

Q. How long would it take to ratify START III?

The President. I don't know. But I think—but actually, I think START III could be done in fairly short order because we have been, Boris Yeltsin and I, have been talking about these issues for years now, and I think we know what the parameters of our two positions are, what our national security considerations are. And so I would expect that it could be done fairly quickly once we get START II out of the way.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. outside the Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Gohar Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan.

Birmingham Group of Eight Summit Statement

May 17, 1998

Northern Ireland

We warmly welcome the Belfast Agreement reached on 10 April. We commend all those involved in achieving an outcome which reflects the fundamental aspirations of both parts of the community in Northern Ireland and secures their rights. We recognise that the Agreement must win the support of the people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. While acknowledging that it presents challenges to all parties, we hope it will achieve the widest possible support, not only as a basis for political stability and peace but also as an opportunity for economic development and prosperity for all Northern Ireland's people. We pledge our countries' support for this process.

Indonesia

We are deeply concerned at the situation in Indonesia, especially the recent upsurge of violence and the loss of life. We deplore the killings and urge the authorities to show maximum restraint, to refrain from the use of lethal force and to respect individual rights. We call on the public to express their views peacefully. It is essential to avoid an escalation of violence.

We recognise the hardship the economic crisis has caused. We believe the economic reform programme agreed with and supported by the international financial institutions is the only way to restore confidence and growth, and fully support the government in implementing it. But successful economic reform and international support for it will require sufficient political and social stability. We will continue to work, together with the international financial institutions, to support reform and alleviate hardship.

The current social unrest indicates that, to resolve the crisis, political as well as economic reform is necessary. The need for political reform is widely acknowledged in Indonesia. We encourage the authorities to respond rapidly, by opening a dialogue which addresses the aspirations of the Indonesian people and by introducing the necessary reforms.

FRY/Kosovo

The continuing violence in Kosovo has revived fears of a new Balkans war. The region has already seen too much bloodshed. A political solution to the problem of Kosovo is vital for the peace and well-being of all the people of the region. We consider the meeting on 15 May between President Milosevic and Dr Rugova to be a positive first step. It is particularly important that President Milosevic has assumed personal responsibility in the search for a resolution of the problems of Kosovo, including its future status. We urge both sides to ensure that the dialogue now begun leads rapidly to the adoption of concrete measures to lower tensions and stop violence. Resolving the issue of Kosovo's status will be difficult but is essential for the good of all those living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Peace and stability in Europe rest on the principles that borders are inviolable and that political change must come about through peaceful means. We reject terrorism and violence from any side to achieve political goals or to stifle dissent. The states of the region should themselves contribute to a non-violent solution to the crisis. All states should cooperate in addressing the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

We underline the importance of cooperation with the Gonzalez mission. We stand ready to promote a clear and achievable path towards the FRY's full integration into the international community. But if Belgrade fails to build on recent progress and a genuine political process does not get underway, its isolation will deepen.

The elections in Montenegro on 31 May must be free, fair and in keeping with democratic standards and their results must be respected by all.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

We welcome the progress that has recently been made on peace implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and support the High Representative's active role in promoting the peace process. This is a critical year for consolidating peace in Bosnia, especially for refugee returns and democratic development, with nationwide elections scheduled for September. While the people of Bosnia have accomplished a great deal under very difficult circumstances, we look to Bosnia's leaders to work harder to create a stable and prosperous future for all the country's citizens.

Middle East Peace Process

We are deeply concerned at the continuing stalemate in the peace process, with concluded agreements not yet being implemented. We encourage all efforts to help revive the peace process. We strongly support the efforts to gain the agreement of the parties to a package of constructive and realistic ideas which have already been presented by the United States, including a second Israeli redeployment. We welcome Palestinian agreement in principle to these ideas which, if accepted by all sides, would lead to the resumption of final status talks. We call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to refrain from unilateral acts which pre-determine the final status negotiations and undermine confidence. We remain determined to work with all the parties—Israel, the Palestinians, Syria, Lebanon—for a comprehensive peace. A resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

would build confidence in the region and help to restore momentum to the peace process as a whole. A continuing blockage on the other hand could have grave consequences for security throughout the region.

Indian Nuclear Tests

We condemn the nuclear tests which were carried out by India on 11 and 13 May. Such action runs counter to the will expressed by 149 signatories to the CTBT to cease nuclear testing, to efforts to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime and to steps to enhance regional and international peace and security. It has been met by immediate international concern and opposition, from governments and more widely. We underline our full commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as the cornerstones of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundations for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We express our grave concern about the increased risk of nuclear and missile proliferation in South Asia and elsewhere. We urge India and other states in the region to refrain from further tests and the deployment of nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles. We call upon India to rejoin the mainstream of international opinion, to adhere unconditionally to the NPT and the CTBT and to enter into negotiations on a global treaty to stop the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. India's relationship with each of us has been affected by these developments. We are making this clear in our own direct exchanges and dealings with the Indian Government and we call upon other states similarly to address their concerns to India. We call upon and encourage Pakistan to exercise maximum restraint in the face of these tests and to adhere to international non-proliferation norms.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 17 but was not issued as a White House press release. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Group of Eight Birmingham Summit Communique

May 17, 1998

Introduction

1. We, the Heads of State or Government of eight major industrialised democracies and the President of the European Commission, met in Birmingham to discuss issues affecting people in our own and other countries. In a world of increasing globalisation we are ever more interdependent. Our challenge is to build on and sustain the process of globalisation and to ensure that its benefits are spread more widely to improve the quality of life of people everywhere. We must also ensure that our institutions and structures keep pace with the rapid technological and economic changes under way in the world.

2. Of the major challenges facing the world on the threshold of the 21st century, this Summit has focused on three:

- achieving sustainable economic growth and development throughout the world in a way which, while safeguarding the environment and promoting good governance, will enable developing countries to grow faster and reduce poverty, restore growth to emerging Asian economies, and sustain the liberalisation of trade in goods and services and of investment in a stable international economy;
- building lasting growth in our own economies in which all can participate, creating jobs and combating social exclusion;
- tackling drugs and transnational crime which threaten to sap this growth, undermine the rule of law and damage the lives of individuals in all countries of the world.

Our aim in each case has been to agree concrete actions to tackle these challenges.

Promoting sustainable growth in the global economy

3. In an interdependent world, we must work to build sustainable economic growth in all countries. Global integration is a process we have encouraged and shaped and which is producing clear benefits for people

throughout the world. We welcomed the historic decisions taken on 2 May on the establishment of European Economic and Monetary Union. We look forward to a successful EMU which contributes to the health of the world economy. The commitment in European Union countries to sound fiscal policies and continuing structural reform is key to the long-term success of EMU, and to improving the prospects for growth and employment.

4. Overall global prospects remain good. However, since we last met, the prospects have been temporarily set back by the financial crisis in Asia. We confirm our strong support for the efforts to re-establish stability and growth in the region and for the key role of the International Financial Institutions. Successful recovery in Asia will bring important benefits for us all. Therefore:

- we strongly support reforms underway in the affected countries and welcome the progress so far achieved. With full implementation of programmes agreed with the IMF we are confident that stability can be restored. The underlying factors that helped Asia achieve impressive growth in the past remain in place. Implementation of agreed policies together with the action taken by ourselves and other countries to avoid spill-over effects provide the basis for a firm recovery in the region and renewed global stability;
- we believe a key lesson from events in Asia is the importance of sound economic policy, transparency and good governance. These improve the functioning of financial markets, the quality of economic policy making and public understanding and support for sound policies, and thereby enhance confidence. It is also important to ensure that the private sector plays a timely and appropriate role in crisis resolution;
- we are conscious of the serious impact of the crisis in the region on the poor and most vulnerable. Economic and financial reform needs to be matched with actions and policies by the countries concerned to help protect these groups from the worst effects of the crisis. We welcome the support for this by