

**Transcript of the Mbeki and Bush Meeting
July 10, 2003
Union Building Guest House, Pretoria**

PRESIDENT MBEKI: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome. I'm very pleased, indeed, to welcome President Bush and his delegation, Mrs. Bush and young Barbara. We are very pleased, indeed, Mr. President, that you were able to come. It's very important for us because of the importance of the United States to our future, and the United States to the future of our continent.

We've had very good discussions with the President, able to cover quite a wide field. We're very pleased with the development of the bilateral relations, strong economic links, growing all the time. Continued attention by the U.S. corporate world on South Africa is very critically important for us. AGOA has had a very big impact in terms of the development of our economy. And we continue to work on all of these matters.

It also gave us a chance to convey our thanks to the President for the support with regards to meeting the African continental challenges. That includes questions of peace and security, the NEPAD processes. Again, very important for the future of our continent. That, of course, also gave an opportunity to discuss some of the specific areas of conflict around the continent.

I must say, President, that at the end of these discussions, we, all of us, feel enormously strengthened by your very, very firm and clear commitment to assist us to meet the challenges that we've got to meet domestically and on the African continent. And, therefore, President, thank you very much, indeed, for coming. We -- the visit will certainly result in strengthened bilateral relations and strengthened cooperation to meet these other challenges that we face together.

But, welcome, President.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. President, thanks. Gosh, we're honored to be here. Thank you for your wonderful hospitality. Thank Mrs. Mbeki, as well, for her gracious hospitality. It's a pleasure to be in South Africa. Your nation's recent history is a great story of courage and persistence in the pursuit of justice. This is a country that threw off oppression and is now the force of freedom and stability, and a force for progress throughout the continent of Africa.

I appreciate our strong relationship -- and it is a vital relationship. Mr. President, I want to thank you very much for working hard to make it a vital and strong relationship. We've met quite a few times in the recent past, and every time we've met I've -- I feel refreshed and appreciate very much your advice and counsel and your leadership.

I appreciate the President's dedication to openness and accountability. He is advancing these principles in the New Partnership for African

Development. He's a leader in that effort. The President and I believe that the partnership can help extend democracy and free markets and transparency across the continent of Africa.

President Mbeki has shown great leadership in this initiative, and our country will support the leaders who accept the principles of reform, and we'll work with them. So thank you, Mr. President.

South Africa is playing a critical role in promoting regional security in Africa, and we discussed the President's leadership, for example, in Burundi. South Africa has helped achieve the peaceful inauguration of a new President. Or in the Congo, South Africa brokered an agreement on the creation of a transitional government. And in Zimbabwe, I've encouraged President Mbeki and his government to continue to work for the return of democracy in that important country.

I also discussed with the President the importance of the continued cooperation in the global war on terror. The United States and South Africa are working together to strengthen this nation's border security and law enforcement. And we're devoting \$100 million to help countries in eastern Africa increase their counter-terror efforts. We are determined to fight, and to join our friends to fight, terrorists throughout this continent and throughout the world.

We're also committed to helping African nations achieve peace. In Liberia, the United States strongly supports the cease-fire agreement signed last month. President Taylor needs to leave Liberia so that his country can be spared further grief and bloodshed. Yesterday, I talked with President Kufour of Ghana who leads ECOWAS. I shared with the President our conversation. I assured him the United States will work closely with ECOWAS and the United Nations to maintain the cease-fire and to enable a peaceful transfer of power.

We're also pressing forward to help end Africa's long-running civil war in Sudan. My Special Envoy, Senator Jack Danforth, is returning to the region. We're making progress there. His message is that there's only one option and that's going to be peace. And his efforts are making good progress.

The President also discussed our action to combat HIV/AIDS. South Africa has recently increased its budget to fight the disease, and we noticed and we appreciate that. America is now undertaking a major new effort to help governments and private groups combat AIDS. Over the next five years, we will spend \$15 billion in the global fight against AIDS. People across Africa had the will to fight this disease, but often not the resources. And the United States of America is willing to put up the resources to help in the fight.

We're committed to helping the people of Africa defeat hunger. We provided more than 500,000 metric tons of food aid to Southern Africa over the past 18 months. This year we'll provide nearly \$1 billion to address food emergencies. We care when we see people who are hungry. We look forward to working with Mr. President to alleviate suffering.

We're also working to expand trade, which I believe is the key to Africa's economic future. The African Growth and Opportunity Act is creating jobs and stimulating investment across the continent. Right here in South Africa, exports to the United States under AGOA have increased by 45 percent in the last year alone, significant progress. We're working with five nations of the Southern African Customs Union on a free trade agreement to help expand the circle of prosperity even wider. Mr. President, our countries have many common interests. We also share a fundamental commitment to the spread of peace and human rights and liberty. By working in close partnership, we're serving both the interests of the people of South Africa and the United States. I want to thank you for your friendship, appreciate the hospitality. It's been a great honor to be in your country.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: Thank you very much, President.

I understand that two U.S. journalists and two South African journalists will pose some questions. John.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to direct the question to both Presidents. And it does concern the issue of HIV/AIDS and the \$15 billion grant. Did you manage to reach some kind of understanding or consensus on the issue of how South Africa will access that money, on what terms South Africa will be able to access that money?

And, President Bush, did you give you any undertakings in terms of using your influence to ensure that there will be cheaper access -- access to cheaper drugs and medicines?

And to President Mbeki, sir, did you --

PRESIDENT MBEKI: How many questions --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, I was going to say --

Q. This is the last part.

PRESIDENT BUSH: This is the ultimate five-part question.

(Laughter.)

Q. Did you give any undertaking in terms of the running out of the national treatment plan? Thank you.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: Well, as the President had indicated, we did, indeed, discuss this. The situation is that we received a request from the U.S. government to say, can we make proposals as to how to access the fund, for what purposes -- a program, a program that we would present. So we are working on that. We want to respond to that request from the United States government as quickly as is possible. We will do that, and convey it. So it will be out of that process of discussion that will result, out of that proposal between the U.S. government and ourselves, that then will come a program, particular concrete kind of action, with the necessary costing when we get to that stage. So that's where we are.

So the matter will be discussed in that way. And as President Bush had indicated in our discussions, that of course, the U.S. government is taking a comprehensive approach to this, which would, therefore, include questions of awareness, questions of health infrastructure, questions of treatment and so on. So we will look at the totality of those and in the proposal that we would make.

PRESIDENT BUSH: We just named Tobias to be the Ambassador, nominated him to be the Ambassador, and he's, upon confirmation, will be working with the countries such as South Africa to develop a strategy -- is what we need, we need a common-sense strategy to make sure that the money is well spent. And the definition of well-spent means lives are saved, which means good treatment programs, good prevention programs, good programs to develop health infrastructures in remote parts of different countries so that we can actually get anti-retroviral drugs to those who need help.

The cost of anti-retroviral drugs has dropped substantially. But we did talk about the pharmaceutical union in a broader context. As you may know, the United States supported a moratorium on the enforcement of patent laws concerning those drugs related to diseases that were causing pandemics. And we will continue to work with South Africa, as well as other countries, to see if we can't reach a common-sense policy that, on the one hand, protects intellectual property rights, and on the other hand, makes life-saving drugs or treatment drugs for, in some cases, life-saving, in some cases that are proper for treatment more widely available at reasonable costs.

But one reason I felt emboldened to ask the Congress for a substantial amount of new money for the AIDS initiative was because of the cost of anti-retrovirals, and it's significantly lower than it was a couple of years ago.

So we're making good progress. And I look forward to working with the President on putting together a sound strategy that saves lives. That's what our country is interested in. We're interested in dealing with this pandemic in a practical way.

Tom. But whatever you do, don't fall into that bad habit of asking both of us three or four questions. How about keeping it to one.

Q. Mr. President, you have an assessment team in Liberia now to help you decide whether to send in U.S. troops as part of a peacekeeping effort.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Right.

Q. U.S. troops are getting shot at increasingly in Iraq every day. We have troops in Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Korea. What do you say to critics who suggest that our forces may be spread too thinly now to engage in further initiatives?

And to President Mbeki, do you think that the United States should play a more active role in peacekeeping, specifically in Liberia?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, first, my answer to people is that we won't over-extend our troops, period.

Secondly, we have made a commitment that we will work closely with the United Nations and ECOWAS (The Economic Community of West African States) to enforce the cease-fire, see to it that Mr. Taylor leaves office, so that there can be a peaceful transition in Liberia. We've made that commitment. I've said it clearly more than one time. Like yesterday in Senegal, for example. So nothing has changed from about 12 hours ago on that question.

We do have assessment teams there to assess what is necessary to help with the transition. And the President brought up the question and he can answer it his own way. But he asked whether or not we'd be involved and I said, yes, we'll be involved. And we're now determining the extent of our involvement.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: Yes, certainly, we discussed this question with the President many years ago and agreed that it's critically important that we, as Africans, should, indeed, take responsibility for the future of peace and stability on the continent. So that is a principal obligation that falls on us as Africans.

So as you would know, the West African states, ECOWAS, have agreed to send in troops into Liberia. And they are trying to move that process forward as quickly as is possible.

We appreciate very much the point that was just made by the President of the commitment of the United States to lend support -- the assessment teams are there to assess that -- to lend support to those processes, processes of restoration of peace, making sure people don't starve, making sure that there's a restoration of democracy in Liberia.

So the U.S. will cooperate with the American troops that will go there. So it's not -- we're not saying that this is a burden that just falls on the United States. It really ought to principally fall on us as Africans. Of course, we need a lot of support, logistics wise and so on, to do that, but the will is there.

PRESIDENT BUSH: One quick follow-up on that -- violating of the one-answer policy. I think our money has helped train seven battalions of peacekeepers amongst African troops. And it's a sensible policy for us to continue that training mission, so that we never do get over-extended. And so one of the things you'll see us do is invigorate this -- re-invigorate the strategy of helping people help themselves by providing training opportunities. I think we've trained five Nigerian battalions, if I'm not mistaken, one Senegalese. So we've got -- but it's in our interest

that we continue that strategy, Tom, so that we don't ever get overextended.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: Thanks. Jimmy.

Q. During the past week, the two Presidents or the governments of -- the government of the U.S. and South Africa have expressed sharp differences about the best way to deal with the Zimbabwean question.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes.

Q. And having met this morning, I wonder if the two Presidents have found the best approach or have agreed about the best approach to deal with Zimbabwe. I see that it is has come up. Can we get from the smiles that you now have a formula to deal best with Zimbabwe? (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT MBEKI: I didn't know, President, that we'd expressed sharp differences.

PRESIDENT BUSH: That's right. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT MBEKI: No. We are absolutely of one mind, the two governments, President Bush and myself are absolutely of one mind about the urgent need to address the political and economic challenges of Zimbabwe. It's necessary to resolve this matter as quickly as is possible. We have said, as you would know, for a long time that the principle is rooted, principal responsibility for the resolution of these problems rests with the people of Zimbabwe; and, therefore, have urged them -- both the ruling party and the opposition, the government and the opposition -- to get together and seriously tackle all of these issues.

I did tell the President that, indeed, the government -- Zanu-PF and the MDC are, indeed, discussing. They are engaged in discussions on all of the matters that would be relevant to the resolution of these political and economic problems. So that process is going on. We have communicated the message to both sides that -- indeed, as we agreed with the President -- that it is very, very important that they should move forward with urgency to find a resolution to these questions.

Of course, again, as the President was saying, was saying that apart from these important political issues about democrats and so on, you actually have ordinary people who are hungry in an economy which can't cope with them, and you can't allow that kind of situation to go on forever. So they are discussing.

We had discussed this matter earlier, sometime back, with the U.S. government that we have to find, we've got to find a way of getting a political solution and we would, indeed, count very much on such economic, financial support as would come from the United States afterwards, in order to address urgent challenges that face Zimbabwe. So we didn't fight about any of what I've just said. (laughter.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: We were smiling because we were certain a clever reporter would try to use the Zimbabwe issue as a way to maybe create tensions which don't exist.

Look, Zimbabwe is an important country for the economic health of Africa. A free, peaceful Zimbabwe has got the capacity to deliver a lot of goods and services which are needed on this continent in order to help alleviate suffering. And it's a very sad situation that's taken place in that country.

Look, we share the same objective. The President is the person most involved; he represents a mighty country in the neighborhood who, because of his position and his responsibility, is working the issue. And I'm not -- not any intention of second-guessing his tactics. We share the same outcome. And I think it's important for the United States, whether it be me or my Secretary of State, to speak out when we see a situation where somebody's freedoms have been taken away from them and they're suffering. And that's what we're going to continue to do. But the President is the point man on this important subject. He is working it very hard. He's in touch with the parties involved. He is -- he's making -- he believes, making good progress. And the United States supports him in this effort.

Last question. Randy.

Q. Yes, Mr. President. Do you regret that your State of the Union accusation that Iraq was trying to buy nuclear materials in Africa is now fueling charges that you and Prime Minister Blair misled the public? And then, secondly, following up on Zimbabwe, are you willing to have a representative meet with a representative of the Zimbabwe opposition leader, who sent a delegation here, and complained that he did not think Mr. Mbeki could be an honest broker in the process?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I think Mr. Mbeki can be an honest broker, to answer the second question.

The first question is, look, there is no doubt in my mind that Saddam Hussein was a threat to the world peace. And there's no doubt in my mind that the United States, along with allies and friends, did the right thing in removing him from power. And there's no doubt in my mind, when it's all said and done, the facts will show the world the truth. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind. And so there's going to be a lot of attempts to try to rewrite history, and I can understand that. But I am absolutely confident in the decision I made.

Q. Do you still believe they were trying to buy nuclear materials in Africa?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Right now?

Q. No, were they? The statement you made --

PRESIDENT BUSH: One thing is for certain, he's not trying to buy anything right now. If he's alive, he's on the run. And that's to the benefit of the Iraqi people. But, look, I am confident that Saddam Hussein had a weapons of mass destruction program. In 1991, I will remind you, we underestimated how close he was to having a nuclear weapon. Imagine a world in which this tyrant had a nuclear weapon. In 1998, my predecessor raided Iraq, based upon the very same intelligence. And in 2003, after the world had demanded he disarm, we decided to disarm him. And I'm convinced the world is a much more peaceful and secure place as a result of the actions. Thank you all very much.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: Thanks a lot.