

is needed to improve the quality of the existing teaching force. These 40 school districts I just mentioned not only hired over 3,500 new teachers; they gave professional development to over 22,000 teachers to improve their skills in the classroom.

Our bill provides that money can be used to train existing teachers, and money can be used for recruitment as well as for salaries. In other words, this fund is flexible where it needs to be flexible but targeted where it needs to be targeted. This report shows conclusively that what we did in 1998, as Republicans and Democrats alike, was right. It shows that the Members of Congress in the Republican Party who ran ads in 1998 complimenting themselves for the 100,000 teacher initiative were right then, and they shouldn't be changing their mind now.

So once again, I ask Congress to put partisanship aside, read this report, and work with me to reduce class size, increase quality in teaching, and increase performance in our schools. We should be funding education strategies that work.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Casserly.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, are you optimistic about Oslo?

The President. Well, yes I am, based on the work that Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat have done already. You know, they've now opened the safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza. They're working very closely together on security arrangements.

But when the Oslo accords were made at the end—the very, very end of 1992, the people

who put them together and the leaders who ratified them were quite smart. They left certain issues to be decided at the end, the so-called final status issues. They left them to the end because they're the hardest.

And so now it's come time to make the hard decisions. This will be difficult for both sides. But I believe that they're well aware of what the options are, and I don't believe they'll get much easier with the passage of time. So I think it's very important that the United States do whatever we can to create the conditions and provide the support necessary for these people to come together and do what they genuinely want to do. And so yes, I'm hopeful. I don't expect that we'll announce the resolution of all the final status issues at Oslo, but I do think that we'll be moving the process right along.

Effect of EgyptAir Flight 990 Aircraft Tragedy on Oslo Talks

Q. Mr. President, are you worried that the EgyptAir crash will overshadow the Oslo trip?

The President. Based on what I now know and my conversation with President Mubarak, based on what I now know, I do not believe that, no. I have no reason to believe that there is any element involved in this which would overshadow or shadow the work of peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:45 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to departure for Oslo, Norway. In his remarks, he referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Exchange With Reporters in Oslo, Norway

November 1, 1999

Middle East Peace Process

Q. What is your hope for the peace process?

The President. Well, first of all, I would like to thank the Prime Minister, the Government, and the people of Norway for hosting this meeting. I think it's coming at a good time. I believe that Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat want to continue the peace process. And we

are now to the point where the really difficult decisions lie ahead. So coming back to Oslo, where the Oslo accords were born, coming here to honor the memory of Yitzhak Rabin, who gave his life for this peace process, it's a good thing to do.

And so we're hopeful that we'll make some progress. And we'll see, and probably the less we say about it in public, the more likely we

are to get something done. But I'm hopeful. And I'm honored to be here in Norway. This is my first trip, as President, to Norway. I haven't been here in 30 years; 30 years ago next month was my first trip to Norway.

President's First Visit to Norway

Q. Do you remember it well?

The President. Very well, yes. It was wonderful.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7 a.m. at Oslo International Airport. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway and an Exchange With Reporters in Oslo November 1, 1999

Prime Minister Bondevik. Mr. President, dear journalists, it's a very special occasion for us in Norway. This is the very first visit from a sitting President of the United States to our country. So we are so glad to receive President Clinton here.

We have had fruitful discussions, where we could continue our talks from the White House in Washington, only 2 weeks ago. And of course, we have discussed the Middle East peace process. We think that the ceremonial commemoration tomorrow for the late Prime Minister Rabin and the talks in that framework can stimulate the peace process. And we are both committed to assist the two parties. The main responsibility for a final solution is, of course, upon the two parties.

Norway and the U.S. will seek ways to expand our common efforts in a number of areas for security, development, and for well-being. The President and I have today agreed on an initiative to follow up the Reykjavik Conference on Women and Democracy, where the First Lady, Hillary Clinton, participated. We are also agreed on a joint initiative on funding for support of disabled victims of the war in Sierra Leone.

Mr. President, I believe that you want to say a few words before we answer one or two questions. Mr. President.

President Clinton. Thank you. First, Prime Minister, let me say I am delighted to be here, honored by your invitation to come a few weeks ago, and then by the King's invitation to come to Norway. As you perhaps know, I traveled here alone as a young man some 30 years ago—

it was actually 30 years ago this December—and I fell in love with this country. I'd long wanted to come back. I was amazed to discover that I am the first sitting President ever to visit Norway. I can't imagine what the others were thinking about—[laughter]—but I am delighted to be here.

I also would like to thank you for the wonderful reception that my wife and my daughter received when they represented our Nation in Lillehammer at the Olympics, and for the support, Prime Minister, you have given to the women's conference and the women's issues that Hillary has tried to raise, most recently in Reykjavik with representatives of your country and the other countries in the region.

We have been friends for a long time. We have been allies for 50 years with NATO. Today the Prime Minister and I discussed building a Europe that is united, democratic, and free; and I am looking forward to seeing the Prime Minister again shortly in Turkey at the meeting of the OSCE. And I'm very grateful that Norway is now the leader of the OSCE, serving its term as chair.

We did discuss the Sierra Leone, and I would just like to say again, I am profoundly grateful that Norway has agreed to work with the United States to provide prosthetics, to provide artificial limbs to as many people as we possibly can, many of them children, whose limbs were deliberately amputated in the cruel civil war in Sierra Leone.

I also want to thank you, Prime Minister, for Norway's support for our common efforts