

Darfur. I remain firmly committed to the rapid deployment of an effective peace-keeping force, coupled with serious political

dialogue between the parties, to help end the crisis and the suffering of the innocent people of Darfur.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony in Tel Aviv, Israel *January 9, 2008*

President Peres and Prime Minister Olmert, I thank you for your warm welcome. You know, it's been nearly a decade since I've been in Israel, and I've really been looking forward to coming back. Truth of the matter is, when I was here last time, I really didn't think I'd be coming back as President of the United States. But I knew I'd come back because Israel is a special place. And it's a great honor to make my first visit as the President of the United States. Thank you all for coming out to welcome me.

My one regret is that my wife isn't traveling today. Laura is back home in Washington, but she sends her very best regards to both of you all and to the people of Israel.

The United States and Israel are strong allies. The source of that strength is a shared belief in the power of human freedom. Our people have built two great democracies under difficult circumstances. We built free economies to unleash the potential of our people. And the alliance between our two nations helps guarantee Israel's security as a Jewish state.

Each of our nations must guard against terror. We must firmly resist those who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives. We must recognize that the great ideology based upon liberty is hopeful. In working the lines here, one of the religious leaders said, "Remember, Mr. President, justice and love." Justice and love is based upon a society that welcomes human rights and human dignity, a society which recognizes the universality of freedom. And that's what we stand for today. We will do more than defend ourselves. We seek lasting peace. We see a new opportunity for peace here in the Holy Land and for freedom across the region.

I look forward to my meetings with President Peres and Prime Minister Olmert. We will discuss our deep desire for security, for freedom, and for peace throughout the Middle East. I want to thank the people of Israel for their friendship and hospitality, and I appreciate the opportunity to visit your beautiful country once again. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:23 p.m. at Ben Gurion International Airport.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Shimon Peres of Israel in Jerusalem, Israel *January 9, 2008*

President Peres. Mr. President, distinguished guests: As the President of the state, I am delighted to speak on behalf

of our people. I want to tell you in simple language, you came to a land and a people