

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Jacques Chirac of France and an Exchange With Reporters in Denver June 20, 1997

Proposed Tobacco Agreement

President Clinton. Let me say, first of all, I'm delighted to see President Chirac again, and I want to compliment him again on his leadership in Paris recently when we signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act. I have asked for his indulgence so that I can make a brief statement about the settlement which was announced in the tobacco case.

You all remember that it was, I think, a little less than a year ago that the Food and Drug Administration announced its proposed rule to restrain the marketing, access, and sales of tobacco to children in the United States. The jurisdiction of the FDA subsequently was upheld in court, and I believe that it was those developments which gave rise to the willingness of tobacco companies to engage in talks with the States and the other parties.

They have now reached a proposed settlement. And the first thing I'd like to do is to compliment the attorneys general and the others who were involved in the suit for their work to advance the cause of protecting the public health and protecting our children. Now what we have to do is to subject this proposed agreement to strict scrutiny.

I have asked my Domestic Policy Adviser, Bruce Reed, and Secretary Shalala to head up an administration team to review this agreement very, very carefully. And they will do that in a matter of weeks, not months. But I want them to take an adequate amount of time.

And I want to assure you that my standard will be what it always has been: We must judge this agreement based on whether it advances the public health and will reduce the number of children who are smoking cigarettes. And we will look at it from that point of view. But I do want to congratulate the parties for reaching this agreement, and I'm looking forward to looking into it.

Q. What's your first take on it, Mr. President? Does it look pretty good, or are there certain areas that you have reservations—[*inaudible*]?

President Clinton. Well, what—the money—of course, it's an enormous amount of money. And apparently, quite a bit was added just in

the last few days. I don't know much more about it than that. I would say this—what I want to look at is two things, principally, from the—[*inaudible*—]point of view: What is the scope of the FDA's jurisdiction? What is the capacity of the FDA, for example, to deal with nicotine levels in cigarettes, things of that kind? And then the second issue is, how is this money going to be paid in and spent over this period of time? What is the spending? Will it really advance the public health?

And of course, then there's some other non-financial issues: What are the nature of the warnings that they've agreed to? I've heard a little about that. But I have had no opportunity to really even see a summary of this agreement. So the number one thing for us would be the scope and nature of the FDA jurisdiction and then how will the money be spent? Will it really advance the public health?

Thank you.

Romania and NATO Expansion

Q. President Chirac, what is your position, and will you be talking to President Clinton about Romania's membership in NATO? Would you prefer Romania to be allowed into NATO right now?

President Chirac. I think it's in the interest of the world and in the interest of Romania to be part of the first set of countries admitted into expanded NATO, and I will certainly be presenting this viewpoint, which I think is fair and normal.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, you evidently got a bad report from President Mubarak on Mideast peacemaking. Are you bringing some urgent message to the President that the U.S. should redouble its efforts? Are you unhappy with the slow state of play?

President Chirac. This is a subject that I will be discussing with President Clinton. I am, in fact, worried about the situation in the Middle East.

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

Q. Mr. President, can we ask you a question, please?

Visit of President Chirac

President Clinton. Yes. Before you do, let me say, first, I want to welcome President Chirac to the United States again and thank him for the wonderful job that he did in hosting the NATO meeting in Paris where we announced the historic partnership with Russia. I would also like to thank him for the work that we are doing together in so many parts of the world and especially on behalf of the American people to thank him for the help that France gave in the evacuation of American citizens in Brazzaville. We were very grateful for that.

The European Economy

Q. I would like to ask you, what's going to be your message to the French and to the Europeans regarding the economy? Do you have something special to say about how to have a better economy for Europe?

President Clinton. I don't think there is a uniform answer for one country you can apply to another. But I think that the trick is how do you have enough fiscal discipline and flexibility to grow jobs and have economic growth while still preserving an adequate safety net for people who deserve their support.

You know, the French have a lot of things that we Americans admire, a wonderful network of child care, for example, for working families, a provision for health insurance for all families. The question is, how can you preserve the essentials that make a society whole and give it integrity and have it be open and flexible enough to grow?

And this question will have to be answered a little differently, I think, in every country. But perhaps if we all work together in good faith, we can all make progress. The United

States has a very great interest in economic growth in France and, indeed, in Europe at large. I have always supported that.

Africa

Q. Mr. President, are you planning, with President Chirac, are both of you trying to reshuffle the cards in Africa?

President Clinton. Well, I have always been impressed with President Chirac's leadership in Africa and his passionate devotion to it. And I can tell you that in every private conversation we've ever had that lasted more than 30 seconds, he's brought Africa up.

We have a proposal. We hope we can work together as we have in different ways in emergencies, in Sierra Leone, in Brazzaville, or the former Zaire. We hope we can work together to really do something for Africa.

You know, there are several countries in Africa that had growth rates of over 7 percent last year, 48 democracies now, and the rest of the world simply can't walk away from it. We need a balance of aid and trade. And we are prepared in the United States to do more. France has always been a leader, and I hope that together we can persuade other countries to join us.

NATO Expansion

Q. Do you think that it's possible to get an agreement of expansion of NATO with President Clinton before the Madrid summit? Is that possible?

President Chirac. I hope so, and I believe so.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. at the Brown Palace Hotel. President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy in Denver June 20, 1997

Proposed Tobacco Agreement

Q. Mr. President, could we ask you one question again—I'm sorry—on tobacco? Apparently,

Mr. Kessler is already a little bit skeptical about the agreement, particularly as it concerns regulating nicotine levels. Could the White House