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# New Steps Toward a Comprehensive Peace in the Middle East

## Comments of

**U.S. Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher, Israeli Foreign Minister  
Shimon Peres, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Egyptian President  
Hosni Mubarak, Syrian President Hafez al-Asad, PLO Chairman  
Yasser Arafat, and Jordanian King Hussein**

[The following is a reprint of remarks made during Secretary Christopher's visits to Israel and Egypt in June 1995, as published in the *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, June 19, 1995, pp. 503-507.]

### **Secretary Christopher and Israeli Foreign Minister Peres**

[Remarks upon the Secretary's arrival in Jerusalem, on June 8, 1995.]

**Foreign Minister Peres.** I would like to welcome the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, on his visit to Israel, Jerusalem, and to the region. He is coming at a very important moment, and his contribution can be of great meaning to all of us. I say this is an important time, and the contribution can be great because we have had, simultaneously, three momentums moving together. We are beginning, apparently very seriously, our negotiations with a new party—the Syrian party. As you know, we attach a great deal of importance to the negotiations with the Syrians, because this may be the last part for a complete peace in the Middle East. If he should be successful in reaching an understanding with the Syrians and the Lebanese, maybe for the first time, the Middle East will have no reason to go to war and can even reduce its arms race and turn much of its means and energies toward peaceful purposes.

If Syria is a new country for the peace negotiations, we also have a second chapter on the negotiations with the Palestinians.

May I say one word—and carefully: despite all the skepticism, we can see the beginning of a real change for the better in the Gaza Strip. In the double meaning of the word, the Palestinian Authority took more measures to establish itself as a security-responsible authority. On the other hand, we can see a drive for building an economic recovery in Gaza itself.

The third new part is to open a new page with Egypt. Egypt was the first to make peace; Egypt remains the most important country in the Middle East. The contribution of Egypt is great and meaningful and permanent, and we are over some [past] arguments.

I cannot remember a more fruitful cooperation for the purpose of peace in the Middle East than the one that exists between the United States of America and ourselves. The layer of complete trust, of complete devotion, of complete creative thinking—and I attribute it very much to the personality of the Secretary of State of the United States. The trust that he has collected all over the place is, in a very strange way, even stronger than the mistrust that we have been used to over many years. So looking ahead to these true new beginnings, and building on the credibility of the Secretary, we welcome you, Mr. Secretary, to Israel.

**Secretary Christopher.** Foreign Minister Peres, thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be with you again, and I am just delighted that we are able to arrange to meet here as I arrive and

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you are ready to depart. It gives new meaning to the concept of an exchange. I am delighted to be back here in Israel as I always am. I am looking forward to meetings later today with President Weizman and Prime Minister Rabin. Then, of course, in the next few days I will be meeting the leaders of not only Israel, but Syria, Egypt, and Jordan as well. As Shimon has indicated. I come here at a time when there is a great opportunity for new steps forward to progress toward a comprehensive peace. There are obstacles ahead, of course, but I think we can take a great deal of satisfaction and encouragement from the developments we see here.

The process of reconciliation between the Israelis and the Palestinians seems to be moving ahead, as the Foreign Minister has said, with renewed confidence on the part of both sides. They're working toward an implementation of the Declaration of Principles by July 1.

I'm particularly heartened, as the Foreign Minister has said, by the fact that the situation has improved on the ground, that it has remained calm, and that the closure has eased in Gaza. I think this provides an environment in which the parties can make good and early progress.

I'm also encouraged, to echo the Foreign Minister, by the progress achieved in negotiations between Israel and Syria. For the first time since the Madrid process began four years ago, there has been a framework for discussion of security issues reached between Israel and Syria, and that's a very desirable step forward which will make it possible for military-to-military talks to begin before the end of this month—and on a serious and significant basis. Of course, this process will require great creativity and flexibility, and it will certainly entail great risks. But the United States stands ready—as always—to stand behind those parties who are prepared to take risks where creativity is needed. Serious endeavors are needed. Of course, there is no one in the world, I believe, who has greater capability and flexibility and greater talent than the [Israeli] Foreign Minister.

I am also pleased to be able to announce here, at the present time, that there will be a meeting between President Mubarak, Prime Minister Rabin, and myself in Cairo tomorrow. Those arrangements have been worked out, and I think that can be an important step forward, a new page between Egypt and Israel, who have such a strong capacity to work together to help move the peace process forward. As a result of many efforts, I believe the landscape is really being transformed here. Progress is not yet complete; the transformation is not complete. But, no doubt, I think we all see over the horizon tremendous opportunities: the cycle of war and terror ending; political cooperation across boundaries; and, for Israel, a chance to assume, in an era of security, its rightful place as a very strong force for peace, progress, and democracy in the region. In short, peace will bring what President Clinton has referred to as “the quiet miracle of a normal life.”

The United States remains, of course, a close partner with Israel in this great undertaking. I want to underscore that we stand behind Israel and are prepared to help it as it undertakes the great risks that peace entails. Our commitment to Israel's security is, as always, unshakable, and will remain that way. We'll continue to do everything we can to maintain the momentum toward a comprehensive peace in this region.

Before I conclude, I'd like to say how happily we welcome the rescue of Capt Scott O'Grady through the night in Bosnia. We rejoice with his family. It was an excellent military operation, and it has been a cause of considerable joy as we learned the news just within the last few hours.

Shimon, I am delighted to be here. Thank you so much for being here at the airport so we could have this conversation.

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## **Secretary Christopher and Israeli Prime Minister Rabin**

[Remarks following their meeting at the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem, on June 8, 1995.]

**Prime Minister Rabin.** Mr. Secretary, the peace team that came with you is most welcome here in assisting us to move ahead with the peace process. Tomorrow, we will meet with President Mubarak, the leader of the Arab country that started the peace process and signed a peace treaty with Israel. Today, we are engaged in a more meaningful peace process that brought about the agreement with the Palestinians—represented by the PLO—and the signing of a peace treaty with Jordan. I believe that as a result of your visit, we will find ways to improve the overall atmosphere in the region by visiting Egypt, by your visit to Damascus on Saturday, and that will, hopefully, bring about the resumption of the talks with Syria. We see today an improved mood, without underestimating still the obstacles that we have to remove from the road to achieve a comprehensive peace.

Mr. Secretary, the President of the United States, President Clinton, phoned yesterday before you came and described to me his talks with President Asad. He conveyed to me his impressions of the improved mood on the part of the Syrians. Let us hope that the good mood will be translated to the practical negotiations that we have with the Palestinians and, hopefully, when the negotiations with Syria are resumed. Again, Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your personal efforts to serve the cause of peace in the region. Welcome to Israel.

**Secretary Christopher.** Mr. Prime Minister, thank you. As always, I am delighted to be back in Jerusalem. I come here at a time of renewed opportunity to seek and achieve a comprehensive peace in the region. The Prime Minister and I had a good opportunity to review the ways in which we might take advantage of this moment when there is a renewed opportunity.

On the Palestinian track, it is clear to me that the negotiations are going forward in a very serious way with a sharpness of focus needed to reach an agreement on phase two of the Declaration of Principles. The negotiations are obviously very complicated and difficult, with a lot at stake. But most of the parties know. I think, that these negotiations can succeed. It will provide a critical path for moving toward reconciliation between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

On the Syrian track, I believe there is an opportunity now to move into a new and important phase. A commitment by the parties to hold senior-level military talks in Washington this month shows the seriousness of the parties on one of the key issues—in many ways the most difficult issue—an issue that I think is so critical to ensuring the future security of Israel. This is a time of unusual opportunity for real peace, for enduring security for Israel, with the United States, as before, with a renewed commitment now to be steadfast in its support of Israel as it takes risks for peace.

We talked about the determination that we have to try to move forward in this process. As the Prime Minister has said, the trip to Cairo tomorrow will bring together two countries that have been the earliest in this process, and both have a very strong stake in its success. We look forward to being with you tomorrow, Mr. Prime Minister, and to talking with you throughout the course of this visit. Thank you so much for welcoming me here, Mr. Prime Minister.

## **Secretary Christopher, President Mubarak and Prime Minister Rabin**

[Opening remarks at a joint press conference in Cairo, Egypt, on June 9, 1995.]

**President Mubarak.** I welcome Prime Minister Rabin and Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Egypt. I think the need is to meet to solve problems and meet together in a very good atmosphere.

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I had long discussions with Prime Minister Rabin about bilateral relations, and we discussed the peace process and how it is going—and it was a very positive negotiation with the Prime Minister. I say that whenever there are problems in the peace process, I think it is better to meet face-to-face and discuss with each other—and we are used to this. I have met Mr. Rabin several times and Mr. Christopher several times. This is the only way to sit—face-to-face—and face the problems and see how we could manage to make the process continue.

We are convinced of peace; we signed a peace treaty with Israel about 18 years ago. We supported the Madrid conference, and we made tremendous efforts so that conference could convene. We made tremendous efforts—and I think Mr. Rabin and Secretary Christopher know that—with the Palestinians until they reached the signatures on the Declaration of Principles, which we appreciated. We still are supporting the peace process until peace prevails all over the area. Our negotiations were very positive—with a very good atmosphere, and I hope—and I am sure that all will continue on the same line until peace prevails all over the area. Thank you.

**Prime Minister Rabin.** Mr. President, Secretary of State. Allow me first to thank you for hosting this meeting in a very good atmosphere, because we are all committed to achieve comprehensive peace in the region. Egypt showed courage, vision, and imagination in being in the lead of changing the Middle East by signing a peace treaty with Israel—by maintaining this peace—and has served as a model of what can be achieved in the Middle East if comprehensive peace is achieved. It took too long after the signing of the peace treaty until the Madrid peace conference was convened and negotiations started. As the Prime Minister of Israel, I believe that what has been achieved in the last two years is no doubt a tremendous achievement—the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, looking at the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, signing the Declaration of Principles [DOP], signing the Cairo agreement that brought about the implementation of the first phase of the DOP.

Gaza and Jericho were first, and now we are in a very deep, serious negotiation with the PLO—with the Palestinian Authority about the implementation of the second phase of the DOP—it is to say of the West Bank, Judea, and Samaria. It is more complicated. We set as a target date the first of July, and we will make on our part the most serious effort to meet this date. There are some problems, but there is no doubt in my mind we have crossed the point of no return in the implementation of the whole DOP all over the area which the DOP refers to.

I hope that the negotiations with Syria will be resumed, but this is more up to the Americans to tell because we do not have the direct contacts and dialogue as we have with Egypt, the Palestinians, and the Jordanians. We are busy now consolidating the second peace treaty that we signed, after Egypt, with Jordan, and I believe we are moving ahead in the consolidation of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. For me, it is a tremendous change that—no doubt in my mind—promises we will do the utmost, as soon as possible; we will see a different Middle East—a Middle East in peace—in which each country will live in peace without the threat of war and, hopefully, without the threat of violence and terrorism. No doubt, today, the main obstacle on the road to solution of the problem between the Palestinians and us is the terrorism carried out by the enemies of peace—the enemies of the agreement signed between the PLO and Israel. We hope that what was started by the Palestinian Authority to control this terror—and we appreciate the efforts of the Palestinians in doing so—no doubt will facilitate our capability to reach an agreement and to see a different situation in the region.

Again, I would like to thank you Mr. President—the atmosphere in our talks—we went into details of our discussion with the Palestinians, what we see vis-a-vis the Syrians, and we appreciate very much your efforts and assistance in advancing the peace process in the whole region with the purpose of achieving a comprehensive peace. Thank you very much. Thank you very much Mr. Secretary for your assistance and the United States' assistance.

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**Secretary Christopher.** Mr. President and Prime Minister. Mr. President, may I join in thanking you for hosting this event and also for the leadership that you continue to provide in the pursuit of peace here in the Middle East. Mr. Prime Minister, I want to add a word of thanks to you for the tremendous leadership you have shown, and the courage you have shown in seeking peace in the Middle East.

Today's meeting reflects a rejuvenation of the Israeli-Egyptian partnership—a partnership that is so vital in the development of peace, cooperation, and stability here in the Middle East. Today, Egypt and Israel stand as bastions of peace—the region's pillars of peace. When the two countries and their leaders come together in a partnership, they can achieve an enormous amount of progress in the pursuit of peace. This is that kind of time. Today's meeting comes at a time of renewed efforts and renewed hopes for the pursuit of peace here in the Middle East.

First, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have regained their momentum with renewed confidence on the part of both sides. The parties are making a good faith effort to reach an agreement on the second phase of the Declaration of Principles with a target date of July 1 and a very serious negotiation going on. Second, the negotiations between Israel and Syria have moved to a new phase—a commitment of the parties to hold senior-level military talks at the end of the year is a very encouraging sign, and I will be pursuing that when I go to Damascus tomorrow. More must be done to take advantage of this great current opportunity. One of the things we must do is to find an economic base for the peaceful steps that have been taken. The Amman summit this October will provide an opportunity to pursue that and provide real economic opportunity for the people of the Middle East as they begin to enjoy the fruits of peace. Today, I believe we turned a new page in the Egyptian-Israeli relationship, one that is promising as we build for the future. We have taken another step to transform the region toward peace and to make peace irreversible. Our hope is to achieve something that President Clinton once called “the quiet miracle of a normal life.” That is what the people of the Middle East deserve, and I think this step today, with the generosity and commitment of the President and the Prime Minister, moves us a step closer to that normal life. Thank you very much.

**Secretary Christopher**

[Opening remarks at a press briefing following his meeting with President Assad in Damascus, Syria, on June 10, 1995.]

President Asad and I had a very productive meeting today—about three hours long. We had a thorough and constructive discussion of the next steps to be taken to move the Syrian-Israeli track to a new and more intensive phase.

Based on my conversation earlier this week with Prime Minister Rabin and those that I had here just a few moments ago with President Asad, we have an agreement to begin a sequence of steps along the following lines. First, Syrian Chief of Staff Shihabi and Israeli Chief of Staff Shahak will come to Washington for discussions, under U.S. auspices, on the security arrangements to be covered by the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement when and if it is completed. These discussions will commence in Washington on June 27, and will continue for two or three days. We have also invited the two Chiefs of Staff to come to Washington a few days in advance for informal bilateral discussions with us, to provide us with an opportunity to carry forward the discussions Ambassador Dennis Ross had with the security chiefs while he was out here in the region.

After the initial meeting of the Chiefs of Staff, starting on June 27, we anticipate about a two-week interval to allow both sides to review the results of those discussions and to digest the results. During this interval of two weeks, I plan to send Dennis Ross back to the region so he can discuss the next steps with President Asad and Prime Minister Rabin. After this two-week

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interval, the Israeli and Syrian military officials—below the Chief of Staff level—will reconvene in Washington under our auspices as part of the ambassadorial channel. With continued discussions in that channel, we expect that series of discussions between the ambassadors and the military officials to take about two weeks. That would carry us through approximately the end of July, by my estimate.

The agreement that we have reached on this rather detailed and ambitious work plan confirms the determination of the parties to seek an early peace. The experience of the months since my visit to the region in March—particularly the agreement that was reached on a set of principles or a framework—demonstrates what we have been saying for some time: that progress on this track will not be easy but that progress can be made when the parties set their minds to it. They have reflected good will, determination, and flexibility, and that has brought us to the point where we are today.

In the weeks ahead, as the two Chiefs of Staff and the others focus on security issues, the ambassadors in Washington will also renew their discussions of the non-security issues, which will be essential if we are to ultimately reach a peace agreement. We have already narrowed the differences on a number of these non-security issues, but there is a good deal of work to do. I strongly feel that if we can make progress on the security issues, then that will have a favorable effect on the environment and will affect the non-security issues as well. Our attention over the next several months will be focused on both security and non-security issues.

**Secretary Christopher and Chairman Arafat**

[Remarks following their meeting in Jericho, on June 11, 1995.]

**Chairman Arafat.** We are very happy to have this opportunity for the participation of His Excellency Mr. Christopher and his team here in Jericho. We had a very fruitful and very positive and very important discussion today, to push forward the peace process and the implementation of what has been agreed upon and signed. I repeat my thanks from my heart to His Excellency President Clinton and to Mr. Christopher for what they are doing to push the peace process. We hope that through their help we will achieve what we are looking for.

At the same time, we hope that by the first of July, we will have something concrete concerning the redeployment and empowerment and, after that, the election. At the same time, we cannot forget this very strong push and active role of His Excellency, through which we can have now a very strong, active role in the Syrian track. Because our aim is to have a comprehensive, lasting, peaceful solution in the Middle East—as has been done with Palestinians and Jordanians, also with the Syrians and the Lebanese. Again, I have to thank His Excellency for what he is doing, and I hope that through this continuous support, we will be able to continue in the peace process in an accurate way. Thank you.

**Secretary Christopher.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here in Jericho again for the second time and to note the progress that has been made since my first visit here, which was only two or three days after the Chairman returned to this area. My coming here is a reflection of the importance the United States attaches to the Palestinian Authority.

Based upon the talks that I had with Prime Minister Rabin on Thursday and Friday and with Chairman Arafat today, I have found on both their parts a renewed determination to move ahead. They are both determined to reach an agreement—within the timeframe—on the issues in phase two of the Declaration of Principles—community must take steps to do more. If the elections are held, it will be a big boost to the credibility of the area, and it will be much easier to get commitments from public donors as well as investments by private parties. There can be no illusion about the difficulty of the issues that remain and the pressure on the negotiators. But

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based upon my visit here and my being in the region for some time, I have confidence that the process and the progress can be sustained.

The United States will continue to support the peacemakers in this area—including the Palestinian Authority—and I want to once again thank the Chairman and his colleagues for the hard work that I know that is going into the progress that has been made. Thank you very much.

**Secretary Christopher and King Hussein**

[Opening remarks at a press conference in Amman, Jordan, on June 11, 1995.]

**King Hussein.** Ladies and gentlemen: I would like once again to say how delighted we are—myself and the government, and the people of Jordan—to receive the Secretary of State and his able colleagues and to welcome a very dear friend back to Jordan. It has become almost part of the scene, and it reflects very much the commitment and the interest of the United States in helping all of us in this region achieve a comprehensive peace and contribute our share for a more stable future for the coming generations, one where there, hopefully, will be every chance for them to fulfill themselves and to achieve what is worthy of them.

I would like to say that on this occasion I have this chance to talk again about everything as we do—as friends do—and I am extremely optimistic by all I have heard. If the Secretary of State would permit me a private local Jordanian joke—whenever we see our Minister of Finance smiling here, we are very happy because it suggests we are out of trouble and the future looks good. And I have seen the Secretary smiling more on this visit than on any other. I hope that I am justified in my optimism, and I hope that this smile will always be there; I hope that we will achieve—with the help of our friends and the dedication and commitment of our friends and all partaking positions of responsibility in this part of the world—our goal of a peaceful area and a happy future for all our people.

**Secretary Christopher.** Your Majesty. Thank you. Let me say how pleased I am to be here again as a guest of His Majesty with his vision and courage and leadership. A warm peace is taking shape between Israel and Jordan, and I think it is much to his everlasting credit. The United States recognizes the risks that the King and Jordan have taken for peace and, of course, there is an underlying reason why President Clinton has been determined to work with the Congress to forgive all of Jordan's debt to the United States and encouraging this trip to the region. There has been significant progress and renewed momentum on the various tracks. I briefed the King on the status of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in light of the meetings I have had in just the last two or three days with Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat. Based upon those discussions, I told him of the determination of both sides to reach an agreement implementing phase two of the Declaration of Principles and to do so within the timeframe the parties have set. I also told the King about my meetings with President Asad in Syria. The fact that a date has now been set for the Chiefs of Staff in Washington to kick off the military-to-military talks is, I think, a reflection of the fact that on that track, we are reaching a new and more intensive phase.

Finally, I conveyed to the King a brief sense of the meeting that took place in Cairo last Friday between Prime Minister Rabin and President Mubarak—a meeting that I think rejuvenated their friendship and partnership which meant so much for the cause of peace in this region.

Serious problems remain to be solved and much, much work remains to be done. I think this trip has reinforced my feeling that there is a tremendous opportunity to move now toward the goal of a comprehensive peace, perhaps a better opportunity than any time during the 2½ years

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that I have been in office. The United States counts on the aid of Jordan but, especially, on the wise counsel of King Hussein, which we frequently call on and always give great heed to.

Your Majesty, as we try to maintain the momentum for peace, we want to work very closely with you here in Jordan.