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REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Speech in Advance of the United Nations General Assembly

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Brookings Institution
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SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, it is a great delight to be back here at Brookings through that revolving door, which really does go both directions. I spoke with Strobe shortly after I was asked to take this job as Secretary of State and began thinking about who needed to be in this new Administration. And he ruefully said, "I know you're going to decimate the place." (Laughter.) I said, well, yes, we are, but that's all part of the revolving door – people who go in and out of administrations, who do the work that is done here every day at Brookings, such high-quality work in many respects, visionary, as well as analytical. And I'm very grateful for this farm team that you have led so well for so many years and the opportunity to work with them now in this new capacity.

I also want to just say a word of personal appreciation to Strobe. As most of you know, he's been a friend of my husband's and mine, starting, of course, with my husband at Oxford and then shortly afterwards. And he and the wonderful Brooke were dear, dear friends over all of these years. And I'm pleased to look out and see Adrian and Devin, the next generation.

I also want to thank Martin Indyk and John Thornton for their leadership as well. And to all of the Diplomatic Corps, the ambassadors who are here with us today, I thank each and every one of you. I've had the opportunity to do bilateral meetings with most of you, with your foreign minister, or in some instance, the head of state. And I appreciate your being with us today. I also see some of the wonderful people who have joined the team at State and USAID who are here as well, and I express my appreciation to all of them.

I thank Brookings for this opportunity to join you on the eve of UNGA. It is a strange acronym. And it causes a lot of moaning and groaning in some circles. Henry Kissinger was famously critical of UNGA, and others have been expressing over the years their concern and disappointment with the United Nations. But I believe that at its best, the United Nations is not only a critical, central institution, but one in which the United States has a lot of equities. So I'm actually looking forward – now, it has nothing to do with the fact that it's in New York, and I get to go home – but it is a personal as well as an official obligation that I am looking forward to.

Let me begin, though, by echoing the President's statement yesterday concerning his approval of the recommendations not only of the Pentagon, but of his entire national security team to deploy a stronger and more comprehensive missile defense system in Europe. This decision came after a lengthy and in-depth review of our assessment of the threats posed, particularly the threat posed by Iran's ballistic missile program, and the technology that we have today, and what might be available in the future to confront it. We believe this is a decision that will leave America stronger, and more capable of defending our troops, our interests, and our allies.

Let me be clear about what this new system will do relative to the previous program, which was many years from being deployed. With the President's decision, we will deploy missile defense sooner than the previous program. We will be able to swiftly counter the threat posed by Iran's short and medium-range ballistic missiles. We will deploy missile defense that is more comprehensive than the previous program with more interceptors in more places and with a better capacity to protect all of our friends and allies in the region. We will deploy technology that is actually proven so that we do not waste time or taxpayer money. And we will preserve the flexibility to adjust our approach to the threat as the threat evolves.

So make no mistake – if you support missile defense, which I did as a senator for eight years, then this is a stronger and smarter approach than the previous program. It does what missile defense is actually supposed to do. It defends America and our allies. Now I know we've heard criticism of this plan from some quarters. But much of that criticism is not yet connected to the facts. We are not, quote, "shelving" missile defense. We are deploying missile defense sooner than the Bush Administration planned to do so. And we are deploying a more comprehensive system.

We are not reducing our capacity to protect our interests and our allies from Iran. By contrast, we are increasing that capacity and focusing it on our best understanding of Iran's current capabilities. And most of all, we would never, never walk away from our allies. We have recommitted ourselves to our Article 5 obligations under NATO. We have sent that message in bilateral and multilateral settings from the President's and my trips to every other encounter and venue that we have been in over the last many months. We are deploying a system that enhances the security of our NATO allies. It actually advances our cooperation with NATO. And it actually places more resources in more countries.

Two of our allies, Poland and the Czech Republic, were very willing to host parts of the previous planned system, and we deeply appreciate that. We will continue to cooperate closely with both nations, for instance, through rotation of a Patriot battery in Poland and close missile defense research and development with Czech companies. As we explore land-based interceptors going forward, we have made it clear that those two countries will be at the top of the list. And let me underscore that we are bound together by our common commitment as NATO allies and also by deep historical, economic and cultural ties that will never be broken.

Finally, let me reiterate what the President said yesterday. This decision was not about Russia. It was about Iran and the threat that its ballistic missile program poses. And because of this position, we believe we will be in a far stronger position to deal with that threat, and to do so

with technology that works and a higher degree of confidence that what we pledge to do, we can actually deliver.

Now my main reason for being here today is to give you a brief review of our agenda next week in New York. But before I get into specifics, I saw a cartoon from *The New Yorker*. It showed a delegate in his seat at the United Nations passing a note to the delegate next to him. And the caption read, "Shh, it's a birthday card for Lichtenstein. Sign it and pass it on." (Laughter.) Well, comic relief is necessary in our work, especially now.

But as with most humor, this cartoon is also commentary. It represents one view of the United Nations, a caricature of what multinational, multilateral organizations spend their time doing. As President Obama leads our U.S. delegation at this year's General Assembly, I hope we can demonstrate that the United Nations does not have to be just a diplomatic talk shop on First Avenue. At its best, it can be an institution that brings the world's nations together to solve global problems through adherence to rules and principles set forth in the UN charter. And it is the responsibility of the 192 member nations during the General Assembly and beyond to capitalize on the opportunity for global cooperation and progress that the United Nations affords to each of us.

I outlined earlier this summer at the Council on Foreign Relations the Obama Administration's efforts to advance our interests and solve today's problems through a global architecture of cooperation and partnership. And we must begin by taking responsibility ourselves, something that, under President Obama, we have already begun to do on issues from climate change to nonproliferation. And we have called on others to do the same. By building and strengthening partnerships, institutions, and international regimes, we can forge a global consensus and use that leverage to offer clear incentives to all nations to cooperate and live up to their responsibilities. And we can also devise strong disincentives for those who would act in isolation or provoke conflict.

The United Nations and this month's General Assembly offer us a venue and a forum for nations to work together to live up to that founding charter and abide by and enforce international rules in service of global peace and security.

I have in my office in the State Department a picture of Eleanor Roosevelt, one of my particular heroines, and she is sitting at a desk working on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I've said this before, but I think that channeling Eleanor Roosevelt is not a bad idea. (Laughter.) It reminds us of what is at stake as we move forward with our responsibilities, as does Strobe Talbott's recent book, *The Great Experiment*. We have to have effective global institutions. That is not a choice. That is an imperative. It is up to us to determine how to make them effective. The United Nations is a building. It is not able to act in the absence of the decisions made by those member-nations. We, in my view, ignore it and walk away from it at our peril, especially in the 21st century, where interconnectiveness gives voice and prominence to views that could have easily been either ignored or marginalized in the past.

Few issues reflect the need for a global architecture of cooperation more than nuclear nonproliferation. No issue poses a more serious threat to our security or the world's, and it will be a main topic of discussion next week and beyond.

Now, the President outlined a robust and ambitious arms control and nonproliferation agenda in Prague earlier this year, and we believe that it sets the template for what we should aspire to – moving toward a world of zero nuclear weapons.

We understand that that won't be easy. We understand that it is a generational commitment. It might not happen in our lifetimes. But as long as nuclear weapons exist in the world, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective deterrent capability. But we want to both be on record and to use our best efforts to move toward more effective nonproliferation and more effective cooperation toward, hopefully, arriving someday at that future goal.

Next week, the President will chair a meeting of the UN Security Council on nonproliferation and disarmament. He will emphasize the importance of strengthening the international nuclear nonproliferation regime – and the critical role that the Security Council must play in enforcing compliance with nonproliferation obligations.

The President has asked me to lead the U.S. delegation to a conference on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. This will be the first time a Secretary of State has attended. It will give me the opportunity to underscore the importance of the CTBT to the global nonproliferation effort and to broaden U.S. security interests.

Strengthening the nonproliferation regime means working to bring other nations into compliance. And this, of course, includes North Korea and Iran. And let me take a moment to say a few words about Iran, which will be another key topic on the President's and my agenda next week.

To begin, it is important to recall what's really at issue, and what's really at stake.

Iran has refused for years to address the international community's deep concerns about its nuclear program. Those concerns have been underscored repeatedly by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the UN Security Council.

Iran's continued failure to live up to its obligations carries profound consequences – for the security of the United States and our allies; for progress on global nonproliferation and progress toward disarmament; for the credibility of the IAEA and the Security Council and the Nonproliferation Treaty; and of course, for stability in the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, and beyond.

Our concern is not Iran's right to develop peaceful nuclear energy, but its responsibility to demonstrate that its program is intended exclusively for peaceful purposes. This is not hard to do. Iran's continued refusal to cooperate has damaged the credibility of its claim that it does not seek a nuclear weapon.

So Iran faces a choice. The international community has made abundantly clear what is possible for all Iranians if Iran lives up to its responsibilities on the nuclear issue – the benefits of economic connections to the rest of the world, cooperation on peaceful nuclear energy, and partnership in education and science.

But there will be accompanying costs for Iran's continued defiance – more isolation and economic pressure, less possibility of progress for the people of Iran.

The Obama Administration has clearly conveyed our readiness to engage directly with Iran. We know that dialogue alone doesn't guarantee any outcome, let alone success. But we also know that our past refusal to engage yielded no progress on the nuclear issue, nor did it stem Iran's support for terrorist groups.

Over the past eight months, the President has reached out both to the Iranian Government and people. We have made clear our desire to resolve issues with Iran diplomatically. Iran must now decide whether to join us in this effort.

Yet, since June, we have seen the Iranian Government engaged in a campaign of politically motivated arrests, show trials, and suppression of free speech. The Iranian Government seeks a sense of justice in the world, but stands in the way of the justice it seeks.

Nonetheless, we remain ready to engage with Iran – not as an end in itself, but as a means of addressing the growing concerns that we and our international partners have about Iran's actions, especially on the nuclear issue. In New York next week, I will be meeting with my counterparts from the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany in the P-5+1 context to discuss the way forward and prepare for talks that Javier Solana is arranging at the beginning of October.

Our message will be clear: We are serious. And we will soon see if the Iranians are serious. This is not about process for the sake of process. In New York, we will work with our partners to put Iran's choice into focus and to stress that engagement must produce real results and that we have no appetite for talks without action.

Let me highlight a few other issues that the President and I will be addressing at the General Assembly and in the months ahead: Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan; development; and women.

Iraq has made important strides with the support of the United States and the international community to build a more secure and hopeful future for its people. We look forward to the parliamentary election next January as an important milestone in this journey, and we pledge to work with Iraqis and the international community, including the invaluable UN Mission to Iraq, to make these elections a success.

As a result of our common efforts, our relationship with Iraq can now enter into a period of transition as our military draws down and the role of civilian agencies increases to better meet the needs of the future and ensure a stable, sovereign, and independent Iraq that contributes to peace and security in the Middle East. This reflects no lessening of our commitment – on the contrary, it demonstrates that we have entered a new, sustained, and more mature partnership

that will serve both of our countries far into the future. I am pleased that Vice President Biden, accompanied by Deputy Jim Steinberg, recently returned to Iraq to continue our robust engagement with Iraq's leaders.

That partnership between our countries will, of course, continue to build security cooperation while strengthening diplomatic relations, but also it will help to build stronger ties in commerce, the rule of law, good governance, education, science, culture, and healthcare, through our Strategic Framework Agreement. I chair a coordinating committee along with Prime Minister Maliki. We had our first full meeting in July, and we will continue to be engaged in working on this broader agenda.

Also on the docket for the General Assembly will be meetings related to Afghanistan and Pakistan. President Obama has stated our core goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and ultimately defeat al-Qaida and its extremist allies, and to prevent their return to either country. This is a goal we share with Afghanistan, with Pakistan, and with the international community. In fact, pursuing al-Qaida and the Taliban was the basis of the original UN resolutions that authorized U.S. military action after the September 11th attacks and created ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force of 42 nations helping Afghans secure their own country.

Our long-term security, and that of our friends around the world, is connected to the security and well-being of the people of these two countries. To effectively squeeze the extremists fighting to destabilize both countries, the Afghan and Pakistani governments must be better able to secure their territory from these extremists and meet the basic needs of their populations.

The recent Afghan elections at once illustrate the promise and the challenges of Afghanistan. Alongside our partners and the United Nations, we will continue to encourage all parties to respect the international and Afghan electoral institutions charged with determining the final outcome of the election process. When the next president is inaugurated, we will work to step up the level of international engagement and expectation with that new government in a strong partnership to strengthen governance at all levels.

As we address these urgent challenges, we will also work on other issues that have implications for American security and interests. Following up on my trip to Africa last month, and the President's visit to Ghana earlier in the year, he will host a lunch for leaders of Sub-Saharan Africa during the General Assembly. I will meet with Costa Rican President Oscar Arias to continue our joint efforts to resolve the crisis in Honduras and help that country restore democratic constitutional order. I will also be meeting with donors and other stakeholders committed to helping Haiti respond to the economic dislocation caused by the global economic crisis, four hurricanes, and a history of challenges. And I will continue discussions with our allies and other partners in Asia about the situation in Burma.

Now, if the global architecture of cooperation demands responsibility of us and our partners, it also offers opportunities. Just as we are focusing intensively on urgent challenges like Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, so too are we pursuing a positive agenda devoted to expanding opportunity so more people in more places can fulfill their dreams and live up to their God-given potential. And I will focus considerable attention on two areas of opportunity – development

and women. They go hand-in-hand, but we are talking about each of them, because each, in and of itself, is critically important to the point that Strobe made – that human security, national security, international security ultimately rests on development and the role and rights of women.

Now, many of you have heard me describe our plans to integrate diplomacy and development as two of the three pillars in our foreign policy, along with defense. I've talked in different venues about the Obama Administration's commitment to leading with diplomacy and engaging other nations. Next week, I will outline how we will approach development in tandem with our diplomacy – to be effective and efficient and enable the State Department, USAID, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation to pursue and execute 21st century foreign policy goals.

The foundation for our approach will be principles that will move us away from top-down assistance that too often fails to meet the needs of those we are attempting to help, or has only short-term effects. To solve the complex problems of poverty, hunger, health, climate change, where they intersect, we want to focus on those root causes, and look for approaches that really change, transform the environment in which people are making these decisions and in which governments are held accountable to a higher degree of performance and transparency. We will be looking for ways to not only explain our approach, but to highlight issues. I will be, for example, participating in an event with Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, hosted by the UN and the United States Government, on food security.

We have launched a Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review – and unfortunately, that adds another acronym to the State lexicon, the QDDR – led by Deputy Secretary of State Jack Lew, and co-chaired by Ann-Marie Slaughter, and the Deputy – the Acting Administrator at USAID, Alonzo Fulgham. This is a broad examination of our structure, policies, and budget, and it'll lead to better accountability and measurable results.

Finally, our delegation, and I personally, will work to advance international efforts to recognize women as key drivers of economic progress and social stability, as well, to address impediments to women's empowerment and advancement, particularly sexual and gender-based violence. I will chair a session of the Security Council and will speak on behalf of the adoption of a resolution on "women, peace and security" which will endorse concrete measures to implement Security Council Resolution 1820 and address sexual and gender-based violence as a tactic of war.

I saw the scale of misery caused by this violence on my recent trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo, having met, in many different settings around the world over many years, with women who are the victims of the worst that humanity offers, but also with women who are the strongest exemplars of the best of what humanity offers. I saw that very vividly on this most recent trip.

Next week, I will be speaking with other foreign ministers and heads of state about strategies to end this violence and to ensure that those who commit atrocities are prosecuted and not treated with impunity. I will work with women leaders, heads of state, foreign ministers at the General Assembly to highlight the importance of raising the status of girls and women and investing in their potential through education, economic development, and healthcare. If women are free

from violence and accorded their rights, they can contribute to local economies and become change agents for greater prosperity and stability.

Our agenda is ambitious. It is full, from Northeast Asia to Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe and the Americas, and we will remain vigilant and proactive about all of them. At this time of year as we contemplate UNGA next week, it seems only fitting that it occurs at the time that we are celebrating the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the Jewish high holy days. We will also, obviously, be focusing on the dream of a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Palestinians, resulting in assurance of the security of Israel and a state for the Palestinian people.

This is a time of reflection and renewal for hundreds of millions of our fellow citizens around the globe. It's a time when we can take stock and reassess and hopefully recommit ourselves to the values and ideals that move us forward. And it is in that spirit that I am approaching not only next week's General Assembly, but the weeks, months, and years ahead. And I very much appreciate the excellent work and contributions of many of you in this audience in the capacities in which you too serve and wrestle with these difficult problems that confront us.

And I hope that we will not only continue to have a partnership that enables us to speak of our hopes and aspirations, but together, produce solutions to the problems that we confront. Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

MR. TALBOTT: You should take care of the Secretary's.

SECRETARY CLINTON: I can do it.

MR. TALBOTT: She can handle that herself, but I'm not allowed to. (Laughter.) Thank you so much, Madame Secretary. We've got a little over 15 minutes or so, and why don't we go immediately to Martin Indyk, who will ask the first question.

SECRETARY CLINTON: There he is.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Strobe. Madame Secretary, welcome to Brookings and thank you for your strong and wise leadership as Secretary of State. You seemed in your speech to make clear to the Iranians that they have a choice to make.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But I wonder – you know, today, President Ahmadinejad said that the Holocaust was a lie; as you pointed out, he essentially stole the elections in suppressing his opposition. And he's also made clear – very clear – that the nuclear – their nuclear program is not something for discussion. Instead, he wants to kind of talk to the P-5+1 about dividing up the world and recognition for his superpower status.

So how do you affect his calculus? What is the strategy for actually getting him to understand that he has to address the nuclear program and has to reassure the international community of Iran's peaceful intentions?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, Martin, as I said, there are no guarantees of results, let alone success, in many of these difficult engagements that we are undertaking. But we do believe that the opportunity presents itself for the kind of face-to-face discussions that the P-5+1, with our full participation, with Under Secretary Bill Burns leading our efforts there, to explore a range of issues. Now, as you, I'm sure, noticed, the Iranians said they had a lot of issues they wanted to discuss that did not include their nuclear program. We obviously said that is the issue we want to discuss.

I'm not going to prejudge this. I mean, we have made it very clear we're on a dual track. That dual track is the process of engagement that we have said we would pursue. We are about to commence that. But the other are the consequences. So I'm not going to speculate on what comes of this effort. We have underscored, as I did again today, that we are not in this just for the sake of talking. We don't check a box by saying we're engaged in some process and now we're going to keep talking forever; that is not our intention.

The President said that we would take stock of where we are with respect to Iran and the international community response around the time of the G-20, which is the end of next week, that we would want to see some movement by the end of this year. I'm well aware of all the problems that you have just briefly alluded to. But we're going to move forward, see what, if any, changes in approach, attitude, actions the Iranians are willing to entertain, and continue to work with our allies, many of whom are represented in this room through their ambassadors on the consequence side of the ledger.

MR. TALBOTT: Andrea, I'm calling on you in your capacity as a virtual member of the Brookings family. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: She looks pretty real, not just virtual. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: If I may follow up on Ambassador Indyk, what are the consequences? Are there deadlines? Because we've seen this kind of diplomacy before; with all due respect, previous administrations, Secretary Rice, tried to negotiate with Iran and there were objections by Russia and others at the Security Council that meant that the threat of sanctions really never could be carried out as aggressively as the United States wanted.

So I know you've said that the missile defense decision was not about Russia, but is there any indication that Russia might take another view toward Iran, that there is a time limit? And are there other threats out there? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think it is fair to say that there has been a much more concerted outreach to both the Iranian leadership and the Iranian people under President Obama than we have seen in 30 years. It's not that other presidents did not look for ways to engage Iran, but for a variety of reasons it was never carried through in a long-term, consistent manner. We, as you know, did not participate fully as a member of the P-5+1 until very recently. For many

years, we outsourced our policy and concerns about the nuclear program to others to try to intervene with and persuade Iran to change course.

So we were on the sidelines. I mean, we were pacing up and down the sidelines extremely agitated, and we were just trying to figure out how to get other people to go on the field and deal with this problem. And look where we are today. We are really nowhere. The potential of the Iranian nuclear program being for something other than peaceful uses is obviously of great concern to us and increasingly to the international community.

So, again, I don't want to prejudge this. I think we have been very clear about what we are looking for. The two tracks that we are proceeding on simultaneously – we have certainly begun conversations with a number of international partners and with all of the P-5+1 members. I think if you had asked us six months ago could we get the strongest possible sanctions against North Korea that have ever been implemented against a member-state of the United Nations with full cooperation, not just on paper, of China and Russia, but active enforcement of those sanctions, I think many of you in this room would not have thought that possible.

Why did it happen? Because we have spent an enormous time listening and really working with our partners, who are partners on some issues and maybe not on all issues, but looking for ways to broaden that sense of cooperation and looking to understand how our views can be more effectively communicated instead of just walking up and down the sideline being agitated, but looking to find common ground in our assessment of the threats that we all face.

So I think that we have proceeded in a very thoughtful way – no guarantee of any particular outcome, but we're determined to persevere.

MR. TALBOTT: Ken. Ken Lieberthal.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, you have always, to my mind, very admirably focused on issues of domestic governing capacity. There has been a lot of attention in recent weeks to the issue of corruption in Afghanistan, and the political and social consequences of that. What do you think we can do concretely to make a difference on that issue?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Ken, this is something that I want advice from those of you here at Brookings. Corruption is as big a national security threat as I can imagine. We've never posed it in quite that way before, but this is how I am seeing it. It's not only corruption in Afghanistan, which I will come back to; it is corruption almost as an epidemic – undermining governance, undermining the capacity of countries to make progress in ways that would grow a middle class that would create stability and prosperity, corruption that siphons off natural resources that should be extracted for the benefit of all of the people instead of a very small elite, corruption that has just eaten away at the fabric of so many countries.

I saw it throughout Africa, where it's tragic. As Wangari Maathai said at my town hall in Nairobi at the University of Nairobi, "God must have loved Africa because Africa was blessed with so many riches, but then one has to ask, 'Why are we so poor?'" And you go to countries which are immensely rich in natural resources, from oil and gas to diamonds and gold and so

much else, and the corruption is endemic, but it is now a security problem. And my view on this is that the international community has to be much more focused. And it is no longer, well, we pass a law in the United States saying our companies can't go bribe people, but other countries and companies say, look, that's the way you do business, how are you going to deal with these people otherwise? Because we are looking at a tipping point when it comes to the impact of corruption in so many of these countries and so many of these places.

Now specifically about Afghanistan, look, we have to take some of the responsibility – not for the fact that corruption was there, predating us, but that we aided and abetted it in implicit ways by not demanding more and not demanding more earlier. So I am very conscious of the difficulties that corruption poses. But it is one of my highest priorities because I no longer see it as a good government concern. Wouldn't it be nice if we could stop people from stealing from their own people and extorting from international companies? Yes, it would be very nice. But isn't it absolutely essential that we figure out more effective ways to do that?

You can look at energy and just know what the possible repercussions of the rampant corruption in the Niger Delta is causing both in terms of human misery and in terms of lower production and disruption of supplies. That's an issue that comes really close to home. And there are so many examples of that. So I'm looking for ways that we can take the very good initiatives that have been already undertaken and bring them to scale and expect more.

Now, in order to do this, we've got to get a critical mass of major economies to be willing to work with us and to see this as a – if not an immediate threat to their interests, as at least a medium- and long-term threat to their interests. So that's what we're going to try to do.

MR. TALBOTT: Yes.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, thank you for the opportunity that you give us with the Brookings Institute. I was looking forward to hearing from you more about the Middle East peace efforts. Your husband, President Clinton, has created lots of hopes in the past of bringing peace to the area. Now, President Obama has also brought that almost same kind of hope after his speech in the Middle East in Cairo and Istanbul.

And – but now, what we are seeing now is that the whole problem of peace and war in the Middle East between Israel and the Arabs is shrinking down to the issue of settlements and freezing of settlements, where it is actually a much bigger issue. And what we see now is no stop for the activities of building these settlements. We see that Israel is digging tunnels under the most second holy shrine of Islam. And the emotions in the Arab and Islamic world are getting really very high and all, with lots of anger. We don't know – I don't know what your talk is covering with the Arab officials, but one of your allies, a king in the area, was the warning yesterday that any failure for these peace efforts would lead to a result that nobody would want to see.

Now, I would like to hear from you that what seems to be Senator Mitchell efforts to be not making any progress with Mr. Netanyahu, a most hardliner. So how are you going to deal with

this issue in order to keep the credibility, the hopes that the United States has produced in the area after the speeches of President Obama?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I understand the emotion and I understand the great hope that is at the heart of your question. And I want to just make several points to you.

First, this President started on the very first day with a commitment to pursue a comprehensive peace agreement premised on the two-state solution. And I can guarantee you that President Obama and I are very patient and very determined. And we know that this is not an easy road for anyone to travel. I have personal experience about how difficult this road is. I well remember that brilliant sunny afternoon on the South Lawn of the White House when Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shook hands. And I well remember the disappointment at Camp David despite enormous efforts to try to finally forge that peace agreement when it was not successful.

However, I believe that the commitment evidenced by my husband and the commitment evidenced by President Obama to be in this from the very beginning, never to be deterred, never to give up, and expecting both sides – not just one side, but both sides – to be ready to pursue that comprehensive peace agreement, is the best way for America to demonstrate our absolute belief that this issue is at the core of so many other challenges we face. And therefore, we are going to do all we can to persuade, cajole, encourage the parties themselves to make that agreement. The United States cannot make it. The Arab nations cannot make it. It is up to the Palestinians and the Israelis. And to that end, we expect both sides – not just one side, but both sides – to be actively engaged and willing to work toward that resolution.

And I think that what George Mitchell has done has been very valuable in sorting through a lot of the concerns, because if you recall in the previous efforts of the Bush Administration through the Roadmap, the parties were encouraged to work themselves toward a resolution. The United States was not actively engaged in it, as we were in the '90s. So do I think maybe we've lost some ground, or maybe it's a little more difficult because of that? I do. But that is not going to discourage us. So let me just reassure you. We are going to continue to do all that we can working with everyone involved, but most particularly the Palestinians and the Israelis, to reach that comprehensive peace agreement that we think is in the best interests of both countries.

MR. TALBOTT: Madame Secretary, as a last question, I'd like to ask you about another issue that you know very well from your personal experience, and that is healthcare. And I would only put that question to you as Secretary of State because many are concerned that it actually has implications for the foreign policy of the United States.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Nice try, Strobe. (Laughter.)

MR. TALBOTT: Well – a bit of a stretch?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yeah, that's all right. That's all right. (Laughter.) I'm sure you want me to talk about our global health initiative. (Laughter.)

MR. TALBOTT: Actually, not. (Laughter.) Let's talk about our national health initiative.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Indeed.

MR. TALBOTT: In the following context. A lot of well-wishers of yours and of President Obama's, both in this country and around the world, are concerned that if the healthcare debate goes badly and ends in a defeat for the President, it will have serious implications for his ability to get a cap-and-trade bill that he can take to Copenhagen in some sense, or at least progress on global warming. You mentioned that you're going to be playing a role with regard to the future of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, that if healthcare goes down it'll be bad for START ratification, CTBT ratification next year.

So insofar as you feel inclined to do so, we'd be very interested in your views on the merits of the issue, but also on the connection between the President's domestic agenda and his foreign policy agenda, which it's your charge to carry out.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, Strobe, based on my own acquaintance with this issue – (laughter) – and my previous experience in the White House, I don't accept the premise of the question. I mean, I think everyone here probably recalls that we were not successful in '93 and '94, but I don't think that in any way undercut President Clinton's ability to deal with the rest of the world, to make tough decisions in places like Bosnia and Kosovo, and lots of other challenges, and even on the domestic front to do welfare reform, to end up with a balanced budget with a surplus.

So I don't see that. I just don't accept that. But I don't think we're going to face that, because I think we're going to be successful. And I think that the work that is being done and the expectations that people now have – 15 years from our unsuccessful effort back in '94—means that more people know what's at stake, more people have seen us try other things. I mean, I remember one of the arguments that was made 15 years ago is let the HMOs handle it, we'll do something called managed competition, that'll control costs, that'll eventually cover everybody. And of course, that was not to be.

So I think that there's just much more real world experience that people from all walks of life have that, in the absence of what is being proposed, costs will continue to go up for those of us who are insured, coverage will continue to shrink for those of us who are insured, the numbers of people who have access to any form of insurance will continue to diminish. And therefore, I think we will be successful. Now, will it be everything any one person would want? No, of course not. That's not the nature of the compromise required in a legislative setting. But I am quite optimistic. We really have an opportunity now to produce an outcome that will significantly improve the important aspects of healthcare reform – controlling costs, increasing quality, expanding coverage. And it's interesting that what we are proposing is fundamentally so conservative compared with so many of our friends and allies around the world who do a much better job than we do in covering everybody and in keeping costs down, and yet some of the political opposition is so overheated.

So we just have to calm down here, take two aspirin, go to bed, think about it in the morning. But I'm very optimistic. I think that it won't be pretty. It's like sausage-making. But we will

end up with a bill for the President to sign that will be an advance. And that's what I think is in the best interest of the country. And of course, it will have political benefits for the President, but I think that what's most important is getting this done for the future budgetary demands of our government, for the future well-being and health of our people. And that's what's going to happen.

MR. TALBOTT: Thank you for that. Let me ask everybody, please, to remain seated. We'll thank the Secretary in just a second, but I want to explain the protocol for ending the meeting. I'm going to ask everybody, please, to remain in this room seated while she leaves. I'm going to escort her out. I want to particularly ask all the Brookings scholars present to stay here, because if you follow her out, I'm going to get nervous about whether you're heading back to Foggy Bottom yourselves. (Laughter.)

But please join me in thanking Secretary Clinton for a terrific hour. (Applause.)

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