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defend ourselves. We seek lasting peace. We see a new opportunity for peace here in the Holy Land and for freedom across the region.

I look forward to my meetings with President Peres and Prime Minister Olmert. We will discuss our deep desire for security, for freedom, and for peace throughout the Middle East. I want to thank the people of Israel for their friendship and hospitality, and I appreciate the opportunity to visit your beautiful country once again. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:23 p.m. at the Ben Gurion International Airport.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Shimon Peres of Israel in Jerusalem, Israel

January 9, 2008

President Peres. Mr. President, distinguished guests: As the President of the state, I am delighted to speak on behalf of our people. I want to tell you in simple language, you came to a land and a people that loves deeply the United States of America, and without any reservation.

And also, may I say that I have the highest respect for you and the highest regard, because, speaking as a politician, you have introduced character in politics. It's a great contribution to politics—character, courage, vision. And I'm thinking about the last few years, you did really three things of importance: your address in 2002, which for the first time established the basis for a solution and the basis for a consensus in the Arab countries and the rest of—the two-state solution.

Then you and the Secretary worked very hard in Annapolis, in spite of all the skeptics around. Finally, Annapolis gave us one thing, at least: a year to work and make progress. And time is so precious. Dare I say that, firstly, I believe it won't be the last year, but it may be the best year for peace. God knows what can happen later on; we'll have to take it extremely seriously.

And I also believe that the process may be slow, but the progress can be sweet. The process will be slow because negotiations by character calls for time between the opening positions and the fallback positions. You argue. You argue; you have to wait for them. But in the meantime, you can build a support for the negotiation that can make it realistic, tangible. I'm referring to economy; it can raise the standard of the life of the people. That will help immensely the Arabs, the Palestinians, Abu Mazen, nothing more than an economic—[*inaudible*]—advance, and also the security arrangements, which are also possible.

About the economy, may I say, it can be done very quickly because things are ready, and that will have the most profound impact upon all people around. And I would like to add also that while the political side is controversial in our country, economic is a win-win situation. It is accepted by the whole Parliament; it is accepted by the Arabs; it is accepted by you and the Europeans. And you can really build a constructive coalition with the Europeans on that issue under your leadership.

We take your visit not as a ceremonial occasion—very powerful—but a third opening after the two states, after the year of Annapolis, and now the year to implement the highest and the greatest hopes we have. It is in this spirit that I welcome you so much.

President Bush. Thank you. Mr. President, thank you for your kind words about me. I'm just following your example. [*Laughter*]

President Peres. Be careful. [*Laughter*]

Q. Ten years to follow.

President Bush. I wouldn't say that. [*Laughter*]

You're well-known in my country, and you're well-respected. And so I bring the respect of America not only to you but to the people of Israel. Secondly, I come as an optimistic person and a realistic person—realistic in my understanding that it's vital for the world to fight terrorists, to confront those who would murder the innocent to achieve political objectives. We've been called to this task in the past. World War II was such a time, when the world was called to fight people who murdered the innocent to achieve a dark political vision.

Here in the 21st century, America knows firsthand, just like Israel knows firsthand, what it's like to confront those who would

murder innocent men, women, and children in order to achieve a political objective. And this war, Mr. President, goes on not only in this part of the world, but it goes on in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Lebanon; it goes on in capitals in Europe. And we must be steadfast in confronting it.

Secondly, the best way to defeat an ideology of hate is with an ideology of hope. And so I come to Israel as a man who believes strongly in liberty and the power of democracy and freedom to be transformative. And your country has shown that to the world. Israel is a thriving democracy, and its politics can be rough sometimes, just like the politics of America can be rough.

President Peres. [*Inaudible*]—the Israeli. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Yes. Well, we share a common vision, though, of peace. I come with high hopes. And the role of the United States will be to foster a vision of peace. The role of the Israeli leadership and the Palestinian leadership is going to do the hard work necessary to define a vision. And so I thank you for your hospitality. I've really been looking forward to this trip, and it's such an honor to be in your presence, sir.

President Peres. Thank you very much. We met, actually, the first time in 1990——

President Bush. That's right.

President Peres. ——the young American President on his ship.

President Bush. That's exactly right.

President Peres. And since then, we are sailing.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:12 p.m. at the President's Residence. President Peres referred to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel in Jerusalem

January 9, 2008

Prime Minister Olmert. Good evening. I am proud and delighted to welcome President Bush to the Prime Minister's home in Jerusalem. We spent more than 2½ hours talking privately and with the delegations, and this was a very interesting and, I think, very important meeting, Mr. President.

I think your visit is timely and is very important to encourage the process that you and Secretary Rice helped start in Annapolis a few weeks ago, and that we, both sides, I believe, are very seriously trying to move forward with now in order to realize the vision of a two-state solution, a Palestinian state for the Palestinian people and the State of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people and the Jewish state.

I want to thank you—this opportunity—for the friendship and the support for the security of the State of Israel that you have manifested for a long period of time, throughout your tenure as President of the United States of America. This last year, you decided to increase the annual support for the State of Israel for an overall package of $30 billion, which is remarkable and important and is very helpful for the future of the State of Israel.

We discussed regional issues and the bilateral relations between Israel and America and, naturally, of course, the progress that we envisage for the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. And I hope, Mr. President, that you felt through these talks that the Israeli team is absolutely committed to carry on these negotiations in a very serious manner, to deal with all the core issues that we need to deal in order to bring about an agreement that will have to be implemented, subject, of course, to the implementation of the roadmap, as we agreed with the Palestinians and as you have announced in Annapolis in the international meeting. That was a very important and encouraging meeting, with the participation of so many countries coming from the region and from all parts of the world.

We are dealing with serious security problems. Only today the terrorists were shooting many Qassam rockets on the southern part of Israel, and mortar shells and few of the rockets landed inside the city of Sderot. This is a serious problem. Israel does not tolerate and will not tolerate the continuation of these vicious attacks on uninvolved and innocent civilians living in our cities. And we made it clear to everyone that we'll take all the