

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Middle East Leaders September 28, 1995

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, what message should the world get from seeing this group assembled here together today?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, this is truly an historic meeting. The people here represented have never sat together before. And we have the Foreign Ministers of virtually the entire Arab League here. There's never been, even when we were here last—September 2 years ago, we didn't have this kind of representation.

And the message to the world is that the peoples of the Middle East are coming together. They're moving toward peace. They're determined to reach an honorable, a just, and a lasting peace.

Q. When do you expect President Asad to join you here, Mr. President? When do you expect President Asad of Syria to be here with you?

President Clinton. We don't want to give expectations. All I can tell you is that the message that should come out of this meeting is the peoples of the Middle East are moving toward peace.

Q. President Mubarak, what do you think of this accord? And do you think it is the biggest step in the right direction?

President Hosni Mubarak. I think it's a very good accord. And I can say that it's a very historic one. It's a very good indication about the peace which all of us hope can be maintained and cover all the Middle East.

Q. Are the toughest decisions yet to come?

President Clinton. There are always tough decisions on the road to peace. But look at what's happened. Look at what His Majesty King Hussein and—look at this agreement today. We're moving in the right direction. That's all anyone

could ask. And the United States is very, very pleased about it.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Q. Mr. President, to what limit can the United States guarantee the honest implementation for that agreement?

President Clinton. I don't know that the United States is in a position of guaranteeing it, but we have worked with these parties, and we have confidence that there will be an honest effort made to implement the agreement.

And I think the fact that President Mubarak would come here—he has been a very positive force in these negotiations—His Majesty King Hussein would come here for this should be evidence that all of us have a high level of confidence that we will be able to work together to help this agreement be implemented.

And that will be my message to the others who are coming here from around the world today. Every nation says that it is a friend of peace in the Middle East. Now we must all help this peace to succeed in every way that we possibly can. And the leaders of your region by coming here today have, I think, given great energy and inspiration to that and will increase the chances that this historic meeting will lead to the proper implementation of the agreement and to rewarding the courage of the Israelis and the Palestinians who have made it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House prior to discussions with King Hussein I of Jordan, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.