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Remarks at the Wye River Memorandum Signing Ceremony

October 23, 1998

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, Madam Secretary. Your Majesty, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chairman Arafat. To the Israeli and Palestinian delegations, the Members of Congress and the Cabinet, members of the diplomatic corps, my fellow Americans who are here, it's a great honor for me to welcome you here. I only wish the First Lady were here as well. She is in Chicago. We talked a few moments ago, and she sends her great happiness and best wishes, especially to Queen Noor and Mrs. Netanyahu.

After some very difficult negotiations, very long, dare I say, quite sleepless, the Israelis and Palestinians here have reached an agreement on issues over which they have been divided for more than 17 months. This agreement is designed to rebuild trust and renew hope for peace between the parties. Now both sides must build on that hope, carry out their commitments, begin the difficult, but urgent journey toward a permanent settlement.

Over the last 9 days I have witnessed extraordinary efforts on behalf of peace. I thank our team, beginning with its head, the Secretary of State, who showed remarkable creativity, strength, and patience. I thank the Vice President for his interventions. I thank my good friend Sandy Berger; our Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, who had an unusual, almost unprecedented role to play because of the security considerations; our Special Middle East Coordinator, Dennis Ross, who was a young man with no gray hair when all this began. [*Laughter*] I thank all the other outstanding members of our delegation.

I thank Prime Minister Netanyahu, who stood so firmly for the security of his citizens and of his country, and of the impressive members of his Cabinet and administration. I thank Chairman Arafat, who tenaciously defended the interests of his people, and the very impressive members of his team, as well. In the end, after all the twists and turns and ups and downs, all their late and ultimately sleepless nights, both reaffirmed their commitment to the path of peace. And for that, the world can be grateful.

And finally, let me thank His Majesty King Hussein, whose courage, commitment, wisdom, and frankly, stern instruction at appropriate times, were at the heart of this success. Your Majesty, we are all profoundly in your debt.

This agreement is good for Israel's security. The commitments made by the Palestinians were very strong, as strong as any we have ever seen. They include continuous security cooperation with Israel and a comprehensive plan against terrorism and its support infrastructure.

This agreement is good for the political and economic well-being of Palestinians. It significantly expands areas under Palestinian authority to some 40 percent of the West Bank. It also offers the Palestinian people new economic opportunities, with an airport, an industrial zone, soon safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, and in time, a seaport. The Palestinian people will be able to breathe a little easier and benefit from the fruits of peace.

Most importantly, perhaps, this agreement is actually good for the peace process itself. For 18 months it has been paralyzed, a victim of mistrust, misunderstanding, and fear. Now, ordinary Israelis and Palestinians once again can become partners for peace.

To bolster this effort, Chairman Arafat will invite members of the Palestinian National Council and other important political entities to reaffirm his prior commitments and their support for the peace process. I have agreed to address that meeting, several weeks hence,

and to underscore the values of reconciliation, tolerance, and respect, and my support for those commitments and this process.

People around the world should be heartened by this achievement today. These leaders and those with whom they work have come a very long way. The Israeli and Palestinian peoples, whose bitter rivalry in this century has brought so much suffering to both sides, have moved yet another step closer toward fulfilling the promise of the Oslo accords, closer to the day when they can live peacefully as true neighbors, with security, prosperity, self-governance, cooperation, and eventually, God willing, genuine friendship.

No doubt, as peace gains momentum, forces of hate, no matter how isolated and disparate, will once again lash out. They know this, the leaders, and they are prepared to face it. Staying on the path of peace under these circumstances will demand even greater leadership and courage.

The work at Wye River shows what can happen when the will for peace is strong. But let me say once again to all the rest of you, everyone who is tempted to handicap every little twist and turn over the last 9 days, you need to know one overwhelming thing: The Prime Minister and the Chairman and the members of their delegation who supported this process, even when there were things about it they did not agree with, are quite well aware that the enemies of peace will seek to extract a price from both sides. They are quite well aware that in the short run, they themselves may have put themselves at greater risk. But by pledging themselves to the peaceful course for the future, to the same values and, ultimately, to the same enemies, they have given both Israelis and Palestinians a chance to have the future we all want for our children and our children's children.

Every effort will have to be exerted to ensure the faithful implementation of this agreement—not because the parties do not want to do so, but because the agreement covers many things, was developed over many days, involved many discussions and sleepless nights. It will test whether the Palestinian people are prepared to live in peace, recognizing Israel's permanence, legitimacy, and a common interest in security. It will tell us whether Israelis want to help build a strong Palestinian entity that can fulfill the aspirations of its people and provide both real security and real partnership for Palestinians and Israelis.

The United States is determined to be of whatever help we can to both sides in their endeavors. I will consult with Congress to design a package of aid to help Israel meet the security costs of redeployment and help the Palestinian Authority meet the economic costs of development. I hope we will have support from Republicans and Democrats in that endeavor.

With respect to Mr. Pollard, I have agreed to review this matter seriously, at the Prime Minister's request. I have made no commitment as to the outcome of the review. Ultimately, the parties will have to translate the gains of Wye River into renewed efforts to secure a just and lasting peace. For as big a step as today is—and after 17 months, it is a very large step, indeed—it is just another step along the way. Therefore, perhaps as important as any other statement to be made today, let me say how grateful I am that the Prime Minister and the Chairman have agreed to begin permanent status talks upon ratification of this agreement.

I have agreed to convene the two leaders at an appropriate time to seek to complete these talks. We have all agreed to try to do it under circumstances which permit more sleep at night. [*Laughter*]

Let me say that no agreement can wipe away decades of distrust. But I think these last several days have helped each side to get a better understanding of the other's hopes and fears, a better feel for all they have in common, including on occasion, thank the Lord, a good sense of humor.

The future can be right for Israelis and Palestinians if they maintain the will for peace. If we continue to work together, the next generation will grow up without fear. Israel can have the genuine security and recognition it has sought for so long. The Palestinian people can, at long last, realize their aspirations to live free in safety, in charge of their own destiny.

So, on behalf of all the people of the United States, let me say to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, *salaam, shalom,* peace

be with you in the hard and hopeful days ahead. We value our friendship, and we thank you for your trust, for giving us the opportunity to walk this road with you.

Now it is my privilege to introduce Prime Minister Netanyahu. Let me say, I was, once again, extraordinarily impressed by the energy, the drive, the determination, the will, the complete grasp of every detailed aspect of every issue that this Prime Minister brought to these talks. He showed himself willing to take political risks for peace, but not to risk the security of his people. And as a result, this agreement embodies an enormous increase in the security of the people of Israel.

Mr. Prime Minister, the microphone is yours.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel made remarks.*]

The President. Let me say, I wish that all of you who care about this could have seen at least a portion of what I saw in the last 9 days in the interchanges between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat. It was very interesting. They were so different. I can't imagine Mr. Netanyahu in a *kafflyeh*. [*Laughter*] But they were very much alike in their tenacity and their astonishing intelligence and knowledge.

Just as I was able to say a thank you to Prime Minister Netanyahu, let me say to Chairman Arafat, I thank you. I thank you for turning away from violence toward peace. I thank you for embracing the idea that Palestinians and Israelis can actually share the land of our fathers together. I thank you for believing that the home of Islam and Judaism and Christianity can surely be the home of people who love one God and respect every life God has created. And I thank you for decades and decades and decades of tireless representation of the longing of the Palestinian people to be free, self-sufficient, and at home.

Mr. Chairman, the microphone is yours.

[*At this point, Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority made remarks.*]

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, many kind things have been said about the efforts of the American delegation and the hours that I spent at Wye Plantation, every one of which I treasured. [*Laughter*] Some more than others. But in truth, all that was required of us was a listening ear and a helpful suggestion now and then, and a kind of a determination to keep us all moving forward.

It is a little too easy, I think, sometimes for people who are not directly, themselves, parties to a peace negotiation to believe they truly understand the judgments that the parties themselves must make, and how difficult they are, and what price they might carry. I think, as hard as we tried not to fall prey to that, from time to time we did. I know we did, because there are people on both sides smiling at me just now as I speak. So the lion's share of the credit belongs to Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat and their close aides.

But His Majesty King Hussein provided an element quite different from what the United States brought to these negotiations, for he reminded us of what rises above the facts, the arguments, the legitimate interests, even the painful sacrifices involved. He was the living embodiment of the best of our past and the brightest of our hopes for the future. And every time he was in the room, he made us all become a little closer to the people we all would like to see ourselves as being. For that, we and the world are immeasurably in his debt.

Your Majesty.

[*At this point, King Hussein I of Jordan made remarks.*]

The President. Let me say—everyone sit down. We have to hurry because the hour is growing late, and it's almost Shabbat. I have to say one thing, very quickly. We have three men of peace here who have extraordinary military backgrounds. We have many others here—I want to mention two who came with Prime Minister Netanyahu: General Sharon and General Mordechai; we're glad to have you here. And I say that because I want you to understand a piece of history.

This table was brought to this house in 1869 by one of America's greatest military leaders, Ulysses Grant, who revolutionized infantry warfare in our Civil War. One hundred years ago this table was used to sign

the peace treaty between the United States and Spain. And for 100 years, this table, brought here by one of our greatest warriors, has been the exclusive repository of our peace agreements, the one we signed with Your Majesty King Hussein on this table; President Kennedy's test ban treaty, signed on this table.

And so I think it is fitting that these three great leaders—two signers, one, His Majesty, observing—who know a great deal about war have come to make peace on this table, which, for our country, has come to embody it. And we thank them.

Thank you very much.

[*At this point, the memorandum was signed.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Queen Noor of Jordan; Prime Minister Netanyahu's wife, Sarah; and former civilian U.S. Navy intelligence analyst Jonathan Pollard, convicted of treason and espionage in 1987. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary included the remarks of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Vice President Al Gore, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chairman Arafat, and King Hussein I. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The Wye River Memorandum

October 23, 1998

The following are steps to facilitate implementation of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip of September 28, 1995 (the "Interim Agreement") and other related agreements including the Note for the Record of January 17, 1997 (hereinafter referred to as "the prior agreements") so that the Israeli and Palestinian sides can more effectively carry out their reciprocal responsibilities, including those relating to further redeployments and security respectively. These steps are to be carried out in a parallel phased approach in accordance with this Memorandum and the attached time line. They are subject to the relevant terms and conditions of the prior agreements and do not supersede their other requirements.

I. Further Redeployments

A. *Phase One and Two Further Redeployments*

1. Pursuant to the Interim Agreement and subsequent agreements, the Israeli side's implementation of the first and second F.R.D. will consist of the transfer to the Palestinian side of 13% from Area C as follows:

1% to Area (A)
12% to Area (B)

The Palestinian side has informed that it will allocate an area/areas amounting to 3% from the above Area (B) to be designated as Green Areas and/or Nature Reserves. The Palestinian side has further informed that they will act according to the established scientific standards, and that therefore there will be no changes in the status of these areas, without prejudice to the rights of the existing inhabitants in these areas including Bedouins; while these standards do not allow new construction in these areas, existing roads and buildings may be maintained.

The Israeli side will retain in these Green Areas/Natural Reserves the overriding security responsibility for the purpose of protecting Israelis and confronting the threat of terrorism. Activities and movements of the Palestinian Police forces may be carried out after coordination and confirmation; the Israeli side will respond to such requests expeditiously.

2. As part of the foregoing implementation of the first and second F.R.D., 14.2% from Area (B) will become Area (A).

B. *Third Phase of Further Redeployments*

With regard to the terms of the Interim Agreement and of Secretary Christopher's letters to the two sides of January 17, 1997 relating to the further redeployment process, there will be a committee to address this question. The United States will be briefed regularly.

II. Security

In the provisions on security arrangements of the Interim Agreement, the Palestinian side agreed to take all measures necessary in order to prevent acts of terrorism, crime and hostilities directed against the Israeli side, against individuals falling under the Israeli side's authority and against their property, just as the Israeli side agreed to take all measures necessary in order to prevent