

**ATTORNEY GENERAL REMARKS**  
**Peace Links Luncheon**  
**October 11, 1995**

Good Afternoon. I am delighted to be with you today. It is a great pleasure to join with you, and I particularly want to thank your Founder and President, Betty Bumpers, and your Executive Director, Carol Williams for their gracious invitation.

I understand that this wonderful organization, Peace Links, was created in 1982 when a group of mothers discovered their children feared that nuclear war would end their lives.

Motivated by their children's fears and concerns, Peace Links members have, for the last 13 years, focused on making a difference and stemming the tide of the international violence that too often rears its head in the form of war and other kinds of conflict.

We are all affected by, indeed diminished by, violence -- however distant -- and your work to deal with violence and dislocation in distant lands speaks volumes about the difference we can all make. That work continues to be important, and I

congratulate you for the efforts you have undertaken.

But now another challenge calls out for your attention. Just as you were moved to act when you recognized that too many of our children were tormented by the fear of nuclear holocaust, I am gratified to note that as a different, disturbingly close to home set of fears invades the minds and disrupts the lives of our children, Peace Links is shifting its focus to address this important concern.

That concern, of course, is violence. You recognize, as we all do, that violence is powerfully altering the quality of life in too many communities across this country. It's disrupting our homes and our streets. It's invading our schools and our neighborhoods. In some way, we all feel the damaging effects of this scourge, and we all have a role to play in eliminating violence from our communities -- we must all work to remove violence from the lives of our children. Certainly, the federal government has a role to play, and this administration is determined to have an impact on the epidemic of violence

sweeping our nation. The 1994 Crime Act is at the cornerstone of our efforts to deal effectively with this problem.

I remain excited about the passage of the 1994 Crime Act because that legislation helps put the federal government on a violence-fighting path that makes simple common sense.

The 1994 Crime Law offers a balanced approach for fighting crime -- it combines support for community policing,

prevention, and punishment, all of which are critical to stopping the violence that is sweeping our country. The Crime Law provides funding to hire 100,000 community oriented police officers. Already we have authorized the hiring of 25,000 of these officers, who are working together with community residents to identify and address strategies to reduce crime, violence, and drug abuse.

The Crime Law also includes the landmark Violence Against Women legislation to help our country respond to

domestic violence. As a result of Fiscal Year 1995 funding, each state has received over \$426,000 to establish law enforcement, prosecutors, and victims' services that address violence against women.

It is notable that you have chosen to launch your new Peace Links effort during this National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. You recognize, as do I, that we cannot **begin** to effectively deal with the violence in our schools and in our

streets until we come to grips with the violence that too many children witness and experience in their homes every day. A child who watches his father beat and abuse his mother comes to see violence as an acceptable fact of life. And too often, that child grows up to become an abuser as well, repeating the cycle of violence that begins in the home.

We must address domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. And we hope that Congress will appropriate funding that will continue to support battered



women's shelters and community programs that help us address this crucial issue. In addition to implementing important Crime Act programs, the federal government also has an important role to play as a strong partner with states and localities committed to reducing violence.

Since President Clinton signed the Crime Law just over one year ago, federal agencies have been working with their state and local counterparts to better understand the issues and roles that education and prevention can play in dealing with violent

crime.

We are strengthening partnerships with state and local authorities; together we are assessing what's working in an effort to bring innovation to our communities.

We are cutting red tape, making it easier than ever before for local leaders to obtain federal grant funding. We are delivering resources to areas that need them most, in record time and with appropriate accountability.

As we move forward, though, we are all mindful of a disturbing trend that should encourage us to re-double our efforts. Recently released statistics tell us the heartening news that violent crime among adults has been declining. This is a wonderful development upon which we should seek to build. Beneath the surface of that positive news, however, we find data that is truly disturbing: the steadily increasing level of violence among teenagers and young adults. Children cannot thrive in environments in which their peers routinely engage in violent behavior that creates a climate of fear and anxiety. We must

focus on youth violence now.

Kids with guns are contributing to the random violence that we fear so much. The Crime Law includes the Youth Handgun Safety Act, which bans handgun possession by young people under the age of 18. It also enables us to swiftly and severely punish anyone who sells or gives a gun to a child. The Law also includes provisions that will allow us to build facilities, such as juvenile boot camps, to help young offenders turn their lives around.

We all know that it is crucial for us to reach these children before they become players on the stage of the criminal justice system. And the crime statistics I mentioned earlier suggest one important set of programs that can help us to have such an impact.

I recently had an opportunity to review statistics which reveal that the time of day when offending rates for youth aged 13-17 is the greatest is that period between roughly 3:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. -- those hours immediately following the release from

school. In a time when we many children leave school to return to empty homes because so many of them hail from one-parent and dual-income parent families, it is clear that we need to provide youth with productive activities after school, in the evenings and during the summer months. Parents who are working hard to give their children to full range of life's opportunities need the communities help -- our help in that important task.

The Crime Act offers the kind of help that can make a difference for these families. One of the most some important crime-fighting tools contained in the 1994 Crime Act was the support that legislation provided to make prevention related programs available for our young people. Afterschool and evening programs can help us to engage young people positively. We need to support such efforts if we really aim to deal with the problem of youth violence.

The federal government clearly has an important role to play in this effort, and the Crime Act is giving us the tools that play that role effectively. But we know that this problem will not be solved at the hands of federal government officials in Washington.

As you know from your extensive work in communities around the country, the most successful anti-crime initiatives are those with strong community involvement. To deal effectively with violence, we must mobilize our communities, focus our



enforcement efforts, and invest in prevention that works.

I encourage you to unleash the vast potential of you citizen network to help us deal with the crisis of violence that affects too many of this nation's young people. Engage yourselves in the lives of our children and you can -- we can -- make a real difference for the future of this country.

If we think about the challenge we face on a large scale, it can indeed seem incredibly daunting. And we might be tempted

to throw up our hands and abandon the crucial task before we even begin. If, however, we focus on our task -- child by child, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, and city by city -- we can reweave our national fabric of community. We can create safe environments in which our children and family can thrive. We can give our children the futures they deserve. We must act to make that vision a reality this country.

With the involvement of people like you, I know we can make the difference and give our children the world of

wonderful opportunities they each deserve.

Thank you very much.