

Remarks at a Multilateral Meeting With Arab Leaders in Sharm el-Sheikh,
Egypt
June 3, 2003

Well, Mr. President, thank you very much for hosting this important meeting. I want to thank the leaders for coming, Your Majesties and His Royal Highness, Prime Minister Abbas, I want to thank you and your delegation for coming as well.

I'm the kind of person who, when I say something, I mean it. I mean that the world needs to have a Palestinian state that is free and at peace. And therefore, my Government will work with all parties concerned to achieve that vision. I believe now is the time to work to achieve the vision.

All of us have responsibilities to achieve the vision. You, sir, have got a responsibility, and you've assumed it. I want to work with you, as do the other leaders here. We must not allow few people, a few killers, a few terrorists to destroy the dreams and the hopes of the many.

Israel has got responsibilities. Israel must deal with the settlements. Israel must make sure there's a contiguous* territory that the Palestinians can call home.

The leaders at the table have got a responsibility. The biggest responsibility that they have, it seems like to me, is to fight off any source of funding to terror, is to prevent the terrorists from gaining a foothold. I know that is the commitment of the leaders here; I have talked to them about that. It's in their own self-interests to fight off terror. It's in their own self-interests to enable the Palestinian state to emerge.

So this is an historic meeting. It's the beginning of a long process and a tough process. But no matter how difficult it is, you have my commitment that I will expend the energy and effort necessary to move the process forward.

I believe that, as I told the Crown Prince, the Almighty God has endowed each individual on the face of the Earth with—that expects each person to be treated with dignity. This is a universal call. It's the call of all religions, that each person must be free and treated with respect. And it is with that call that I feel passionate about the need to move forward, so that the world can be more peaceful, more free, and more hopeful.

Mr. President, thank you for convening this meeting. Tomorrow we've got important meetings as well. This is the beginning of a process where all of us must not allow the few to destroy the hopes of the many.

May God bless our work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. at the Movenpick Conference Center. The following leaders participated in the meeting with the President: President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain; Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; and Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

* White House correction.