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that we can be trusted to do more, even better, if we're given the chance to do it. We should be worried about the future; that's what elections are about. We should be grateful for the conditions that exist today. We should recognize there are a whole range of challenges out there, and we should be intensely focused on meeting them. Because of your help, that's exactly what we're going to be able to do.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. in the Balcony Room at the Sheraton Luxury Collection. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Grossman, national chair, Democratic National Committee.

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Chuan Likphai of Thailand and an Exchange With Reporters

*March 13, 1998*

***President Clinton.*** Let me just begin by welcoming Prime Minister Chuan here to the United States. We have had a remarkable friendship with Thailand over a long period of time. It is our oldest security alliance in the region. We have, obviously, been very concerned about the challenges facing the Thai economy but very, very impressed with the leadership of this Prime Minister—his willingness to make difficult decisions to bring his country back to a full and robust financial health. And we want to do whatever we can to be a good friend and a good partner, because we have confidence in the Prime Minister's leadership and because we value our partnership with Thailand.

We welcome you here, sir.

***Q.*** What are you going to do?

***President Clinton.*** Would you like to say anything?

***Prime Minister Chuan.*** I thank President Clinton for inviting me and the Thai delegation to visit the United States. Thailand and the United States have enjoyed a long history of relations for the past 165 years. My visit is aimed to reaffirm and underline the friendship that exists between the Thai and American people and between our two countries.

Thailand is undergoing a period of financial and economic crisis. During this time of need, we appreciate the help and support of our friends. We, the Thai people, will do whatever we can to overcome our crisis, and we are confident that we will be able to regain economic stability and be a force that can contribute to world peace and progress.

The people of Thailand wish to thank President Clinton for the concern that he has displayed for the crisis in Thailand, the concern that he has displayed for the situation in Southeast Asia. We thank him for his sincere engagement in that region.

***President Clinton.*** To answer your question, I will make an announcement later today. But I think in fairness, the Prime Minister and I should have a chance to speak first because we haven't discussed it, and I want to have a chance to hear from him on any ideas he has. But we will have one or two things to say later in the day after we've had a chance to visit.

### *Asian Economies*

***Q.*** Mr. President, is the worst of the Asian financial crisis now behind us?

***President Clinton.*** Well, I hope so, but it's hard to say. I think what we're beginning to see is a differentiation on the part of the markets in dealing with these different countries. And that's what, first and foremost, I would like to see; that is, we don't want to see the whole region thrown into a long-term recession because of a perception that everything is the same everywhere. I think that what we want is at least to get the investors where they're making individual judgments about nations and about particular investments within nations and then get everybody on a path to recovery and reform.

We've worked hard with Indonesia, with South Korea, with Thailand. We want to support the efforts of the IMF and others in Malaysia, the Philippines, all these countries that have had either a temporary or longer term difficulties. So I hope the worst is over, but I think that every leader is going to have to do what this Prime Minister has done, which is to try to follow a rigorous path that will build confidence in the investment community, get the flows going back into the country of the money necessary to get business going and strengthen the lives of ordinary people.

### *President's Visits to Russia and China*

***Q.*** Are you going to China and Russia this spring? Have you moved up a travel schedule?

***President Clinton.*** I do not have a definite schedule for Russia. Prime Minister Yeltsin—I mean, President Yeltsin and I agreed a long time ago, probably a year or so ago, that I would come to him for the next visit, but that it would occur after the Russian Duma ratified START II so that we could begin to work on START III and really get the—take the next big step in lowering the nuclear weapons arsenals of both countries.

***Q.*** They haven't done that?

***President Clinton.*** Not yet. That's something that I talked to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin about when he was here, and the Vice President did. If the Russian Duma should decide to do that, then I would attempt to respond, as I promised President Yeltsin over a year ago I would.

Now, on the China issue, let me explain why this trip was moved up. Ambassador Sasser and other advisers of mine have been arguing for months, literally for months, that I should move up the trip to China. Because we had such a successful summit here with President Jiang, a lot got done. Much has happened since then. I felt that, after listening to them, that they were probably right, that even though we had a lot of trips this year, so we tried to space them out, that our relationship with China is so important that we needed to try to build on it and make some more progress.

Now, just yesterday, the Chinese announced their intention to sign the Covenant on Political and Civil Rights. This is a very significant step forward in our attempts to work within to establish rational legal systems and to elevate the cause of democracy and human rights. So I was very pleased by that. And I expect that they will sign it soon. So we will continue to work on that, and we're trying to work out the details of the trip now.

### *Northern Ireland Peace Process*

***Q.*** Sir, what about Belfast?

***President Clinton.*** Well, as you know, we're about to celebrate St. Patrick's Day here, and we expect that many of the major players in the Irish peace process will be here. I will do my best to see them all. I am—I've been very involved in this from the beginning. I think that the next 60 to 90 days are very, very important, and we have to do everything we can to try to get the parties together to move in a timely fashion.

Whether I would go to Belfast or not when I'm going to—more or less around the time I'll be in England for the G–8 meeting would depend upon what the posture of things is then with the peace process and, after consultation with Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Ahern, whether I could make any kind of constructive contribution.

There's been absolutely no decision and hardly any discussion of that. I am far more—that's a very premature thing. The more important thing is when the parties are here next week, can the United States play a positive role in trying to push the Irish peace process forward? It's a very—that's a very important thing and, in a way, much bigger in terms of its potential impact than a question of an Irish trip.

### *China*

***Q.*** Are your confident that China is living up to the nuclear agreement?

***President Clinton.*** You're referring, I think, to the story in the paper this morning. Let me say that when I made the agreement with President Jiang, sometime after that information came to us that indicated that there was a low-level discussion—not a high-level one in the Chinese Government, a low-level discussion—about the possibility of some transfers which would have been inconsistent with that agreement. We followed through on it. The Chinese followed through on it and kept their agreement to the letter.

So I think that the revelation in the paper this morning is further support for the proposition that we should be engaged with China. The Prime Minister and other Asian leaders who are friends with the United States have urged us to build a stronger, constructive partnership with China. And so I'm well pleased, actually, with the way that issue can out.

### *Legislative Agenda*

***Q.*** Sir, do you think the Patient's Bill of Rights is going to pass, sir?

***President Clinton.*** Do I believe it will?

***Q.*** Do you believe the Patient's Bill of Rights will pass, given that you're to receive the report of the quality care commission today?

***President Clinton.*** I do. I hope it will pass this year, and I think there are relatively few differences. The difference between the business and the insurance community on the one hand, and the medical and patient community on the other, about many things, but there's, you know, there's some discussion about the litigation issues and all that. We have to resolve some of the differences. I have been impressed with the number of Republicans who have agreed with what I think is an almost unanimous position of the Democratic Caucus in the House, and I think there's a similar sense in the Senate that it is urgent that we do something on this.

So I'm hopeful that we can do it this year. If we—I'm hopeful that that will happen. I hope we get the tobacco settlement. Obviously, I'd like it if my entire legislative program could be adopted this year, as well as some of their ideas, but at a minimum we shouldn't leave without dealing with the tobacco issue.

***Q.*** Are you going to keep Congress in until it passes, sir?

***President Clinton.*** Well, I would certainly consider that. I don't think they should leave without resolving the tobacco thing. You know, passing over from one year to the next is understandable in a measure of this size and magnitude, but we're talking about 1,000 children a day who are going to have their lives shortened. You can't justify taking another whole year to deal with this. The issues are somewhat complicated, but they're not that difficult, and they ought to be dealt with this year.

***Q.*** Once the Paula Jones case is resolved——

### *NCAA Basketball Tournament*

***Q.*** Did you see the tournament?

***President Clinton.*** It's a great tournament. It's the most interesting tournament we've had in some time, really.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia; President Jiang Zemin of China; James M. Sasser, U.S. Ambassador to China; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks on Signing the Memorandum on Establishment of the Quality Interagency Coordination Task Force

*March 13, 1998*

Thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, thank you for your work on this issue and your interest in it. I thank Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman, Secretary West, the members of the White House staff who worked on this. But especially let me thank the members of the Commission and the Executive Director of the Commission, Janet Corrigan. They have done a remarkable citizen service for the people of the United States of America, and we're all very grateful to them.

As we approach a new century with all its stunning advances in science and technology, we know that many of them will come in medicine and health. We must act now to spread these breakthroughs and improve the quality of health care for every American. I accept the Commission's report. I endorse your recommendations.

For 5 years we have worked to expand access to quality health care for the American people, step by step: health insurance coverage for people who move between jobs; expanded health care coverage for millions of children; strengthened Medicare with more preventive benefits. Last year, as the Vice President said, this Commission recommended a Patient's Bill of Rights. Last month I acted to ensure by Executive order that one-third of all Americans—those in Medicare, Medicaid, veterans health care systems and other Federal plans—enjoy the benefits of this Patient's Bill of Rights. Now these protections must be extended to all Americans. And in the remaining 68 days of this congressional session, Congress must