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William J. Clinton

The White House,
September 6, 2000.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea in New York City

September 7, 2000

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, how did your Middle East meetings go yesterday? And are there any more meetings planned—did you make any progress?

The President. Well, I think they went basically well. They were good, constructive meetings. I think they both very much want an agreement, and they understand they have a limited time in which to achieve it. And we discussed a whole range of things, in terms of where we were and where we were going.

I don't know if there will be any more meetings while we're here. I worked until late in the night last night, and as you see, I'm here with President Kim, and I have a few other meetings, and then we'll see where we are and what, if anything, else should be done while we're here. But I'm confident there will be a serious effort to work through these things over the next few weeks.

Q. Would that include a summit, sir, before the end of October?

The President. Well, there's been no discussion of that.

Oil Prices

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about your meeting with the Saudi Prince yesterday, any discussion of oil production?

The President. Yes, we talked about it. You know, I told him that I was very concerned that the price of oil was too high, not just for America but for the world, that if it's a cause of recession in any part of the world, that would hurt the oil producing countries, and there are other reasons why

it was not in their interest. And he agreed with that. He's been very strong about that.

And I said I certainly hoped that when OPEC met there would be an increase in production, because that was the policy they adopted. Remember, they adopted a policy that said if the price got outside the range—as I remember the range, it was \$22, \$28 a barrel—and they would take appropriate action. So I hope that they will.

Of course, in the United States, we had a particular concern because our inventories are at a 24-year low and because in this region, New York and up north, are so dependent on heating oil. And we're attempting now to fill our reserve and to look at what all of our options are, particularly for meeting the home heating oil needs of the American people. So we're working on all that.

I also will say it's not too late for Congress to pass the long-term energy agenda I've had up there for a couple of years, which will make us relatively less reliant on oil by increasing conservation and alternative technologies and energy sources. And I certainly hope that we'll be able to persuade them to pass that in this environment before they go home.

Korean Unification

Q. On Korean unification, do you see any prospects, sir?

The President. Well, I think you ought to ask President Kim. I think the main thing I would like to say about that is that I think he has done a brave and a good thing, not only for the people of his country and North Korea but for the whole stability of the region by taking this initiative. It has been very impressive to me, and I have strongly supported it. And I will continue to strongly support it. I think it's not only good on a human level but for the long-term security of the Korean Peninsula and all of east Asia—I think it is a very, very positive goal. We will continue to be supportive.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:03 a.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria. In his remarks, the President referred to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**Remarks at a Reception for Leaders
of African Nations in New York City**
September 7, 2000

Well, first of all, let me thank Congressman Jefferson. This reception was his idea, and I thank him for his work on it—and all the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus who helped him who are detained in Washington for votes this afternoon. I want to thank all the leaders of African nations who are here and the diplomats and the business leaders who have come.

There's a simple purpose to this event. We want to say that Africa matters to America. Or as Reverend Jackson, my Special Envoy, was just saying, we don't see Africa as a continent of debtor nations; we see Africa as a credit bank for America's future, an opportunity for a real and genuine and lasting partnership.

I just got back from Nigeria and Tanzania, where I was with some of you in Arusha. And that trip reminded me again of all the positive things that are out there to be built in the future. It also enabled me to say something no American President had ever been able to say: I was glad to go to Africa for the second time.

But I think, and I hope and pray, that no future American President will ever not say that, that we will take it for granted that we should have a broad, comprehensive, in-depth, consistent relationship with Africa. We have a shared interest in making sure that the people of Africa seize their opportunities and work with us to build a common future.

Of course, the governments of Africa have to lay the foundations—the rule of law, a good climate for investment, open markets, and making national investments that broaden the economic base and provide benefits to ordinary people. These things will work.

Last year the world's fastest growing economy was Mozambique, and Botswana was second. Nigeria turned a fiscal debt into a surplus. So that will work. But we must also reach out through our Export-Import Bank, our Overseas Private Investment Corporation, our Trade and Development Agency to encourage more American investment in Africa.

We also should encourage the regional trade blocs to unite smaller economies into bigger economic units in more attractive markets. And as Bill Jefferson said, we're going to do our best to make the most of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, the trade act which the Congress passed earlier this year. When we fully implement it, Africa will have much greater access to American markets than any region in the world has to American markets outside North America, and I'm very proud of that.

We are also working to bridge some of the other divides, helping 20 African countries connect to the Internet, training more than 1,500 government and civic institutions to use it. We know we have to do more in communications in rural Africa. There are some rural areas where there is less than one phone line for every 500 inhabitants.

We don't want a digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world, but neither do we want a digital divide to develop within Africa itself, between cities that are connected and villages that are left out. So we will continue to do what we can for trade and technology. We know that is not enough.

A year ago I announced that we would support a global effort on debt relief and that we would completely write off the debts of as many as 27 African nations. Uganda has already used savings on debt payments to double its primary school enrollment—double. Senegal has used theirs to hire 2,000 teachers. Mozambique has used theirs to buy much-needed medicines.

I asked Congressman Jefferson to go back after meeting with all these leaders to influence the Congress to give us the \$435 million we need this year to fully fund our debt relief program this year and to continue to extend debt relief to other deserving countries who will take the savings and invest it in their people and their future.

I also believe we should do more to promote education in Africa. I have launched a \$300 million initiative, which I hope will be nothing more than a pilot program, to work with developing countries to provide free meals—nutritious breakfasts or lunches in school—so that parents will be encouraged to send 9 million more boys and girls to