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the loss of their brave leaders. I have been privileged to speak with Palestinians at their National Council in Gaza. Today I am proud to speak with you because I value our long friendship, and because I believe our friendship can still be a force for tolerance and understanding throughout the world. I hope you will be able to meet the difficult challenges we have discussed today.

If you do not, there is a danger that Pakistan may grow even more isolated, draining even more resources away from the needs of the people, moving even closer to a conflict no one can win. But if you do meet these challenges, our full economic and political partnership can be restored for the benefit of the people of Pakistan.

So let us draw strength from the words of the great Pakistani poet Muhammad Iqbal, who said, "In the midst of today's upheaval, give us a vision of tomorrow." If the people of Pakistan and South Asia are driven by a tolerant, generous vision of tomorrow, your nation and this entire region can be the great success story of the world's next 50 years.

It is all in your hands. I know enough about the ingenuity and enterprise and heart of Pakistani people to know that this is possible. With the right vision, rooted in tomorrow's promise, not yesterday's pain, rooted in dialog, not destruction, Pakistan can fulfill its destiny as a beacon of democracy in the Moslem world, an engine of growth, a model of tolerance, an anchor of stability. Pakistan can have a future worthy of the dreams of the *Quaid-e Azam.*

If you choose that future, the United States will walk with you. I hope you will make that choice. And I pray for our continued friendship, for peace, for Pakistan. *Zindabad.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:20 p.m. from the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Pervez Musharraf, army chief of staff, who led a coup d'etat in Pakistan on October 12, 1999. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this address.

Statement on the Election of Vladimir Putin as President of Russia

March 27, 2000

In a telephone conversation earlier today, I congratulated President-elect Vladimir Putin on his victory in the Russian Presidential elections.

Sunday's vote was an important milestone in the development of a democratic Russia. The people of Russia demonstrated again their intense commitment to democracy. Roughly 70 percent of eligible Russians voted.

In my conversation with President-elect Putin, I emphasized the importance to Russia and the world of strengthening the foundations of Russia's democracy and deepening its international integration. President-elect Putin has an opportunity to translate his electoral mandate into concrete steps to advance economic reform, to strengthen the rule of law, to intensify the fight against crime and corruption, and to join with us on a broad common agenda of international security, including arms control, nonproliferation, and regional peace and stability.

Finally, I emphasized my concerns about the war in Chechnya. I stressed to President-elect Putin the importance of launching impartial and transparent investigations of reported human rights violations and providing prompt and full access for international organizations and the press.

Joint Statement by the Depositary States on the 25th Anniversary of Entry Into Force of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

March 27, 2000

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons Convention, the three Depositary States, the Russian Federation, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, reaffirm their belief in the continuing relevance and importance of the