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to cancel all the provisions of the Palestinian National Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist or are otherwise inconsistent with the September 1993 exchange of letters between Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat. This action is an important demonstration by the Palestinians of their commitment to honor the terms of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

The President and Prime Minister also expressed satisfaction with the improved understanding reached last week on Southern Lebanon as a result of Secretary of State Christopher's negotiating efforts and after discussions with the governments of Israel and Lebanon and in consultation with Syria. They noted the importance of prompt activation of the monitoring committee and consultative group established by the understanding.

Finally, the President and the Prime Minister agreed on the need to end the Arab boycott and to eliminate discrimination against Israel in all international organizations, including the United Nations.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting on Assistance for Cattle Producers and an Exchange With Reporters

April 30, 1996

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, first let me—I want to thank this bipartisan congressional delegation from cattle-producing States for coming in. Cattle producers, by numbers, represent the largest single segment of America's agricultural economy. Cattle prices are at a 10-year low, and feed prices are at—are or have been recently at an all-time high. And we want to discuss some potential recommendations for action the Secretary of Agriculture might take, using traditional means at his disposal to help to deal with this situation and help these producers through this difficult time.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who requested this meeting and who brought this matter to our attention, and I'm looking forward to the meeting.

Q. How much traditional beef are you going to buy, Mr. President?

The President. The Secretary of Agriculture will have an announcement later, once we have time to talk through our options here.

Q. Can you act quickly?

Q. Will you call up the conservation reserve for more grazing nationwide?

The President. Well, we will issue an announcement after the meeting; the Secretary of Agriculture will.

Yes, we're going to act quickly. We won't fool around with it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:43 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with congressional leaders. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters

May 1, 1996

The President. First, let me say I am very pleased to have Chairman Arafat in the Oval Office today. We need to take this opportunity to take stock about where we are with our common efforts in the Middle East. I had a good visit with Prime Minister Peres yesterday, and I look forward to this one.

I do want to make two specific points before we begin. First of all, I want to applaud the action that Chairman Arafat has taken in keep-

ing the commitment he made at the Sharm al-Sheikh meeting to revise the Palestinian Covenant. I think that was applauded by all Americans.

And secondly, we now have to work hard on where we go from here. I want to talk to him about what we can do to improve the welfare of the Palestinian people and what we can do to continue to work together to improve security for all the people in the region. And I'm looking forward to that conversation.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, do you endorse a Palestinian State as we did so avidly the creation of the State of Israel?

The President. I endorse the continuation of the talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis to resolve that problem.

Q. Well, how does the U.S. feel?

The President. We are going to do everything we have done—we can do, just as we have since I took office, not to get in the way of these parties making a permanent peace that suits them. That's what we want to do.

Q. Chairman Arafat, can we ask you how you view the state of Israel-Palestinian relations in the aftermath of the Israeli military campaign in southern Lebanon?

Chairman Arafat. First of all, I have to thank His Excellency for giving me this opportunity. It is a great privilege from His Excellency. And no doubt, it is a very important opportunity to speak about how to push forward to strengthen more and more the peace process which we cannot forget His Excellency was from the beginning, which started here under his provision.

Q. How are relations now with Israel in the aftermath of that military action in southern Lebanon?

Chairman Arafat. What is important is that the efforts to stop all the military activities has succeeded, and the two sides have retained back to the agreement of 1993, which is very important, and this is also because of His Excellency's efforts and Mr. Christopher's shuttling visits.

Q. Could President Asad learn anything from your example, sir?

Chairman Arafat. I am sure that President Asad will follow up in his Syrian track the same line so that we can achieve a comprehensive, lasting peaceful solution in the whole area.

The President. Thank you.

Gasoline Tax

Q. Are you going for a gas tax repeal?

The Vice President. That's a good place to leave it, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]. [*Laughter*]

Q. But what is the answer?

The Vice President. Thank you.

Q. You've got a new press secretary here. [*Laughter*]

The President. He's always been better at it. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, when will——

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital?

The President. Let me begin by making a statement, if I might. I am delighted to have this opportunity to meet with Chairman Arafat. When we met at Sharm al-Sheikh, he said that there would be a revision in the Palestinian Covenant by the 1st of May. Under difficult circumstances, he kept that commitment. And now it's time for us to discuss the continuation of the peace process, what we can do to help improve the welfare of the Palestinian people, which I know is uppermost on his mind, and we are very concerned about that, and what we can do together to improve the security for all the people in the region. So we're going to discuss all these issues.

Q. Mr. President, when will we see that Israeli negotiations are going to continue to complete the circle of peace that you are talking about?

The President. I believe that they will continue shortly, and we're going to discuss that.

And as to your question, ma'am, my position from the day I got here is still the same position. I believe that those matters are going to have to be worked out by the parties in the region. I do not believe the United States can serve any useful purpose by getting in the middle of decisions which have to be resolved by the parties themselves.

Our purpose is to try to speed the peace process along and to help those like Chairman Arafat who take risks for peace. When people take risks for peace, we want to minimize those risks, and we want to do what we can to help improve life for ordinary people in the region.

And we intend to do that, and that's what we're going to discuss here.

Abu Abbas

Q. Mr. President, 99 Senators asked for you to—and for Chairman Arafat to authorize the extradition of Abu Abbas, the mastermind of the *Achille Lauro* hijacking. Will you ask the Justice Department to issue an extradition request?

And Chairman Arafat, would you honor such a request if it came from the United States?

Chairman Arafat. We should not forget that Abu Abbas came and attended the PNC and voted to change the Covenant of the PLO and to support the peace process.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. Arafat, Mr. Peres said this week that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel forever, and Mr. Savir said the right to return is not going to be given to the Palestinians. What are you going to talk about in the final talks of negotiations, only the settlement?

Chairman Arafat. No, according to what has been agreed upon and what had been signed in Washington and in Cairo and in Washington, that this has to be discussed with other matters—Jerusalem—settlements, borders, and relation with neighbors.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. During the exchange, reporters referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria and Uri Savir, Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

Remarks Honoring the United States Olympic Committee's Champions in Life

May 1, 1996

Thank you very much. Let me say that whoever organized this program so that I could follow Buddy Lee—[*laughter*]—should take up another line of work. [*Laughter*] Wasn't he wonderful? Let's give him another hand. [*Applause*]

And thank you, Bonnie Blair, for your story and your example. Thank you, Ralph Neal, for letting us come here to Eastern. I thank the Senior High School Band, and I thank the wonderful Eastern High School Choir that sings for us every Christmas, I'm told. I thank the students from Elliot and Payne and the Head Start kids who are here; thank you. I want to thank Al Oerter and the representatives of the U.S. Olympic Committee and all the Champions in Life who are here.

I am so honored to be here with you today. And I hope that all of you have enjoyed this just as much as I have and has gotten just as much as I have out of it.

You know, I'm very proud that the United States is going to be hosting the Olympics again and that this is the 100th anniversary of the modern games. I'm proud that there will be people from 197 different nations coming here. And when I see these folks behind me, the Olympians and the Paralympians, I know that they will see America at its best.

They'll see our diversity and our unity. They'll see that we have differences that don't divide us. They'll see that we understand individual excellence and teamwork. They'll see, as Buddy Lee said, that no champion wins alone, not in athletics and not in life. There's always a parent who cares or a teacher who listens or a coach who believes or a friend who encourages or a church and community that supports.

And behind them, there must be an America—an America where every child, without regard to race or gender or however they start out in life, has a chance to make the most of his or her own life through a decent education and safe streets and a clean environment and a brighter future.

We know that it takes extraordinary individual effort to achieve. The Vice President talked about Jeff Blatnick's heroism in the face of his cancer. We know that there are incredible stories of heroism here on this stage and throughout the Olympic teams: people like Deanna Sodoma, a cyclist until she was paralyzed, and now she will race in a wheelchair in the