

July 4 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

always, not only to welcome people to our borders but to welcome people into our hearts.

To go beyond the things which divide us, race and culture and religion, to understand that whether our ancestors came here on immigrant ships or slave ships, whether they flew across the Pacific or once walked across the Bering Strait a very long time ago, anyone who accepts the rights and responsibilities of citizenship is our fellow citizen, equal in the eyes of God, entitled to be treated equally and with dignity by all of us. That must be our resolution on this and every Independence Day.

In 1827, 51 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the sole surviving signer of the Declaration was Charles Carroll of Maryland. He wrote the following: "I recommend to the future generation the principles of the Declaration as the best earthly inheritance their ancestors could bequeath. All of us are created equal; all are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights; among them, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

You may have noted that last week it was my great honor to announce on behalf of our common endeavors with our British and Japanese and other counterparts that the first rough map of the human genome has been decoded. We now know that there will be an explosion of scientific discoveries which may give the young children in this audience a life expectancy of 100 years. But one thing we have already learned that proved the wisdom of the Founders

is that genetically, without regard to race, we are 99.9 percent the same and that the genetic differences of individuals within each racial and ethnic group are greater than the genetic differences of one group to another.

It is important that we remember that—that, after all, the Founding Fathers were pretty smart and that science has confirmed what they said so long ago. The really difficult thing is to confirm what they said in our everyday lives.

Remember this fine young woman who introduced me today, and resolve to make the creed of our Declaration the reality in all of our lives.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. aboard the ship in New York Harbor. In his remarks, he referred to Seaman Rosa Norales-Nunez, USN, newly sworn-in citizen, who introduced the President; President John F. Kennedy's daughter Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, her husband, Edwin Schlossberg, and their children, Rose, Tatiana, and John; Operation Sail, Inc. Chairman Charles A. Robertson and his wife, Carol; Secretary Cohen's wife, Janet Langhart Cohen; U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Richard C. Holbrooke's wife, Kati Marton; Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.'s son James Gregory Zumwalt; and U.S.S. *John F. Kennedy* Commanding Officer Capt. Michael Miller, USN. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Announcing the Camp David Middle East Peace Summit and an Exchange With Reporters

July 5, 2000

The President. Good morning. Early next week, Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat will come to Camp David at my invitation. A few days before that, their negotiators will arrive to help pave the way for this summit. The objective is to reach an agreement on the core issues that have fueled a half-century of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

After lengthy discussion with the two leaders and after listening to Secretary Albright's report, I have concluded that this is the best way—indeed, it is the only way—to move forward.

To state the task is to suggest the magnitude of the challenge. Behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lie the most profound questions about beliefs, political identity, collective fate. Etched in each side's mind are intense fears and emotions and a deep-seated commitment to defend their people's interests. There are no easy answers and, certainly, no painless ones. And therefore, there is clearly no guarantee of success.

Why this summit, and why now? While Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have made real

progress, crystallizing issues and defining gaps, the truth is they can take the talks no further at their level. Significant differences remain, and they involve the most complex and most sensitive of questions. The negotiators have reached an impasse. Movement now depends on historic decisions that only the two leaders can make.

I will be there with them, and I intend to do all I can to help them in this endeavor. But to delay this gathering, to remain stalled is simply no longer an option, for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as all of us has seen, knows no status quo. It can move forward toward real peace, or it can slide back into turmoil. It will not stand still.

If the parties do not seize this moment, if they cannot make progress now, there will be more hostility and more bitterness, perhaps even more violence. And to what end? Eventually, after more bloodshed and tears, they will have to come back to the negotiating table. They will have to return to face the same history, the same geography, the same demographic trends, the same passions, and the same hatreds, and, I am sure, the exact same choices that confront them here and now.

Of course, action does have its perils but so, too, does inaction. The decisions will not come easier with time. Fundamentally, that is what I have concluded. The leaders have to make the decisions that are still there to be made, and the longer we wait, the more difficult the decisions are likely to become. The Israeli and the Palestinian people have leaders now who are visionary enough, courageous enough, capable of building a fair, just, and lasting peace.

In coming here and accepting this challenge, Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat have shown they are ready to take risks to pursue peace. The rest of the world, and especially the rest of the region, cannot afford to be bystanders. For all those who are truly committed to the cause of peace and to the well-being of the Israeli and Palestinian people, now is the time to lend their support to the peace-makers.

To the people of Israel and to the Palestinian people, I would like to say this: Peace under circumstances like these is never cost-free. Neither side can achieve 100 percent of its goals, for the optimal solution of each party is, by definition, one the other party cannot and will not accept. Negotiations, therefore, must create an outcome that is realistic, balanced, and fair

and that meets the fundamental objectives of both sides, an outcome that strengthens the two parties rather than weakens one of them, an outcome that accommodates both sides' vital needs and dreams, an outcome that reconciles their competing grievances. That is the only outcome that will permit Israelis and Palestinians to offer their children a future far different from the past, one with more opportunity and less fear, more hope and less despair. And that, of course, is the ultimate prize of peace.

The objective is often overshadowed, I might say, as all of you know, by the abject dreariness of the pursuit—one that you will, no doubt, have occasion to comment on in the days ahead. The ups and downs of the process, the daily hassles and disputes, the open-ended nature of the negotiations—all these, over time, have blurred the vision of what it is we are trying to achieve.

For Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat, the challenge next week will be to start drawing the contours of the long-awaited peace, a peace that can fulfill the Israeli people's quest for security, for recognition, for genuine reconciliation with Palestinians and genuine acceptance in the region—acceptance in deeds as well as words—a peace that can fulfill the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations to determine their destiny on their own land and to build a better future.

Almost 7 years ago now, we witnessed the historic handshake between the late Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat. It began a process that offered the Israeli and Palestinian people the chance to achieve what I then described as the quiet miracle of a normal life. That is still the vision that must inspire the efforts and call forth the commitment, courage, and creativity of Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat next week.

Q. Mr. President, do you think that this is the last opportunity for peace during your Presidency? And how long will you give these negotiations? Are you talking days, weeks, what?

The President. Well, the answer to the first—actually, the short answer to both questions is, I don't know. I'll tell you what I do know. I know that Prime Minister Barak strongly believes that the nature of this process is such that the final decisions cannot be made except by a meeting between the two leaders and that he cannot go further than he has gone without that sort of meeting.

Chairman Arafat understands that the nature of the process is such that the final decisions will have to be made by the two leaders. And so they're willing to give it their best shot. And they understand, too, that as we have already seen, delay tends to make these things worse, not better.

One of the most important judgments any political leader has to make when dealing with a thorny problem is whether delay will make it better or worse. Occasionally, you actually get problems where the best thing to do right now is nothing, that delay will actually cause them to become less severe. These are not such problems. Delay only seems, to me, to make them more severe. So that's the answer to the first question.

The second question is, we all know what the deal is. We know what the issues are. We know, at least within a range, what the options are. I think if we work hard, we can get it done in several days, but I will give it whatever time is required, as long as we're still moving forward.

Q. Mr. President, could you describe the extent of your participation? Are you going to move up to Camp David, lock, stock, and barrel, for as long as it takes? And are you going to present a U.S., maybe a model plan, that might bring these two sides together?

The President. Well, I think the less I say right now about what I'm going to do, the better. And I will spend as much time there as I need to spend. I may come back here from time to time, depending on what else is happening, what else I need to do. We've got a lot going on in Congress now, even though they'll be gone a lot—some of the time, perhaps. But I think they'll be here most of the time we'll be here, and I may have to come back. So we'll just see. But I will be there a lot, and I'll work as hard as I need to work.

Q. What happens if this slips past the deadline in September? How important is that deadline?

The President. Well, it's a deadline they set for themselves, and I think they all see it in terms that are—both sides see it in terms that are different from the deadline they set for the framework agreement; that is, they knew that there were problems inherent in making the framework agreement that if they could overcome, they could make the final agreement consistent with the framework agreement. So that's

one of the things, obviously, that has driven my decision here.

I think that neither of them really want to see us go by September without a resolution of this, and I think they understand the stakes here.

Q. Mr. President, can you talk about the symbolism of the location of Camp David, what impact at all it might have on the parties to help them bridge the difficult gaps between them?

The President. Well, it is a place where, obviously, a milestone in Middle East peace was reached, and I hope in that sense, I think, it has to be a positive environment. But I think they also realize that from the very beginning, these were the hardest questions that go to the core of both sides' identity and sense of themselves, far more difficult to resolve, with all respect, than any issues between Israel and the Egyptians or the Jordanians or even the Syrians. Although we are not there yet with the Syrians, everybody knows pretty much what the deal is there and that there are practical questions there that are not nearly so charged with emotion and identity and almost national consciousness as these are. So these are the difficult ones.

And obviously, I hope that the setting will help to inspire them and to inspire us. I hope we'll all be inspired by it. But it's also a great place for us to be, because it gives us a reasonable chance to work in quiet and without interruption and to observe the necessary discretion that without which we won't be able to move forward.

Thank you.

Mexican Elections

Q. Mr. President, something about Mexico, about the Mexican elections, please?

The President. Well, I called President Zedillo and congratulated him on what was clearly an open and fair and well-fought election, and I called President-elect Fox and congratulated him on his victory. We talked a little bit about the importance of our relationship and what lies ahead, and I told him that he would be welcome here at any time if he would like to come up.

Obviously, he has a lot of things to do, and he'll have to make that decision. But I'd be happy to meet with him if he would like to come up and sort of get our relationship started. Most of his term will unfold with the next President, but the relationship that we have with

Mexico needs to go beyond individual personalities always, because we have too much in common and too much of a future to build together.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White

House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and President Ernesto Zedillo and President-elect Vicente Fox of Mexico.

Remarks in New York City on the United Nations Optional Protocols on Children's Rights

July 5, 2000

Thank you very much, Ambassador Holbrooke. That generous introduction confirms one of my unbreakable laws of politics, which is, whenever possible, you should endeavor to be introduced by someone you have appointed to high office. [*Laughter*]

I thank you, Deputy Secretary-General Fréchet, for your welcome and for hosting me here today, and I'm delighted to see Olara Otunnu, Carol Bellamy. And thank you, Jim Wolfensohn, for being here and for your truly visionary leadership of the World Bank. I thank the members of the Security Council and the other Ambassadors who are here.

It's a special honor to have the President of Mali, President Konare, here, as well. I thank Secretary Summers for his work, and for coming here. And I'm delighted to be here with three Members of the House of Representatives: the chairman of the House Committee on International Affairs, Mr. Ben Gilman from New York; and Representative Carolyn Maloney, who represents the district in which the United Nations is located; and Sheila Jackson Lee from Houston, Texas, who did so much work on these subjects we're here to discuss today.

I also appreciate the presence here of members of the NGO community and members of the State, Defense, and Justice Departments' negotiating team who worked on these agreements. I'd also like to acknowledge the leadership of the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff who worked hard to ensure that we could sign the child soldiers protocol in good faith, without compromising our military readiness or our national security in any way.

Let me begin just by expressing a general word of appreciation, if I might, to the United

Nations for the work that you have done. You mentioned the 500 multinational protocols that have come out of this organization since it began. We are grateful for the attention that you are now devoting to the world health crisis and for the opportunity that we will have to introduce this resolution tomorrow, for the work you are doing for peacekeeping, most recently in Sierra Leone, and in so many other ways. It's a profound honor for the United States to host the United Nations, especially in this millennial year, and I'm looking forward to coming back for the millennial summit.

These two protocols today, I believe, are very important statements that go beyond their very terms. With the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor I signed last year, they form a trio of vital protections for children, and they must be signposts for the future of the global society.

To give life to our dream of a global economy that lifts all people, first we must stand together for all children. Yet every day, tens of millions of children work in conditions that shock the conscience. Every day, thousands of children are killed and brutalized in fighting wars that adults decided they should fight in. Every day around the world, and even here in the United States, children are sold into virtual slavery or traffic for the worst forms of sexual abuse.

Think about what has been lost for the future because roughly 2 million children have fought in wars over the last two decades. In Sierra Leone today, as many as half the rebel forces are under 18, some as young as 5 or 6. In Colombia, guerrillas have taken thousands of children from their villages to serve as soldiers.