

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and an Exchange With Reporters

March 10, 1997

President Clinton. Let me say that I'm very glad to welcome President Mubarak back to Washington. The United States and Egypt have been partners in the quest for peace in the Middle East for two decades now. Nothing positive has happened except when we work together, and I think it's important that we continue to do so. And I'm looking forward to this meeting to discuss that as well as what we can do to improve the relations between our two countries.

Welcome, Mr. President. I'm glad to see you.

President Mubarak. Thank you very much.

U.S. Veto of U.N. Resolution on Jerusalem Settlements

Q. President Mubarak, you're the leader of the first nation to begin a peace process with Israel. Do you buy President Clinton's rationale that he is preserving the peace process by, in effect, sanctioning the building of settlements in East Jerusalem?

President Mubarak. It is said in the memo that the President did change his mind concerning the settlements, but the statements coming out from the State Department and from the White House concerning the settlements—the President is a full partner in the peace process. Without the United States, it would be very difficult to continue the peace process. So it's very important to have his influence, his leadership, his activity——

Q. But he gave a green light with his veto.

President Clinton. We're going to have a press conference later.

President Mubarak. Yes.

President Clinton. And we're going to answer all the questions. But I don't think it's fair to say I've sanctioned that. We'll have a press conference later. I'll answer more questions.

Q. Are you prepared to explain the veto, Mr. President—Clinton?

President Clinton. Sure. Yes, we'll have a press conference, and I'll answer all those questions. I'll be happy to answer that. And if no one gets to ask it, I will voluntarily answer it later.

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

President Clinton. Let me begin by saying that it's a great honor for the United States to have President Mubarak back at the White House. His leadership for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East has been absolutely essential to any progress which has been made for 20 years now. We have worked closely together, and I'm looking forward to having this meeting.

Let me also say that we're going to have a press conference afterward, and we'll do our best to answer whatever questions you have.

Do you have anything you would like to say, Mr. President?

President Mubarak. Usually, I come to the United States to meet Mr. Clinton, for the United States is a full partner for the peace process, making tremendous efforts so the process will continue, so as to reach a comprehensive settlement and peace could prevail in the whole area and cooperation will continue among the countries in the Middle East. I thank the President for his efforts, and we are going to discuss other issues now.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt March 10, 1997

President Clinton. Good afternoon. I was glad to have the chance to welcome President Mubarak back to the White House. He has been a valued friend of the United States for 16 years now, one of the very first leaders to visit me in 1993 and also one of the first now to come to Washington during my second term.

Through this meeting and through consultations with other leaders from the region, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chairman Arafat, and King Hussein, who will be here next week, we are working to help the parties find common ground through progress toward lasting peace. We know that these efforts cannot succeed without the leadership of Egypt.

Since the Camp David accords in 1979, Egypt has been a powerful force for peace in the Middle East. That has continued to be true through the last 3½ years, a time of extraordinary progress toward peace and repeated challenges. Now, as Israel and the Palestinians embark on the difficult task of permanent status negotiations, as we look to revive negotiations between Israel and Syria and then bring Lebanon into the process to complete the circle of peace, we know that Egypt's leadership will be vital to finish the job.

In January Israelis and Palestinians once again demonstrated that even though the challenges are great, the will to create peace is there. An agreement on difficult issues can be achieved through genuine negotiations. But we've also been reminded recently of how difficult it is to maintain the momentum toward peace. Clearly, we're at a moment when all those with a stake in the peace process must rededicate themselves to building confidence and making progress.

Today the United States and Egypt have deepened our own understanding in our partnership, our determination to coordinate our efforts even more closely and to encourage the parties to tackle the tough questions ahead. We also discussed how we can increase our cooperation on issues of regional security and expand the ties of commerce between our people. Stability and security in the region demands that the people of Egypt and all the peoples of the

Middle East are rewarded in their efforts by greater prosperity.

I congratulated President Mubarak on the strong economic advances Egypt has made in the last 2 years, the work that he and Vice President Gore have done. And the U.S.-Egypt partnership for economic growth and development has made a real difference by promoting privatization and tariff reduction.

The President's Council, a group of business leaders from the United States and Egypt, has achieved dramatic success, increasing trade and investment between our nations and deepening support for necessary economic reforms. Now Egypt is creating new growth and opportunity, building a better future for its people and for others throughout the Middle East.

Mr. President, you and I have been together here at the White House, in Cairo, at the Summit of the Peacemakers at Sharm al-Sheikh, and elsewhere, working for a just and lasting peace and a new day in the region. Now we're in a new phase, and we have to protect the hard work and achievements of the last 3½ years, and we know we'll have to work hard to fulfill the hopes for the Middle East and for peace. I know we can look to you as a friend and partner, and I look forward to being your friend and partner on this historic mission.

Welcome.

President Mubarak. Ladies and gentlemen, I was very pleased to meet once again with President Clinton and exchange with him views and ideas of matters of common concern. Let me first seize the opportunity to congratulate the President on the reaffirmation of the American people's confidence in his wise and inspiring leadership. It is most reassuring for many to know that they have a knowledgeable and far-sighted friend in the White House.

In our discussion today, we had the opportunity to review several issues of special interest to us. First, we reviewed recent developments of the Middle East peace process. While we are pleased by the progress which has been attained on the Israel-Palestinian track, we were alarmed by the differences and the complications that have appeared lately. Such developments make the peace process a fragile and