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Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Jerry John Rawlings of Ghana in Accra, Ghana

March 23, 1998

President Rawlings. Let me just take this opportunity to welcome each and every one of you to Ghana, and quite frankly, if I had the choice, I would have suggested that you visit a place like Ghana in the month of August when it's nice and cool. So while you're here under this hot, blazing African sun, do everything you can to—what do you call—put in as much fluid as you can in order to fight the dehydrative effect of the tropics. But at the same time, if you keep away from the shades, the wives and the husbands would be missing the chance of a nice suntan before you leave the tropics.

Let me say that as short as this visit is, I think what's most important is the content. And there's no doubt that the agenda that's been drawn out would be an issue that takes on the serious subjects that concern Africa, an issue that's been initiated by the President and members of his Cabinet. That's most welcome to this continent.

Let me remind you, ladies and gentlemen, 27 years from now, as I said to some of our colleagues in the CNN yesterday, that the population of this continent or sub-Saharan Africa will be doubling to about 1.5 billion. And if we don't take the appropriate measures, both from the economic standpoint and the political standpoint, to lay the foundation towards development and peace, I'm afraid we'll be running down the hill.

However, I feel very hopeful and very confident that the measures we've taken—and a good number of African countries—we're beginning to register a healthy economic upturn. The political stability that's returning to this continent, no doubt, I believe, is what must have encouraged the President and his colleagues to take on this issue to do what they can to assist the efforts that we're putting in Africa.

And for this, I would like to welcome him, his wife, his—our dear Chelsea—we'll talk about her later—and members of his Cabinet. And I'm so glad that we have Reverend Minister Jackson also as a member of the delegation.

And—what else? Talking about the 8-hour period, let me explain that in politics there are times I believe that we spend the least time with those who have the least problems. It's hot, naturally so, all the time. I mean, there are times when we can relax and spend a lot of time with those that we have so much in common. But quite frankly, the relationship between the U.S. and Ghana has been so healthy, so much foundation has been laid, that, quite frankly, I believe there's no turning back in terms of the progress that's been made. And I can only see a forward movement.

And let me simply end up by saying that please, you've come at the wrong time of the season, not in economic or political terms but the hot, blazing sun. So please do what you can to—not to dehydrate yourself. Do what you can to take in as much liquids as you can, and don't miss out on the sun.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President Clinton, have you spoken with——

President Rawlings. Can we make this just the one and only question, because—let's put it this way, I don't want to share the limited time that I have with the President. I have only, barely—no, about 8 hours from now. And our colleagues are waiting in the Cabinet for a meeting. Beyond that, our people have been waiting from 5 a.m., and there are hundreds of thousands, chiefs, elders, children, et cetera. I don't want anybody fainting. Neither do I think President Clinton would like to see that happen.

Q. It's only one, sir.

President Clinton. I'll take one question.

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Q. Thank you, sir. Have you spoken with President Yeltsin? Are you concerned about his dismissal of his Cabinet? Do you think you understand what is behind it or what the effect will be, sir?

President Clinton. Let me say, first of all, I have not spoken with him. I found out about it this morning when I woke up. And until I know more, I don't think I should say much, except that we don't interfere in the internal affairs of any country, and as President, he has to constitute the government as he sees fit. We hope that the general direction of policy will

be unaffected by this, and I have no reason to believe that it—that anything different will occur in a way that's at all adverse to the partnership we've been building with Russia. If I know anything else in the next few hours, I'll be glad to tell you.

Let me also thank President Rawlings for welcoming me here. I have very much looked forward to coming to Ghana, especially since the first time we met in the White House. I admire the direction this nation is taking under his leadership, and I want to make the most of this next 8 hours. So we better go to work, so we can get out there and see the people, too.

President Rawlings. Thank you very much, sir.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:25 a.m. in the garden at Osu Castle. President Rawlings referred to civil rights leader Jesse Jackson. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to the People of Ghana in Accra
March 23, 1998

Thank you. President and Mrs. Rawlings, honorable ministers, honorable members of the Council of State, honorable Members of Parliament, honorable members of the judiciary, *nananom* [to the chiefs], and the people of Ghana. *Mitsea mu. America fuo kyia mo* [My greetings to you. Greetings from America]. Now you have shown me what *akwaaba* [welcome] really means. Thank you, thank you so much.

I am proud to be the first American President ever to visit Ghana and to go on to Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana, and Senegal. It is a journey long overdue. America should have done it before, and I am proud to be on that journey. Thank you for welcoming me.

I want to listen and to learn. I want to build a future partnership between our two people, and I want to introduce the people of the United States, through my trip, to the new face of Africa. From Kampala to Cape Town, from Dakar to Dar es Salaam, Africans are being stirred by new hopes for democracy and peace and prosperity.

Challenges remain, but they must be to all of you a call to action, not a cause for despair. You must draw strength from the past and energy from the promise of a new future. My dream for this trip is that together we might do the things so that, 100 years from now, your grandchildren and mine will look back and say this was the beginning of a new African renaissance.

With a new century coming into view, old patterns are fading away: The cold war is gone; colonialism is gone; apartheid is gone. Remnants of past troubles remain. But surely, there will come a time when everywhere reconciliation will replace recrimination. Now, nations and individuals finally are free to seek a newer world where democracy and peace and prosperity are not slogans but the essence of a new Africa.

Africa has changed so much in just 10 years. Dictatorship has been replaced so many places. Half of the 48 nations in sub-Saharan Africa choose their own governments, leading a new generation willing to learn from the past and imagine a future. Though democracy has not yet gained a permanent foothold even in most successful nations, there is everywhere a growing respect for tolerance, diversity, and elemental human rights. A decade ago, business was stifled. Now, Africans are embracing economic reform. Today, from Ghana to Mozambique, from Cote d'Ivoire to Uganda, growing economies are fueling a transformation in Africa.

For all this promise, you and I know Africa is not free from peril: the genocide in Rwanda; civil wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia, both Congos; pariah states that export violence and terror; military dictatorship in Nigeria; and high levels of poverty, malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, and unemployment. To fulfill the vast promise of a new era, Africa must face these challenges. We must build classrooms and companies, increase the food supply and save the environment, and prevent disease before deadly epidemics break out.

The United States is ready to help you. First, my fellow Americans must leave behind the stereotypes that have warped our view and