

Finally, I want to emphasize that according to China's constitution, the freedom of religious belief in Tibet and also throughout China is protected. But as the President of the People's Republic of China and as a communist member, a member of the communist party, I myself am an atheist. But this will by no means affect my respect for the religious freedom in Tibet.

But still, I have a question. That is, during my visit to the United States last year and also during my previous visits to other European countries, I found that although the education in science and technology have developed to a very high level, and people are now enjoying modern civilization, but still quite a number of them have a belief in Lamaism. So this is a question that I'm still studying and still looking into. I want to find out the reason why.

I think President Clinton is a strong defender of the American interests, and I am a strong defender of the Chinese interests. But despite that, we still can have very friendly exchanges of views and discussions. And I think that is democracy. And I want to stress that, actually, there are a lot of areas in which we can learn from each other.

If you agree, we will finish this. *[Laughter]*

President Clinton. I agree, but I have—you have to let me say one thing about the Dalai Lama. *[Laughter]*

First, I agree that Tibet is a part of China, an autonomous region of China. And I can understand why the acknowledgement of that would be a precondition of dialog with the Dalai Lama. But I also believe that there are many, many Tibetans who still revere the Dalai Lama and view him as their spiritual leader.

President Jiang pointed out that he has a few followers of Tibetan Buddhism, even in the United States and Europe. But most of his followers have not given up their own religious faith. He has followers who are Christians—supporters, excuse me, not followers, supporters—who are Christians, who are Jews, who are Muslims, who believe in the unity of God, and who believe he is a holy man.

But for us, the question is not fundamentally religious; it is political. That is, we believe that other people should have the right

to fully practice their religious beliefs and that if he, in good faith, presents himself on those terms, it is a legitimate thing for China to engage him in dialog.

And let me say something that will perhaps be unpopular with everyone. I have spent time with the Dalai Lama. I believe him to be an honest man, and I believe if he had a conversation with President Jiang, they would like each other very much. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President's 161st news conference began at 12:05 p.m. in the Western Hall of the Great Hall of the People. President Jiang spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of this news conference could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Joint Statement on Anti-Personnel Landmines

June 27, 1998

The United States and China reaffirm their commitment to ending the humanitarian crisis caused by the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines (APL). They both maintain that efforts to eliminate the APL threat to civilians should be pursued consistent with national security requirements.

The United States and China recognize the importance of the Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Conventional Weapons in addressing humanitarian concerns resulting from the indiscriminate use of landmines. They agree to work toward the early ratification of the Amended Protocol and urge others to ratify it as well.

The United States and China agree to actively pursue at the Conference on Disarmament the commencement of negotiations on an anti-personnel landmines transfer/export ban by supporting the prompt establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee.

The United States and China commit to accelerate global humanitarian demining operations with the objective of eliminating the threat of anti-personnel landmines to civilians as soon as possible. The United States and China reaffirm their commitments to

furnish demining assistance, which could include mine awareness, training in mine clearance, and technology for detection and clearance, through appropriate channels to affected countries with the objective of promoting their indigenous capacity for humanitarian demining.

NOTE: The joint statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release.

Joint Statement on the Biological Weapons Convention

June 27, 1998

Recognizing the threat posed by biological and toxin weapons, the United States and China reaffirm their strong support for the complete global elimination of biological weapons. As States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, the two sides stress the importance of the Convention to international peace and security, fully support the purposes and objectives of the Convention, and favor comprehensively strengthening the effectiveness and universality of the Convention.

The United States and China each reaffirm that they are determined to strictly abide by the provisions of the Convention, to earnestly and comprehensively fulfill the obligations each has undertaken, shall not develop, produce or stockpile biological weapons under any circumstances and shall oppose the proliferation of biological weapons and their technology and equipment.

Both the United States and China support efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention, including the establishment of a practical and effective compliance mechanism. In this connection, the two sides positively appraise the work of the Ad Hoc Group set up for this purpose on negotiating a protocol to the Convention. The two sides believe the protocol must include efficient, practical and cost effective measures to deter proliferation or violation of the Convention and improve transparency. Appropriate measures should be formulated and implemented in a manner that takes into account protection of sensitive commercial information and legitimate security needs, and in

light of relevant national laws and regulations. The two sides express their desire to cooperate in the negotiations and work together to further accelerate an early conclusion of the negotiations on the protocol.

The United States and China agree that they shall strive to enhance bilateral cooperation and exchanges in the field of biotechnology and vigorously engage in and promote the peaceful use of biological technology.

NOTE: The joint statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Jiang in Beijing

June 27, 1998

President Jiang, Madame Wang, members of the Chinese Government, fellow guests; I am honored to be here representing the people of the United States in the Great Hall of the People which reflects the impressive progress of the Chinese people in the 20th century.

We Americans first saw it on our television 26 years ago when President Nixon became the first American leader to visit China. Those were the very first live pictures of China ever seen in my country. Across the United States, Americans were filled with great hope as relations resumed between our two great nations.

That visit changed history. It reminded us of the warmth each nation felt for the other, long before the cold war. It recalled our alliance in World War II and our long history of commercial relations dating back to the infancy of the United States. We were trading together before our Constitution was written. Even the tea that our Founding Fathers threw into the Boston Harbor in 1773 to protest British taxes was from China.

For most of our history we have looked upon China as a distant friend across the sea. As the Bamboo Curtain opened, Americans and Chinese learned about each other all over again. Starting with pandas and ping-pong players, we have built a broad and friendly relationship.

Today China and the United States cooperate across a wide range of enterprises,