

February 12, 1995

Remarks at a Meeting with Middle Eastern Leaders

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Summary:

Remarks by U.S. President Clinton at a meeting with the Foreign Ministers and representatives of the Middle East Peace Process on February 12, 1995 that reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the process at large.

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Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And thank you, all of you, for coming to this very important meeting. It is no secret to anyone in the world that we are at a critical moment in the peace process. We cannot allow the rise of terror again to threaten this peace, or as Chairman Arafat said the other day, we cannot allow it to kill the Palestinian dream.

We are prepared in this country to redouble our efforts to get the peace process back in full gear. We are doing what we can on our own and with others to deal with the problem of terror.

I want to begin by saying a special word of appreciation to President Mubarak for the Cairo summit. He has been involved in this process all along, and I think that the Cairo summit produced a clear statement by the leaders of all of you here represented that we are not going to let terror hold sway, that we are not going to let the peace process collapse. Today it is for us to begin to take the specific steps necessary to have the message of peace and renewed commitment carried out.

I think it's clear that we have to complete phase two of the Israel-Palestinian Agreement. I think it's clear that we have to fully implement the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. I think it is clear that we have to bring some economic benefits of peace as quickly as we possibly can.

And the United States is prepared to do its part on that. For example, if you agree to establish industrial zones in the West Bank and Gaza and elsewhere, I am prepared to go to Congress and seek approval for extending duty-free treatment to products coming out of those zones. Of course, in the end, the economic and political cooperation among all of you will be the most important thing in reaping economic progress. But I want to do our part.

I know our Russian partner feels the same. I think that many others around the world will also help. But I am absolutely convinced that we need to move as quickly as we can to prove that there are some economic benefits to peace.

Let me say also that, even though we must have enhanced security to create enhanced economic benefits, it is obvious that our attempt to do that is impaired when the movement of goods is limited by boycott, by closure, by any other action. So we're all going to have to work hard to make progress on the peace front, on the security front, and on the economic front at the same time. And we all have to recognize that there are difficult decisions to be made in this area.

The negotiations that you have already concluded have built a framework for peace. What we have to do now is to have specific achievements, lasting achievements. We will do our part. We are as committed today as we have ever been to a comprehensive peace. I wish the representatives of Syria and Lebanon were around this table; they are not here only because there has been no peace agreement signed with them. But I know you all join me in saying that our work will never be completed until we are all around a table as partners working for peace.

Now, there are many other things I could discuss today, but I mostly want to say to you, the United States is still committed to this, more strongly than ever. We are ready to do our part. We are ready to do our part economically. We are certainly ready to do our part in fighting terror. But we all have to do this together. And I hope that this meeting will produce further specific steps that we can all take to keep doing it together. We cannot let people believe that they can disrupt the rational, humane, decent course of history by terror.

Mr. Secretary.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. at Blair House. The following officials and their respective peace delegations attended the meeting: Secretary of State Warren Christopher; Foreign Ministers Atef Sedky of Egypt, Shimon Peres of Israel, and Abd al-Karim al-Kabariti of Jordan; and Nabell Sha'ath, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation for the Palestine Authority.