

As a result of our discussions with the Israelis during past weeks we now have Israel's agreement to **enter talks in close proximity** in a renewed effort to reach agreement on an interim arrangement for withdrawal of Israeli forces in Sinai and reopening of the Suez Canal. I am persuaded the Israelis are now ready to **negotiate** actively and **without precondition** to see whether an interim agreement is possible.

When we first broached the idea of talks in proximity with you last **October** you said you found the proposal appealing. I know Mr. President, how disappointed you are that the past year has not yielded greater results in terms of the progress we all hoped for towards a peace settlement. **I share this sense of disappointment personally**, but we are now offered a fresh opportunity, and past disappointments should not keep us from testing it. The experience of the past year leaves me convinced that the positions of the two sides on an interim agreement leave room for reconciliation and that an agreement is not out of the question.

Mr. President,

The purpose of this oral message is not to press you on this matter. We have no interest other than to help facilitate an agreement between Egypt and Israel that meets the concerns of both sides. I realize the situation is more complicated today than last October but I believe that a diplomatic option nevertheless is available. We are prepared to seek to get talks underway, with Mr. Sisco as go-between at a time and place agreeable to you. If you would care, we would be pleased to have your views on the matter and particularly any thoughts you might have on the time, place and level of negotiations which we are prepared to discuss with Israel. I am personally satisfied that it is desirable to pursue this effort, but I would understand if you feel you want to take some time to reflect on these questions or to delay any response until a later time.

I am aware, Mr. President, of your concern that any interim agreement must not be considered an end in itself but rather the **first step** toward a final peace settlement in accordance with Security Council resolution 242. **This has also been our conception from the very beginning.** You have also indicated in your statements recently that Egypt looks to Ambassador Jarring as the principal focal point for further peace settlement efforts. If Ambassador Jarring can find some way to move ahead constructively with the parties on an overall peace agreement the United States would welcome it. Such talks as well as any U.S. may conduct relating to an interim agreement, could be **mutually reinforcing.**

