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Remarks prior to discussions with President Stephanopoulos and an exchange with reporters. (Pres. Bill Clinton and Greek Pres. Konstandinos Stephanopoulos)

(Transcript)

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Greece-U.S. Relations

President Clinton. Let me say that it is a great honor for me to welcome President Stephanopoulos here to celebrate the ties that bind the United States and Greece. And we look forward to discussing the many, many issues between our two countries, including the situation in the Aegean, which we strongly feel should be resolved without any force or threat of force, according to the international agreements and with respect to the territorial integrity of all parties involved.

I'm looking forward to this, and I'm very glad you're here, Mr. President.

China-U.S. Trade

Q. Are you afraid of a trade war with China, Mr. President?

President Clinton. Excuse me?

Q. Are you afraid of a trade war with China?

President Clinton. No, I don't think so. The United States, I think, has been more open to Chinese products than any other country. We buy an enormous percentage of their exports, a far larger percentage than our share of the world economy. And we are - tried to aid the transition of the Chinese economy and to have a constructive relationship with them, but we have a right to preserve the integrity of our own laws and especially our intellectual property laws.

The United States has been fortunate to lead the world in the production of a lot of electronics and computer related equipment and software. And the products of the mind and the laboratories in America should be protected under international agreements, and they should be entitled to that in every country. That's all we ask.

Q. Do you expect them to budge before May 15th?

President Clinton. Well, I hope we can resolve the differences between the two countries before May the 15th. We're working hard on it. I hope we can. And we'll do our best to resolve it.

The President would like to make a statement.

Greece-U.S. Relations

President Stephanopoulos. I now want to say how pleased I am to be in the United States on an invitation for such a state visit. I would like to convey to the American people the greetings of the entire Greek people and their admiration. The Greek people are fully aware of the fact that democracy is founded on efforts such as the ones that the United States and Greece make and based on the ideals that our two countries express.

And I would like to assure you that the problems that arise in the Aegean are not at all our responsibility. We always try, and we succeed, in behaving according to international law.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Clinton. Thank you very much.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

President Clinton. Good morning. Have we got everyone in? Let's wait until we have everyone in.

Q. There are two Stephanopouloses in the same office.

President Clinton. There are two Stephanopouloses in the same office.

Q. How do you feel about it?

President Clinton. I feel very good about it. I asked George this morning if there are any relations between himself and the President, and he said he had been searching for one desperately, but he hadn't yet found it. [Laughter] He was still hoping to find one.

Let me say, first, how very pleased I am, on behalf of all the people of the United States, to welcome President Stephanopoulos here. The ties between America and Greece are well known. The vitality, the importance of the Greek-American community to our country, I think, is well known to the people of Greece. But our partnership for so many years now has meant a great deal to the United States, and I look forward to working to strengthen it.

I also look forward to our discussions of a wide variety of issues. I know we will discuss the matters in the Aegean. I want to say again that we believe these matters should be resolved according to international law, without any force, without any threat of force, and respecting the territorial integrity of all the parties. And we believe that a lot of progress can be made in that part of the world, and that the future of Europe and the future of the Mediterranean region and, indeed, to a large extent the future of democracy everywhere depends upon our ability to work in good faith, to work through those issues.

So I'm looking forward to this meeting, and very pleased to have the opportunity to host it.

Aegean Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, a month ago in this same office, you had a meeting with the Greek Prime Minister and you had discussed these problems we had with Turkey. Do you think there is any chance for Turkey to go to the International Court? Do you have any information about that from Ankara?

President Clinton. Well, I believe there is a chance. I was encouraged. Of course, the representatives of the two countries met in Bucharest recently, and I believe will meet again in Berlin soon. And I think there is a good chance it can be resolved. I believe we have taken a position that is the proper one, and I believe it's consistent with the position that the Greek Government has staked out.

Balkan Peace Process

Q. How will you define the role of Greece in the Balkans?

President Clinton. Excuse me?

Q. How will you define the role of Greece in the Balkans?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I want to thank Greece for their support of the operation in Bosnia, and the President, in particular, I know, has tried to play a constructive role in dealing with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in dealing with the problems in Albania.

I believe that Greece will have to be involved in order to have a comprehensive resolution of the problems in the Balkans, and goodness knows we have worked hard for that. And we have seen in the last few years what a terrible price we pay if the problems are not resolved peacefully in the Balkans.

Cyprus

Q. Anything on Cyprus, Mr. President? On Cyprus issue? On Cyprus?

President Clinton. Well, as you know, I have spent quite a lot of time myself on the Cyprus issue in the last 3 1/2 years. I am sorry that it hasn't produced any more positive results. But we are exploring now the possibility of what else we can do there, and I want to discuss that with the President. And I'm hopeful that the United States can play a constructive role there. And I'm hopeful that it can be resolved. But that is something we need to discuss.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Konstandinos Simitis of Greece. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.