

respect for the rule of law. We want to see a China that is moving toward democracy at home and stability around the world. This agreement gives China's people access to goods and services, to ideas and innovations that will help to promote those goals. It also gives China access to the World Trade Organization membership, and that will help to promote those goals.

Bringing China into the WTO is a win-win decision. It will protect our prosperity, and it will promote the right kind of change in China. It is good for our farmers, for our manufacturers, and for our investors. Encouraging China to play by international rules, I say again, is an important step toward a safer, saner world.

I will be working hard over the coming weeks and over the coming months to make sure we do not let this opportunity slip away. I want to thank Secretary Daley and Mr. Ricchetti for agreeing to take on this important task. And we will do everything we can to succeed.

Thank you.

Q. What are the chances?

*The President.* Well, I think they're quite good if we can get a vote early in the year. I think this is something that is in the national interest. I have made it clear to the leaders of Congress that I strongly support it and that I think it should be scheduled for a vote at the earliest possible time. And if we do that, I think we've got an excellent chance to pass it.

*Elian Gonzalez*

Q. Mr. President, do you think that Congressman Burton is improperly interfering in the Elian Gonzalez case by issuing that subpoena? And are you troubled that Vice President Gore also thinks that the INS is not competent to make the decision and that it ought to be made by a judge in a court?

*The President.* Well, I believe that the INS made the decision it was charged to make according to the rules and laws that govern the INS. And if anyone wants to challenge that, the appropriate thing to do is to challenge it in a legal way. I don't have any comment about what Mr. Burton does or any judgment about it. I mean, it's always interesting.

Q. What about the Vice President?

*The President.* Well, anybody is free to express their opinion about this and whether they think they did right or wrong. What I have successfully done, I think, is to make sure we got through the decision without it becoming

overly politicized. We allowed the INS to review the facts, to interview the relevant parties, and to make a decision based on the law and regulations governing the INS. I think they did that to the best of their ability.

And as I said, if this were an American case, it would be handled in a family court, according to the best interests of the child. I think the INS tried to do what was right by the child, and I think that they did the best they could with a difficult and controversial situation. So I want to stand by them. And if anyone disagrees with them and they have some legal recourse, they ought to pursue the legal recourse. But again, I—and, of course, they can say they don't agree, but I think they did the best they could on the facts.

*Israel-Syria Peace Talks*

Q. Mr. President, how far do you think that they got in Shepherdstown, and when do you expect the two sides to get back together again?

*The President.* Oh, I think they'll be back here pretty soon. We're just trying to work out the precise arrangements. And you know, these people really talked about the substance of their differences for the first time. They were very open; they were very candid; they covered all the issues. And I think that they broke a lot of ground. But it's tough. I told you it was tough in the beginning. I still think we can get there, but they're going to have to come back here determined to do so, and I believe they will.

Q. You're not disappointed, sir, in the results?

*The President.* Oh, no. I never expected in the first go 'round that we could have a concluding agreement. It's just—this is too tough. These are very difficult issues. But they're not—the good news is they're not overwhelmingly complicated. That is, sometimes you have in these peace negotiations issues that are both politically difficult and extremely complicated.

I think there's some complexity here, but it's all quite manageable. So I think that they know where they are now; they've talked through. They have a feeling for each other; they've dealt with all these issues. We have a working—a document, if you will, on which we can work through the differences. And so I feel pretty good about it.

I think our United States team did a good job. I'm very proud of Secretary Albright and Mr. Berger and all the rest of them. They did