

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak
of Egypt in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt
January 16, 2008

President Mubarak. I'd like to welcome President Bush here in Egypt and, particularly, in Sharm el-Sheikh City. It is the City of Peace.

We briefed Mr. Bush—he briefed us on the outcome of his visits in the region, and we held very important consultations, which dealt with the security situation now and bilateral and mutual efforts for the sake of peace, security, and stability in the Middle East.

I emphasized through our consultations the Egyptian situation, underscoring and supporting peace and our aspirations that Mr. Bush follows up the negotiations between both the Israeli and Palestinian sides, and I also said that I wish to reach a peace agreement before the end of his term. I emphasized that the Palestinian question, of course, is the core of problems and conflict in the Middle East, and it is the entry to contain the crises and tension in the region and the best means to face what's going on in the world and our region; I mean by that, the escalation of violence, extremism, and terrorism.

I also underscored the strategic importance we focus on here in Egypt: that the Gulf, its peoples—sisterly peoples and states—they are part and parcel of the national security of Egypt, the security of the Middle East, and the world. The Egyptian-American relations actually have been very important, and this importance has been getting more important. And this importance addressed the interests of both people in all the region and issues in the Middle East.

Our consultations today showed that we believe and understand the mutual interests of both sides in continuing our dialogue and consultations—and I mean by that, strategic consultations—for the sake of the peace, security, and stability of the Middle

East and the development of its states and the prosperity of its people. I also emphasized that we need to—we are keen on supporting peace efforts; that we're ready, hand in hand with the United States of America and the Quartet and all other regional and international stakeholders and parties, for the sake of comprehensive and just peace, to put an end to this Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, finally, to open new horizons for the Middle East, for a more peaceful and security future, to have more justice and security in the region.

I reiterate our welcome words for Mr. Bush, and I hope that his efforts for the sake of peace would reach a success. And now I'll give you the floor, sir.

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you, sir. It's a pleasure to be back in Egypt. This is such a beautiful site, Mr. President. Thank you for hosting my visit here. As you mentioned, I've been on a long trip, and I can't think of a better place to end it than right here with you in this beautiful setting.

President Mubarak. But needs much more days.

President Bush. Yes. He wants me back, okay. [Laughter] He's extended an invitation, and thank you for that, sir.

It's an important stop for me because the United States has a longstanding friendship with Egypt. It's important for the people of Egypt to understand, our Nation respects you, respects your history, respects your traditions, and respects your culture. Our friendship is strong. It's a cornerstone of—one of the main cornerstones of our policy in this region, and it's based on our shared commitment to peace, security, and prosperity.

I appreciate the opportunity, Mr. President, to give you an update on my trip. And I appreciate the advice you've given

me. You've seen a lot in your years as President. You've got a great deal of experience, and I appreciate your feeling comfortable in sharing that experience once again with me.

I really appreciate Egypt's support in the war on terror. I appreciate the fact that you've given peacekeepers for Sudan. I did brief you on my talks in Israel and with the Palestinians, and they were positive talks. And I said, I'm optimistic an agreement can be reached. And the reason I am, is because I believe the leadership in Israel and the leadership of the Palestinians is committed to a two-state solution. And I know nations in the neighborhood are willing to help, particularly yourself. And I appreciate your strong, constructive support for the process.

And I told the President, I'm going to stay—there's a wonder whether or not the American President, when he says something, whether he actually means it. When I say, "I'm coming back to stay engaged," I mean it. And when I say, "I'm optimistic we can get a deal done," I mean what I'm saying. And so I appreciate the chance to talk.

We also talked about Lebanon, and we agreed it's important for nations in this region to support Prime Minister Siniora. It's important to encourage the holding of immediate and unconditional Presidential elections according to the Lebanese Constitution and to make it clear to Syria, Iran, and their allies, they must end their interference and efforts to undermine the process.

We talked—and by the way, when it came to the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, I want to thank you for your support of Annapolis. It was important that you were there. As a matter of fact, you didn't hesitate, because you knew that both those parties had to have supportive people in the region. And I thank you very much for that.

We spent time on Iraq. The President asked me how I thought things were going

there. The decision to send more troops is working. Violence is down. Secretary Rice came back from Iraq yesterday and briefed me that she was able to see life returning back to the streets, where moms are out with their children. Normal life is coming back, and political life is moving.

Mr. President, I'm sure you followed the fact that the Council of Representatives passed the de-Ba'athification law as part of an important reconciliation package. The Government isn't perfect, but nevertheless, progress is being made. And I assure to you, Mr. President—I want to share this with the press corps—that the United States will continue to help the Iraqi people secure their democracy.

I also talked about Egypt's role in the world. Egypt is an important nation that sends a clear signal. People watch Egypt. I appreciate very much the long and proud tradition that you've had for a vibrant civil society. I appreciate the fact that women play an important role in your society, Mr. President. I do so because not only am I'm a proud father of two young professional women, I also know how important it is for any vibrant society to have women involved in constructive and powerful ways. And I appreciate the example that your nation is setting.

Progress toward greater political openness is being led by the Egyptians themselves, by pioneering journalists—some of whom even may be here—bloggers or judges insisting on independence or other strong civic and religious leaders who love their country and are determined to build a democratic future.

Because of the predominate role you play and because I strongly believe that Egypt can play a role in the freedom and justice movement, you and I have discussed the issue. You have taken steps toward economic openness, and I discussed that with your Prime Minister—and democratic reform. And my hope is that the Egyptian Government will build on these important steps and give the people of this proud

nation a greater voice in your future. I think it will lead to peace, and I think it will lead to justice.

Our friendship with Egypt is deep and broad. Egypt will continue to be a vital strategic partner of the United States. We will work together to build a safer and more peaceful world. And, Mr. President, I thank your leadership on the issue of peace and security.

I've had a great trip. I've been impressed by the warmth and the energy of the people I have met. This is a dynamic part of the world that is seeing significant changes. I wish my fellow citizens would be able to come and see firsthand the vibrancy and excitement in the Middle East. People here are working to embrace the opportunities of a modern global economy and, in doing so, are not abandoning their traditions or cultures or their faith.

This isn't easy work, as we head into the 21st century, and it's going to require social, economic, and political reform. And it takes time for people to resolve the challenges in their respective societies; same in my country. But I'm absolutely confident the people of the Middle East are working hard to build a society based upon justice. And I've assured them that as they make the journey, the United States will be a steady friend and partner.

Thank you for your time. God bless.

President Mubarak. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the Royal Suite Garden at the Four Seasons Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; and Prime Minister Ahmed Mohamed Nazif of Egypt. President Mubarak spoke partly in Arabic, and those portions of his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

January 16, 2008

Dear _____ :

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-114)(the "Act"), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond February 1, 2008, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Joseph R. Biden, Jr., chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Robert C. Byrd, chairman, and Thad Cochran, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Tom Lantos, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; and David R. Obey, chairman, and Jerry Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations.