of Montenegro.

On June 15, 2006, the Serbian Government officially recognized the independence of the Republic of Montenegro.

Over the course of the summer, Montenegro has become a member of the United Nations and numerous international organizations and established formal diplomatic relations with countries throughout this world.

Today, it is important that the United States House of Representatives consider this resolution and recognize Montenegro's historic achievement. Madam Speaker, this resolution congratulates the people and government of Montenegro for conducting their free, fair and responsible independence referendum, welcomes Montenegro as an independent and sovereign state, and urges the people and government of Montenegro to continue to embrace the principles of democratic government, human rights and freedom.

I urge the adoption of this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself such time as I might consume.

Madam Speaker, Montenegro is a place of great beauty, of rugged mountains and a spectacular coast on the Adriatic Sea. Its people are warm and friendly, and they have a fascinating history and culture. I had the pleasure of visiting Montenegro on many occasions, and I find it a truly delightful place.

The people of Montenegro are fiercely independent. During the five centuries of Turkish dominance of the Balkans, from the late 1300s to the late 1800s, Montenegro was never under Turkish rule, despite repeated attempts of the Sultan to conquer the area.

At the end of World War I, an assembly of Montenegrin representatives voted to unite Montenegro with Serbia. Shortly thereafter, it became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which later became known as Yugoslavia.

When Marshal Tito established the Federation of Yugoslavia in 1945, Montenegro was recognized as one of its constituent republics. In 1991, the Yugoslav Federation began to disintegrate as its republics chose independence.

For over a decade, Montenegro and Serbia continued as the Yugoslav Federation. On May 21 of this year, the government of Montenegro held a free, fair, and open referendum on the question of separating the Republic of Montenegro from Serbia.

Madam Speaker, you will be pleased to note that some 86 percent of the people of Montenegro participated in the referendum, and well over half voted in favor of independence. On June 3, the Montenegrin parliament declared the country's independence.

The United States recognized this status in June. The United Nations General Assembly unanimously accepted Montenegro as the UN's 192nd member at the end of June; and, on August 15, we established diplomatic relations with Montenegro pursuant to an exchange of letters between the Presidents of the United States and Montenegro.

Just 3 weeks ago, Montenegrins voted in their first general election since gaining their independence. A coalition headed by Milo Djukanovic took 40 seats, and it will lead the country's government.

Prime Minister Djukanovic has been the leading political figure in the country over the past decade and a half. The vote that I just referred to is important because the new parliament will draft the constitution defining the newly independent country's goals and its governmental structure.

Madam Speaker, this peaceful separation of Montenegro from Serbia is truly historic. Montenegro has demonstrated its readiness to assume the responsibilities of independence. As UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said, "In achieving its independence through a nonviolent and democratic process conducted in a fair and open way, Montenegro showed the entire world not only its patience but also its political maturity."

The government of Serbia also acted responsibly and maturely with regard to the independence of Montenegro. Shortly after the parliament of Montenegro declared its independence, the government of Serbia formally recognized the country, established diplomatic relations with Montenegro, and the President of Serbia, Boris Tadic, was the first head of state to pay an official visit to Montenegro.

President Tadic was our guest here in Washington just this past week, and I want to commend him for his very positive role in this singularly civilized and peaceful evolution in the Balkans.

Throughout the history of the world, Madam Speaker, we have seen much bloodshed and violence over similar situations. The peaceful, amicable separation of Montenegro and Serbia, as the earlier peaceful separation of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, have been exemplary, and all of those countries deserve our recognition and praise.

The European Commission has announced that it will open talks on closer ties between the European Union and Montenegro this month. We look forward to welcoming Montenegro into full membership into the European Union and into other international organizations. We also express the hope that the government of Montenegro and its people will continue to embrace the principles of democracy and particularly will encourage a free and open and democratic society with full respect for the human rights of all of its citizens.

Ethnic Albanians in Montenegro, with whom I have visited at length,

have faced many challenges in the past. But I look forward to this newly independent state of Montenegro; and I hope it will remember its tradition as a multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious society based on the rule of law. It has the responsibility of protecting the freedom and human rights of all of its citizens.

Our resolution commends the people of Montenegro on the referendum on independence, welcomes them to the community of nations and to membership in the United Nations and welcomes the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Montenegro.

I strongly support this resolution, Madam Speaker, and I urge all of my colleagues to do as well.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from California (Mr. LANTOS) for his leadership in this resolution; and I ask for adoption of the resolution.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, as one of the cosponsors, I am pleased to rise in support of House Resolution 965. The people of Montenegro deserve this commendation for the fair and orderly manner in which they achieved independence. They also deserve commendation for their patience. Many Montenegrin citizens wanted independence much earlier, but they and their political leaders understood that following a process marked by democratic norms and mutual agreement would only add credibility to the result.

A significant number of Montenegrin citizens, I should add, did not see a reason to break its ties in a state union with Serbia and voted against independence in the May referendum. To their credit, they have nevertheless accepted the result. Just last week, Montenegro held new parliamentary elections which were favorably assessed by the OSCE, indicating that the republic remains committed to democratic norms where differences of opinion will be respected.

As noted in the text of the resolution, Serbian authorities and the people of Serbia deserve some credit here as well. While many in Serbia failed to understand why Montenegro felt a need to break with Serbia, there was a willingness to work out differences and, since the May referendum, to respect the results.

Things were not always so easy. As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I recall holding hearings on Montenegro. At the time, this republic posed the only genuine and effective internal opposition to the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, and became his threatened next target as a result. Montenegro became a haven for those displaced by the Bosnian and Kosovo conflicts, which was very challenging given its own, small yet ethnically diverse population. For some, it continues in that role. Montenegro needed to assess its own role in the violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, and to rebuild good relations with its neighbors. It has done just that. The Commission has maintained a dialogue with Montenegrin political leaders over the years, held hearings on the situation in Montenegro, observed elections there and most recently observed the referendum itself. Whatever concerns have been expressed in this ongoing dialogue, we have had a serious back and forth.

It is my hope that Montenegro, as the 56th participating State in the OSCE, will remain committed to the path it has chosen, and remain engaged with the Helsinki Commission on issues of common concern. Among those issues, few are as important as trafficking in persons. This criminal activity remains a widespread problem throughout southeastern Europe, and Montenegro must endeavor to stop it. I also want to encourage Montenegro to undertake the reforms necessary, especially regarding the judicial system and other aspects of the rule of law, in order to realize its aspirations for European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The people of Montenegro can count on my support.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I think it important to note that Montenegro's independent statehood has implications not only for Montenegro but for the region as a whole. With Montenegro's independent statehood accepted and recognized, another outstanding issue has been resolved, and this time, thankfully, in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Other issues still remain, including of course the question of Kosovo's status. Some would assert that Montenegro's achievement of independent statehood is a precedent that can be easily applied to Kosovo or elsewhere. I would argue, however, that it is not the result of the process Montenegro followed but the process itself, with its commitment to democracy and respect for human rights as well as to finding the most widely acceptable arrangements through compromise, that is the true precedent here that others should follow.

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 965.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill and a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H.R. 5074. An act to amend the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 to provide for continued payment of railroad retirement annuities by the Department of the Treasury, and for other purposes.

H. Con. Res. 235. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that States should require candidates for driver's licenses to demonstrate an ability to exercise greatly increased caution when driving in the proximity of a potentially visually impaired individual.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 3679. An act to authorize appropriations for the National Transportation Safety Board, and for other purposes.