

And we expect this torch to be given to whoever will be the successor.

### **2000 Presidential Election**

**Q.** Mr. President, how are you going to explain what's going on back home to Mr. Putin and other foreign leaders?

**President Clinton.** Well, I think it's pretty clear that no one knows yet who won the election. There are recounts in progress, and there will be a full accounting according to an accepted legal process in America. We have plenty of time. There's nothing to worry about.

I think other leaders should have the same reaction the American people have about it. I think they are pretty relaxed about it now. They're going to let the process play out. Both sides are certainly very well represented, and they'll argue their points, and we'll see how it works.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:10 p.m. at the Assara Guest House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

### **Statement on Ratification of the Convention To Combat Desertification**

*November 15, 2000*

On November 13 I signed the instrument of ratification for the Convention To Combat Desertification. Degradation of dry lands affects hundreds of millions of people around the world, especially in Africa. The Convention will help countries marshal the resources needed to mitigate the effects of desertification. It will enhance the effectiveness of foreign assistance and promote a strong role for nongovernmental organizations. Finally, it properly places affected local communities at the heart of international efforts to meet this critical challenge. I look forward to working with our partners in Africa and around the world to implement this innovative international agreement. I commend the Senate for its approval of this important treaty.

### **Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea in Bandar Seri Begawan**

*November 15, 2000*

### **2000 Presidential Election**

**Q.** Have any of the leaders asked you about the election results, sir?

**President Clinton.** Just briefly.

**Q.** Did they accept your explanation of what's going on?

**President Clinton.** No, they were just interested in it. I told them it would all be worked out. The process was underway.

### **Possible Visit to North Korea**

**Q.** Mr. President, what exactly are you waiting for from the North Koreans, in terms of commitments on their missile program? What do you need to hear from them?

**President Clinton.** Well, we're working on a number of issues, of which the missile program is one. We're obviously trying to make as much progress as we can, and I'll make an appropriate decision about the trip sometime in the not too distant future.

**Q.** Sir, do you think it would be helpful to bring the South Koreans' President with you if you make a trip?

**President Clinton.** Well, I don't—he just went, and he deserves a lot of credit for doing it. I was actually quite thrilled, as I've told him several times, that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to him for a lifetime of devotion to peace and human rights, and especially for the breakthrough he's achieved here.

So I think he's put this whole business on a different footing. Secretary Albright, as you know, had a very good trip to North Korea. So I think we're going to work together. We've always worked in partnership with South Korea, and we will continue to do so.

NOTE: The exchange began at 6:42 p.m. at the Istana Edinburgh Guest House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Interview With Terence Hunt and Walter M. Mears of the Associated Press

November 14, 2000

### Impact of 2000 Election

**Q.** Why don't we start with the election? Do you think either Vice President Gore or Governor Bush is going to be able to govern effectively in a situation as divided and increasingly embittered as it is now?

**The President.** I think it's too soon to draw that conclusion. I think the American people are pretty good about uniting around a President, particularly if the President gets a certain grace period. And I don't think that the circumstances are as rife, or ripe, for discord as they were in '93, where Newt Gingrich was in control and—the Republican apparatus in the Congress—and had a certain theory about what he was trying to do. I think now the country may be quite sobered by this, and the Congress may be somewhat sobered by it. You might well find that there is a real willingness to work together.

The fact that the American people were closely divided on the candidates for President, and would have been closely divided even if Ralph Nader weren't in here, the Vice President would have won the election probably, what, 51.5 to 48.5 or something. That indicates that the American people—I don't think that means that they don't believe there's a dynamic center that can be achieved. And I think that's what they will want from the next President and from the next Congress. So I think it's too soon to say that bitterness and partisanship will paralyze the next President. We don't know that, and I hope it won't be the case.

This is actually, if you think about it, while it was a hard-fought campaign, there wasn't a lot of personal criticism in it—some from the Republican side against the Vice President but not nearly as harsh as we've seen in some campaigns of the past and even less from the Democratic side against Governor Bush. There was some, but not much. I think, on balance, it was an election fought out over two different approaches to the country's challenges and opportunities and different positions on specific issues. So I don't think we are necessarily doomed to 4

years of stalemate and partisanship, and I hope that won't be the case.

**Q.** People are talking about the—some people were even saying the election is being stolen, and there's all this bitterness, suits. You don't think that that poisons the atmosphere?

**The President.** Well, I think that depends on what happens in the next few days. And so far what I've tried to tell the American people is, they have spoken, and we're trying to determine what they said. I think there's another million or so votes to be counted in California, New York, and Washington State, maybe even a little more. I guess still the—some prospect of asking for a recount in Iowa and Wisconsin by the Bush people.

And then there's the attempt to resolve all the questions that are out there about the Florida vote. And I think we just—you know, the process is underway. Both sides are clearly very equally represented. And I just think we ought to let the thing play out. It will work itself out in some way or another. We've had this happen before. In 1800 Thomas Jefferson was elected in a very divisive, highly partisan election and went into the House of Representatives. I think he even had to vote on the fitness of the electors. He was a sitting Vice President. You know, he gave a very conciliatory Inaugural Address, saying, "We are all Federalists; we're all Republicans," and led to a whole new era in American politics, out of what was an exceedingly divisive election. He was reelected, and Mr. Madison was elected, served two terms; Mr. Monroe was elected, served two terms. It was actually probably the most stable period in our country's history, in terms of leadership, born out of an exceedingly divisive election in 1800.

So I think it depends upon whether the people believe that this whole thing plays out in a fair way. So that's why I've encouraged the American people to just relax, take a deep breath, recognize that a result of this kind is always possible in a democratic election that's hard-fought, and that the most important thing is that, when it's all said and done, that people believe that all the issues were resolved in a fair way and that the people—franchise was protected and the integrity of the process was. It's unfolding. We just—and