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tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Teleconference Remarks to Participants in the Burundi Peace Talks
February 22, 2000

[*The teleconference is joined in progress. Former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa stated that the leadership in Burundi was committed to peace, and he then turned the discussion over to President Clinton.*]

President Clinton. Well, thank you very much. First of all, President Mandela, let me thank you for the efforts you are making for peace in Burundi. I know that all the parties there appreciate it, and I can assure you that people all around the world appreciate your efforts.

I also want to say that I am joined here by our Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright; my National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger; my Chief of Staff, John Podesta. We want you to know how important the United States believes it is for a peace to be achieved in Burundi.

This work began under President Nyerere, and we thank you for continuing the effort. I want to also say to the people of Burundi, America cares about the peace process there, and America wants all the parties to succeed. I also want to pay tribute to President Mkapa and the people of Tanzania for hosting the talks and being good neighbors. And I thank the facilitators from the Nyerere Foundation who work each day to help their brothers and sisters from Burundi to achieve peace.

I am very glad that I can speak to you because of this modern technology. It's a symbol of our growing interdependence. And I'm thrilled that the sounds and the images of these deliberations are being beamed back to the people of Burundi.

I want to say that, in a way, my speaking to you through this technology shows that the greater openness of people and borders makes us more interdependent in ways that are positive and, particularly, negative as well. As the world shrinks, we are all more vulnerable to the problems of those beyond our borders—all those with whom we share this small planet Earth. All of us benefit when others build peace; all suffer when others suffer.

That is why you are there, Mr. President, and why I am honored to be joining you in this way today. We understand what is at stake, first, for the people of Burundi who have suffered so much death, fear, and insecurity; for all of Africa; and, indeed, for the rest of the world.

Just last week I attended the opening in Washington of our National Summit on Africa. More than 2,000 Americans participated, people from all 50 of our States, from every walk of life and every racial and ethnic background. All came because they believe in Africa's promise and because they want to work with Africans to realize it by building a more open world trading system, by standing with young democracies, by lifting the burden of debt, by supporting education in Africa and fighting malaria, TB, and, of course, AIDS.

The United States wants to build a common future with all of Africa. The real question for the leaders from Burundi who have gathered with you in Arusha is whether your country will share in the promise of this future. Will you lead the way to a lasting settlement for the larger conflicts in the Great Lakes region? Will you show the way for other societies in Europe and Asia that are also victimized by these kinds of ethnic conflicts? Or will you hesitate and falter?

If that were to happen, I am afraid a disaster would befall your people, and it would seep beyond your borders. We have seen how a spark lit in one small part of this region can engulf the whole.

To most of us outsiders, the choice is clear. I know that to our friends from Burundi, who are burdened with painful memories, it is more complicated. Yet I have found that all the great peacemakers somehow find a way to let their real grievances and pain go and walk away, not just from imagined but from very real grievances.

The late Israeli Prime Minister, my friend Yitzhak Rabin, said, "You do not make peace with your friends." And Mr. President, of course, your own life is the most powerful example of the good that comes from letting go of legitimate grievances and harm.

So I ask the people who are gathered there to remember the examples of what works in this new and exciting world, and to let go of their old hurts, even if they are legitimate—perhaps especially if they are legitimate, because nothing that happened yesterday will take care of today and tomorrow, and the children of Burundi deserve leaders who are looking to today and especially to tomorrow.

It requires vision to believe that in the end we'll all be better off if we work together; that people of different tribes and ethnic groups, different races and religions, all need one another; that violence is bad because it just breeds more violence; and that sustainable peace and security can be achieved only by negotiation, by what you are doing there; that everyone comes out ahead when all members of society feel that they have a common stake in the nation.

It requires courage for these leaders to accept the risks of peacemaking. It's easy for me, half a world away, to tell the leaders of the various parties they should do this. But I know they have to go back and explain it to those whom they represent. So, even though it's easy for me and hard for them doesn't change the fact that it's still true: The courageous and brave thing to do is to find reconciliation and to give everyone a role to play in Burundi's future.

Of course, there are those who doubt that you will succeed. There are those who believe some places are simply cursed by their past and condemned to a future of endless conflict. But Mr. President, if that were true, your old cell on Robben Island would still be occupied today instead of being the site that all the tourists want to see.

We can change; all of us can change. And I thank you again for helping the people of Burundi to change. I applaud the effort of all who are gathered there in Arusha and the vision and courage that brought you there. I support the efforts to form a new social compact and a single, indivisible, democratic nation.

I call upon those armed groups still using violence to suspend hostilities and come to the negotiating table. You do not have to abandon your points of view, just to defend them with the force of argument, not the force of arms.

And let me say to all our Burundian friends who are present there, the United States and our partners will do all we can to ensure that these talks to succeed and to help create the economic conditions essential to a sustainable peace. My Special Envoy, Howard Wolpe, will continue to work with you, and I thank him for his dedication. We will do this because it's the right thing to do and because we, too, have a stake in your future. We will do it because we have faith in you, President Mandela, and in other African nations who have pledged to see this process through.

Ultimately, of course, the people of Burundi and their representatives will have to decide what to do. You have all known fear and insecurity and loss. I ask you, do not condemn your young children to what you have known in the past. Seize this chance to give them a different future. Give them a country where they can sleep in their homes, walk to their schools, worship in their churches, and rise to their potential without being at war with their neighbors; a country that helps to fulfill the promise of Africa, that is part of the life of the world.

This will be a long and difficult journey. But as you go forward, I want the people of Burundi to know the people of the United States are prepared to walk with you. We will reach our destination together. *Turikumwe*—I am with you. And I thank you.

[*At this point, President Mandela thanked President Clinton and made brief remarks.*]

President Clinton. Thank you. Let me just say very briefly how much I appreciate those remarks and, again, how much I appreciate all the parties being in Arusha. And you may be sure that the United States will continue to support this process. And if the process achieves an agreement which brings peace, we want to support Burundi. And we want to use this process, and your role in it, Mr. President, as a shining example to other troubled countries in Africa and throughout the world that there is a way to walk away from war toward a peaceful future.

So again, I thank you. I pledge my support. And I am very impressed by what all of you have done. I urge you to stay there and keep working at it. You can do it, and the United

States will be with you. Thank you very, very much.

President Mandela. Well, goodbye, Mr. President.

President Clinton. Goodbye.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:50 a.m. from the Situation Room at the White House to Burundi peace talks participants at the International Conference Center in Arusha, Tanzania. In his remarks, he referred to President Benjamin William Mkapa of Tanzania; and Howard Wolpe, Special Envoy of the President and Secretary of State to Africa's Great Lakes region. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Mandela; however, it did not include the opening portion of the teleconference.

Remarks on Efforts To Improve Patient Safety

February 22, 2000

Thank you very much. Let me begin by thanking Barbara Blakeney for her words and her work on the frontlines of health care, and for the true visionary leadership that the nurses of our country have given efforts for health care reform, certainly for all the days that I have been privileged to be here as President, and long before.

I want to thank Secretary Shalala and Secretary Herman for the work that they have done on the whole issue of quality health care, on medical errors, and their pioneering work for the Patients' Bill of Rights.

I thank Senator Jeffords, Senator Specter, and Senator Harkin for being here. They had an important hearing today, and I can tell you that—I was talking to them for a few moments outside—they are passionately interested in and very well-informed about this issue. And as we all know, when we have a bipartisan commitment in the Congress to solving a problem in America, it normally gets solved. And I thank you all very much for your dedication.

I want to thank all the people who are here from the National Government. John of AHRQ—I like that. That's pretty good. [*Laughter*] Tom Garthwaite, Sue Bailey, Paul London, all the people here from all the other agencies who have worked so hard on this. Thank you very, very much. Thank you, Ken Kizer. I thank the leaders representing consumers, health care plans and providers, business, labor, and quality experts who are here. And of course, I want to thank the National Academy of Sciences' Institutes of Medicine for its landmark report.

As Secretary Shalala said, the IOM study focused new light on what has been a high priority of ours, which is ensuring that all Americans get the highest quality health care in the world. Secretary Herman pointed out that this is about more than saving lives—the dollar cost of—it is about more than money, and it's even about more than saving lives, because it's about the toll in lost trust in the health care system. We heard a lot about it when the IOM study came out.

But we know that if we do the right things, we can dramatically reduce the times when the wrong drug is dispensed, a blood transfusion is mismatched, or a surgery goes awry. As I have said many times, I will say again, I'm not here to find fault. I'm here to find answers.

We do have the best health care system in the world, the finest health professionals in the world. New drugs, new procedures, new technologies have allowed us to live longer and better lives. Later this year, when researchers finish the mapping of the human genome, it will lead to even greater advances in our ability to detect, treat, and prevent so many, many diseases.

But the growing advances have been accompanied by growing complexity in our health care delivery system. I might say it's complicated by the choices we have made about how we finance it and operate it. So the time has plainly come, as a result of the IOM study, to just take a step back and ask ourselves: How can we redesign the system to reduce error? Have we given all of our caregivers adequate training? Do they adequately coordinate with and communicate with one another? Do all settings have the right kinds of teams and systems in place to minimize mistakes?