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years ago, and decades of use have taken their toll. It is high time we get our children out of trailers and into 21st century classrooms.

At the start of this new school year, parents and teachers everywhere are telling students to do their best. In turn, their families have a right to expect that we, here, will do ours. So let's not make them wait another year for the resources they need.

With more teachers, smaller classes, modern schools, and faith in their future, our children will do more than reach for their dreams; they'll achieve them.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:59 p.m. on August 25 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and an Exchange With Reporters in Abuja, Nigeria

August 26, 2000

President Obasanjo. Mr. President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, members of the press, let me say how pleased I am for this opportunity to welcome President Bill Clinton to Nigeria. I am confident that by now President Clinton must have felt from the personal meeting to the enthusiastic crowds that greeted him the extent of our delight to have him among us.

President Clinton and I have had very friendly and fruitful discussions covering all the items and subjects that make up the content of our joint declaration which we have just signed and exchanged, and even more. I just want to emphasize that for all the shared strategic interests between Nigeria and the United States of America, President Clinton and myself share a common view that is based on human welfare, human development, and human well-being in both our countries, our continents, and throughout the world.

Of course, whatever strategic interests, economic, political, or of a social nature, the essence is based on the fundamentals of humanity. Also deriving from this is the issue of Nigeria's role of peacemaking and peacekeeping in our sub-region, our region of Africa, and under the auspices of the U.N., the whole world. Needless to say that this goes for the United States, by virtue of her status as the number one world power today.

President Clinton has only just begun his visit, designed so far that it will be a memorable one, and we wish you a very pleasant day in Nigeria. We welcome you once again.

President Clinton. President Obasanjo, members of the Nigerian Government, members of the press, I think I can say on behalf of the Members of the United States Congress who are here and the members of the American delegation, we are delighted to be in Nigeria.

Two years ago I came to Africa to begin building a new partnership between this continent and the United States, one in which Americans look upon Africa not simply as a continent with problems but also as a continent which presents the world's next great opportunity to advance the cause of peace, justice, and prosperity.

When I came here 2 years ago, one of the biggest obstacles to a new relationship with the entire continent was the fact that the democratic hopes of Nigeria's people were being smothered by military misrule and corruption, with your finest leaders being killed, banished, or in the case of President Obasanjo, forced to languish in prison.

My greatest hope then was that some day I could come to Africa again, to visit a Nigeria worthy of its people's dreams. Thanks to President Obasanjo and the people of Nigeria, I have the high honor today to visit the new Nigeria and to pledge America's support for the most important democratic transition in Africa since the fall of apartheid.

All of us in the American delegation know that after so many years of despair and plunder, your journey has not been easy. But we are also committed to working with the people of Nigeria to help build stronger institutions, improve education, fight disease, crime, and corruption, ease the burden of debt, and promote trade and investment in a way that brings more of the benefits of

prosperity to people who have embraced democracy.

We are rebuilding ties severed during the years of dictatorship. I am very happy that last week the first direct flight since 1993 left Muritala Mohammed Airport for the United States. Today we have signed our first open skies agreement.

With patience and perseverance, Nigeria can answer the challenge your President issued in his inauguration 2 years ago—a speech I got up very early in the morning in the United States to watch. I remember that he said, "Let us rise as one to face the tasks ahead and turn this daunting scene into a new dawn."

With one-fifth of Africa's people, and vast human and natural resources, a revitalized Nigeria can be the economic and political anchor of West Africa and the leader of the continent. We need your continued leadership in the struggle for peace. I am pleased we have begun this week to help to train and equip the first of five Nigerian battalions preparing for service in Sierra Leone. We also need your continued leadership in the struggle against poverty and infectious disease, especially AIDS. I thank President Obasanjo for his offer to host an AIDS summit in Nigeria next year.

Finally, we need Nigeria to keep leading by example as a successful democracy and a nation that has managed, despite many years of repression and strife, to prove that for democracies, our diversity can be our greatest strength.

These are just some of the issues we discussed today. Later, I will have the honor of speaking to the Nigerian Parliament, and I will speak in greater detail about the challenges ahead and the promise of our growing partnership. But let me just say, I begin this visit with enormous admiration for the progress you have made and the highest hope for the progress you will make in the future and the depth that our partnership will assume.

Thank you again, Mr. President, for making us all feel so welcome.

President Obasanjo. We will now take questions from the members of the media. I think we should go to our guests first.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, you're going to meet with President Mubarak of Egypt. Can you give us an idea of what you're going to discuss with him and whether this portends another Mideast peace summit?

And President Obasanjo, I'd also like to have your perspective on these efforts to reach peace in the Middle East.

President Clinton. Well, let me say, first of all, I think it's inconceivable that we could have a peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians without the support of President Mubarak.

As you know, when I leave here, I'm going to Tanzania to support President Mandela and the peace process that he has been working on in Burundi, and then we have to make a refueling stop on our way home. I had hoped to see President Mubarak at the United Nations summit, which will be at the end of the first week of September, but he can't come to that. And so we were having one of our regular telephone conversations the other day and decided that since he would not be in New York, that I ought to refuel in Cairo and we ought to reconnoiter on the peace process.

I don't think you should read too much into it, other than that we are working with a sense of urgency, given the timetable the parties have set for themselves. And we don't underestimate the continuing difficulties, but I'm pleased they're still working, and working under enormous pressures.

President Obasanjo. I must take this opportunity to commend the efforts of President Clinton in the Middle East. I believe that the fact that the door is not completely closed and the fact that areas where, in fact, a few years back one would infer that there would be no advancement at all, whether Jerusalem could be negotiated on, is now an issue that can be put on the table to be negotiated—I believe that should give all of us some hope.

And as President Clinton just said, all the people that should be involved must be engaged, to be involved. And we should never be tired until we achieve success. And I believe success will be achieved. I have no doubt.

Third World Debt Relief

Q. President Clinton's attitude to Africa and the poorer nations of the world is very well-known. He is sympathetic to those nations. But America does not make up the West, only America does not. Now, at a—[*inaudible*]—in Ghana in April, a position was adopted on the issue of the strangulating debt burden in the poorer countries of the world. Now, President Obasanjo, as the chairman of the—[*inaudible*]—was given the mandate to present that position to the G–8 at the July Okinawa summit. Both President Obasanjo—[*inaudible*]—on that issue came out at that meeting expressing disappointment at the lack of concrete commitment on the issues by the richest nations of the world.

Is there any indication that the contact today with a key member of the G–8 would open up new vistas on the issues of debt cancellation for the poor countries of the world? And America is perhaps the strongest supporter of democracy around the world, and we know that democracy turns on the face of the huge debt burden. What is the way out?

President Clinton. Well, let me say, first of all, what I believe the G–8 was saying. You may know that I, because of other commitments and because of the Middle East peace process, unfortunately, had to miss the first day of the G–8 summit and, therefore, I missed the President's presentation.

At Cologne, Germany, we got the G–8 to make a commitment to a debt relief program for the poorest countries in the world, and we had some problems implementing it, but the basic idea, I think, was sound, which was that we should give debt forgiveness in return for a commitment to spend the freed-up resources on human development and to have a responsible economic reform program. That was basically the agreement.

I strongly support that, and I would favor expanding the number of eligible nations once we've actually taken them in some proper order. Our Congress has before it now legislation that would pay America's share of the debt relief for the countries that have qualified under the program that the G–8 adopted.

My own view is that the G–8 would be willing to go beyond those 24 countries as long as it was clear that there was a commitment to economic reform and a commitment to democracy and a commitment to use all the savings for human development purposes, not for military purposes or other purposes that were inconsistent with the long-term interest of the countries.

But I think that the real issue is not whether they can afford the debt relief—in most of these countries, they actually have to budget the debt relief even if they're not going to get repaid. And to be fair, the United States does not have the same dollar stake in most of these nations in the multilateral forum as some other countries do. So it is a little more difficult for them than it is for us.

And I think that you are seeing the beginning of a process that I believe will continue, since I believe that we'll have more countries doing what Nigeria is doing: embracing democracy, having a program with the IMF, a commitment to economic reform that will commend itself to the creditor countries of the world for debt relief. And I think that you'll—it will happen.

But, you're right, we have been in the forefront of pushing this. But to be fair to the other countries the relative size of the American economy make our—makes it easier for us to do than for some of these other countries. And the real problem is not the money itself, because many of them don't expect to be repaid. The real problem is that they all have budget rules like we do that require them to budget that in their annual budgets—the forgiveness of debt—just as they budget for education or health care or defense or anything else, even thought it's, arguably, an unnecessary thing since they don't expect to get the money back from the poorest countries.

But you need to understand that's the political problem that a lot of these leaders have. And since the European countries and Japan have a bigger percentage of their income tied up in debt than we do, it's a little more difficult for them to do. I think we have moved them in the right direction, and I think Nigeria, in particular, and other countries following behind will find a much more

ready response. I think that what happened in Cologne, the call of His Holiness the Pope and others for debt relief in the millennial year, will lead to a process that I expect to play out over the next few years that I believe will result in significantly greater debt relief than we have seen, as long as it's coupled to maintenance of democracy, economic reform, and honest economies and using the savings from debt relief for the real human benefits and needs of the people in the affected countries.

Nigerian Debt Relief/Oil Prices

Q. Mr. President, would you urge President Obasanjo to reduce—to work within OPEC to reduce oil prices? And did you offer him any commitment on rescheduling or writing-off of debt for Nigeria?

And President Obasanjo, I was wondering if you can give your own views on—[*inaudible*]—situation.

President Clinton. Let me answer the debt question first, since it sort of follows upon the previous question. I reaffirmed the commitment that I had previously made to the President that, first of all, the United States would do all we said to get the entire Paris Club to do what the G–8 has now agreed to do and have a generous debt rescheduling, which will alleviate a lot of the cash flow requirements, at least, for Nigeria in the short run; and that now that there was an IMF program in place, once there was enough experience with this IMF program that we could argue to the other creditor nations that have a larger—as I said to the previous questioner, the gentleman before, that these other nations that have a bigger share of the debt than we do—that Nigeria has shown a commitment to economic reform, as well as a commitment to democracy, that I would support debt relief for them, that I thought they ought to have some debt relief in return for showing that they've got a commitment to a long-term political and economic reform. That's the position I've had for some time now.

On the oil prices, we talked about that, and Nigeria, of course, does not have the capacity to change the prices, because they're pretty well producing at full capacity already. So I asked the President to do whatever he could to encourage others to increase production enough to have the impact that OPEC voted to have at the last meeting.

At the last meeting, they voted for production levels that they felt would bring the price back closer to its historic average, somewhere in the mid-20's. And that has not worked out for a number of reasons, and so I asked him to do what he could in that regard.

President Obasanjo. I have always maintained that an excessive high price of oil is neither good for the oil producers nor for the oil consumers, particularly developing oil consumers. Neither is excessive low price of oil, neither is it good for the oil producers nor the oil consumers because you need certain amount of stability. I believe that that stability would be there when OPEC brought in the mechanism to trigger off oil if the oil price is above certain price level, to automatically go in and produce more, and if it's below certain levels to automatically go in and withdraw from the production.

Well, as President Clinton said, what has taken place so far has not worked. The OPEC will have a summit meeting in Venezuela next month, and the price of oil will be one of the major issues to be discussed. And I will, by the grace of God, be at that meeting. And we will work to bring an element of stability into the price of oil. It is in the interest of all concerned that that should happen.

U.S. Issuance of Visas to Nigerians/United Nations Security Council

Q. My question is to President Clinton, and it concerns the U.S. visa policy of Nigeria. The policy so far has—[*inaudible*]—going to do to affect some concrete change in this direction. And the second question is will the United States support a Security Council seat for permanent participation in the United Nations?

President Clinton. Well, let me answer the first question first. I'm very concerned about some of the problems we've had in getting visas to Nigerians who have legitimate interests in coming the United States and should have a perfect right to do so.

If I might say something in defense of the people who have to issue the visas. Because of the worldwide concern—that has nothing to do with Nigeria—about terrorism and

other problems, they have been given instructions to bend over backwards to make sure that all the documents that anybody from any country applying for a visa are in perfect order. Because of a lot of developments here over the last several years, that's not always possible. So what we've got to do is go back and take a hard look at this situation as it affects Nigeria, because we acknowledge that there are many Nigerians who have tried to come to the United States, who should have been able to come and, therefore, should have been able to get visas, who haven't been. And we have to try to find a way to solve that consistent with our law.

And I wish I had an answer for you today, but frankly, I was not aware of the dimensions of the problem until I was preparing to come here and preparing for my visit. And so I don't have a solution today. But I can—I make you a commitment that we will work on it, and we will try to work this out, because I'm quite concerned about it. When I saw the numbers and I saw the small percentage of those who had applied who had been approved, and it was obvious that many, many more had legitimate interests, perfectly legitimate interests in coming to the United States, I realized we had to do something. And we're going to work with your government and try to work it out.

President Obasanjo. Thank you very much. President Clinton—[*inaudible*].

President Clinton. Oh, I'm sorry. Jet lag. [*Laughter*] The position of the United States is that the size of the Security Council should be expanded, that there should be a permanent African seat, and that the holder of that seat should be determined by the African nations, not by the United States and not by the permanent members of the Security Council. I don't think that's our business. I feel the same way about Latin America. I think there should be a permanent Latin American seat on the Security Council.

The analog to Nigeria and Latin America, of course, is Brazil. Brazil is the most populous nation in Latin America, just as Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, and we have very good relations with Brazil. But I think the Latin Americans should decide for themselves if they get the seat, and I think they should, who should hold it, and whether someone should hold it permanently or not.

But I strongly believe that Africa should have a permanent representative with a permanent representative's vote on the United Nations Security Council. If it makes sense for it to be Nigeria, then that's fine with me. But I think the African people should decide that—the leaders of Africa.

President Obasanjo. Thank you very much.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 2 p.m. at the Presidential Villa. In his remarks, he referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; and Pope John Paul II.

Remarks to a Joint Session of the Nigerian National Assembly in Abuja

August 26, 2000

Thank you very much. Mr. President of the Senate, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy President and Deputy Speaker, members of the Assembly, it is a great honor for me to be here with members of my Cabinet and Government, Members of the United States Congress, mayors of some of our greatest cities, and my daughter. And we're glad to be here.

I must say, this is the first time I have been introduced as President in 8 years, speaking to parliamentary bodies all over the world, where they played a song before I spoke. [*Laughter*] I liked it a lot. [*Laughter*] It got us all in a good frame of mind.

Twenty-two years ago, President Jimmy Carter became the first President ever to visit sub-Saharan Africa when he arrived in Nigeria saying he had come from a great nation to visit a great nation. More than 2 years ago, I came to Africa for the longest visit ever by an American President, to build a new partnership with your continent. But sadly, in Nigeria, an illegitimate government was killing its people and squandering your resources. All most Americans knew about Nigeria then was a sign at their local airport warning them not to fly here.