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William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 1, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on November 4.

Exchange With Reporters on Arrival in Oslo, Norway

November 1, 1999

Middle East Peace Process

Q. What is your hope for the peace process?

The President. Well, first of all, I would like to thank the Prime Minister, the Government, and the people of Norway for hosting this meeting. I think it's coming at a good time. I believe that Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat want to continue the peace process. And we are now to the point where the really difficult decisions lie ahead. So coming back to Oslo, where the Oslo accords were born, coming here to honor the memory of Yitzhak Rabin, who gave his life for this peace process, it's a good thing to do.

And so we're hopeful that we'll make some progress. And we'll see, and probably the less we say about it in public, the more likely we are to get something done. But I'm hopeful. And I'm honored to be here in Norway. This is my first trip, as President, to Norway. I haven't been here in 30 years—30 years ago next month was my first trip to Norway.

President's First Visit to Norway

Q. Do you remember it well?

The President. Very well, yes. It was wonderful.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7 a.m. at Oslo International Airport. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway and an Exchange With Reporters in Oslo

November 1, 1999

Prime Minister Bondevik. Mr. President, dear journalists, it's a very special occasion for us in Norway. This is the very first visit from a sitting President of the United States to our country. So we are so glad to receive President Clinton here.

We have had fruitful discussions, where we could continue our talks from the White House in Washington, only 2 weeks ago. And of course, we have discussed the Middle East peace process. We think that the ceremonial commemoration tomorrow for the late Prime Minister Rabin and the talks in that framework can stimulate the peace process. And we are both committed to assist the two parties. The main responsibility for a final solution is, of course, upon the two parties.

Norway and the U.S. will seek ways to expand our common efforts in a number of areas for security, development, and for well-being. The President and I have today agreed on an initiative to follow up the Reykjavik Conference on Women and Democracy, where the First Lady, Hillary Clinton, participated. We are also agreed on a joint initiative on funding for support of disabled victims of the war in Sierra Leone.

Mr. President, I believe that you want to say a few words before we answer one or two questions. Mr. President.

President Clinton. Thank you. First, Prime Minister, let me say I am delighted to be here, honored by your invitation to come a few weeks ago, and then by the King's invitation to come to Norway. As you perhaps know, I traveled here alone as a young man some 30 years ago—it was actually 30 years ago this December—and I fell in love with this country. I'd long wanted to come back. I was amazed to discover that I am the first sitting President ever to visit Norway. I can't imagine what the others were thinking about—[*laughter*]—but I am delighted to be here.

I also would like to thank you for the wonderful reception that my wife and my daughter received when they represented our Nation in Lillehammer at the Olympics, and for the support, Prime Minister, you have given to the women's conference and the women's issues that Hillary has tried to raise, most recently in Reykjavik with representatives of your country and the other countries in the region.

We have been friends for a long time. We have been allies for 50 years with NATO. Today the Prime Minister and I discussed building a Europe that is united, democratic, and free; and I am looking forward to seeing the Prime Minister again shortly in Turkey at the meeting of the OSCE. And I'm very grateful that Norway is now the leader of the OSCE, serving its term as chair.

We did discuss the Sierra Leone, and I would just like to say again, I am profoundly grateful that Norway has agreed to work with the United States to provide prosthetics, to provide artificial limbs to as many people as we possibly can, many of them children, whose limbs were deliberately amputated in the cruel civil war in Sierra Leone.

I also want to thank you, Prime Minister, for Norway's support for our common efforts to end the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. And I want to say a special word of thanks to the Norwegian people, because I believe that when the 800,000-plus Kosovar Albanians were driven from their home, on a per capita basis, Norway took in more of the refugees from Kosovo than any other country in the world. And that is something that you can be very proud of and something for which your friends must be very grateful. So I want to thank you for that.

And finally, let me thank you for your continuing interest in the Middle East peace process and for having this wonderful occasion to honor the memory of my friend and partner, former Prime Minister Rabin. I think it will be very successful, indeed. Your country has a lot to be proud of. You have enormous influence for your size, and it is very much earned and deserved. Thank you.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, do you believe that the Middle East talks here in Oslo can move the peace process substantially forward?

President Clinton. Yes, I do. I don't think you should expect some sort of major announced breakthrough here, because, keep in mind, the parties have had—since, in the last couple of years, they had the Wye peace agreement under Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat. Then when Prime Minister Barak came in, they modified the Wye peace agreement and agreed to an even faster schedule of implementation.

Since then, Israel has released controversial political prisoners, agreed to establish safe passage between—and started it, actually, started the safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, and agreed to open a port, which was a source of great tension between them before. Now they have to move into the final status talks, as conceived almost 7 years ago now here in Oslo, with the Oslo accords. So the important thing now is that the two leaders know that they have set themselves an ambitious timetable and that they agreed about how they're going to meet the timetable. This is the hard part—I mean the really hard part. And we all need to support them.

But do I believe that we can come out of this meeting and this solemn occasion with a renewed commitment to the peace process? Yes, I do.

EgyptAir Flight 990 Aircraft Tragedy

Q. Mr. President, they're still combing the wreckage of EgyptAir Flight 990. Do you know any more about the cause of the tragedy, whether it was a mechanical malfunction or has terrorism been ruled out? And have there been any threats recently against any carriers flying out of the United States?

President Clinton. We know nothing more than I said to you earlier today—it seems like half a lifetime ago—when I came out of church with Hillary. We are still searching. We have to find—as you know, to make a final determination about the cause of the crash will require the recovery of as much of the airplane as possible, as well

as the equipment, which will give us some—if the usual case is present here, give us a pretty definitive idea of what happened.

But that has not been done yet, and therefore, I will say again, nothing has been ruled in, nothing has been ruled out. And I hope no one will draw any conclusions one way or the other until we finish the work.

President's Legacy

Q. Mr. President, how do you hope that people will remember you as the President of the United States? And is the peace process in the Middle East important in that regard? Would you like to be remembered as the President that created peace in the Middle East?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, that's a question I'd feel more comfortable answering if I weren't President anymore, because I hope I'm still piling up memories for them. But I can tell you what I tried to do.

What I tried to do is, first of all, take a country which I've found in economic distress and social division and turn it around toward greater prosperity and greater harmony, and convince people that, working together, we could solve our social problems. And then, I hope I will be remembered as someone who got our country to assume its responsibilities in the post-cold-war world, to make America a major force for peace and freedom, and against terrorism and racial and ethnic and religious hatreds. That is what I have worked to do and what I intend to continue working to do every day I have left to serve.

Threats to U.S. Air Carriers/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, two things. Could you address Mr. Katz' question about whether there had been any threats to U.S.—to carriers, airline carriers flying out of the United States? And also, do you see any merit to the idea that's been floated about having a Camp David-style negotiation in January to help Israel and the Palestinians meet the rigorous deadlines that they've set for themselves on the toughest issues in the talks?

President Clinton. First, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press], on the first question you ask—and I didn't mean to evade it—if there have been any such threats, I do not know about them. That is, I am not aware of any specific threats against American airlines or airplanes flying out of American airports with large numbers of American passengers. If there have been any such, I don't know about them.

Now, it is possible that there could have been some that I don't know about, so I don't want to—I can't tell you the things I don't know about didn't happen. But I can tell you that I'm not aware of any, and as you know, I work on my intelligence information every day.

As to the possibility of a Camp David-style meeting, I think it is premature to discuss that at this time. What we need now is an understanding of the parameters of where we're going and how we're going to get there. I wouldn't rule out anything, but there is, as you know, going all the way back to '93, there is nothing I would not do if I thought it would genuinely help to build a lasting peace in the Middle East. There is nothing I would not do. So—and I'm prepared to reaffirm that to Prime Minister Barak and to Chairman Arafat.

But one of the things we have also learned here is that, in the end, the hard decisions have to be made by the parties. The United States can help with financial support, with military support, with moral backup. The rest of the world can help in many ways. But we have to get a framework of going forward that is consistent with the timetable they, themselves, have adopted, because I don't think we want to slip the timetable. Even though these decisions are very hard, they've been looming out there for several years now, and they're not going to get any easier, in my judgment, by letting them linger. So I will do what I can to get this thing going.

Prime Minister Bondevik. Last question.

Q. Yes, Mr. President, what do you regard as a real progress in the discussions with you and the Palestinians and the Israelis concerning the discussions about peace in Palestine and Israel?

President Clinton. The real problems?

Q. The real progress. What will you regard as the real progress?

President Clinton. Oh, I'm sorry. Well, I would feel that real progress has been made

if they made agreements about the modalities under which they will proceed—the procedures, the process, how it's going to operate—so that we can move into and then through these decisions in a timely fashion.

There's no way in the world they can come here and agree in talks with me on the big issues. You know what all the big issues are. That's why they're final status issues. But if we can get everybody sort of focused on what it would take to get there within the time allotted, the time they have allotted themselves, then I think that that would be a very good thing, indeed.

Keep in mind, you have here leaders who have demonstrated their commitment to peace and demonstrated their willingness to take risks. And you also have leaders who have been supported by their people for taking those risks. So I don't think this is a time for handwringing. But when you have a lot of implementation, like you did recently with the Wye modified agreement, and then you have the prisoners release, you have the port decision going forward, you have the safe passage open, you have some settlements closed and not all settlements closed—what it does is, it whets everyone's appetite, on the one hand, for more to be done; and it also builds in a little bit of a resistance to more being done. It's like, ''I'm tired; I did this last week,'' you know? And what we've got to do is to create a renewed energy to make the process continuous, until you work all the way through to the end.

Prime Minister Bondevik. I'm sorry, I just have to end up by saving that I know that you have been informed that I could be to your disposal after the President has left this building. Unfortunately, because we are on overtime for the luncheon at the Royal Castle, I also have to leave now. But I can be to your disposal at the Grand Hotel at 2:15, approximately, and tell you even more about our discussions.

We have, of course, also discussed the situation in Chechnya, our relations to Russia. We have found that we have very much in common regarding the priorities in foreign policy, combating poverty, promoting human rights, preventing conflicts. And I feel that our meeting has served to strengthen the already close ties between our two nations.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The remarks began at 12 p.m. in the Prime Minister's Office. In his remarks, the President referred to King Harald V of Norway; former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and current Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete..

Joint Statement by President Clinton and Prime Minister Kjell Bondevik

November 1, 1999

We share concern about the growing problem of trafficking in women for the purpose of placing them into slavery-like conditions. This is a problem worldwide, although trafficking in women within the OSCE area has come more into focus recently. The need to address this issue in the Nordic-Baltic region also arose as one of the recommendations of the Reykjavik conference on Women and Democracy. We attach great importance to cooperation between our two countries to focus on the need to combat this problem.

It is important to focus on the economic and social structures that give rise to prostitution and sexual exploitation, and to find methods to empower the women involved.

Norway is proposing to host a conference next spring on trafficking in the OSCE area. The aim would be to (1) develop national and international policies to combat trafficking and (2) to design and put into practice joint action.

The issue should also be addressed at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul. Norway, in its capacity as OSCE Chairmanship, is actively considering the possibility of an event focusing on trafficking on the margins of the Summit.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.