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## Appendix A

### Concluding Remarks by Secretary of State James A. Baker III Before the Organizational Meeting for Multilateral Negotiations on the Middle East (January 28, 1992)

As we approach the end of our first day, let me start my concluding remarks by saying, quite simply, that I am encouraged that this organizational meeting is taking place, because I think that the launching of these multilateral talks is another important milestone in what I referred to earlier as the historic road that we began in Madrid.

Many here have demonstrated real creativity and vision in the ideas that have been suggested here today and the comments that have been made here. It was heartening to hear some of my colleagues from the Middle East talk about the rich potential of regional cooperation. And, it is also heartening to hear of the readiness of many countries around this table from outside the region to pitch in and help realize that potential.

It should be surprising to no one that we heard today of difficulties as well as possibilities and that we spoke today candidly of problems as well as hopes. It is obvious that enduring regional cooperation will not be possible without progress toward resolving core political disputes that are involved in the multilateral negotiations, and many speakers today have made mention of that. It is obvious that many of the questions discussed today, like arms control and regional security or water, are inherently complex subjects.

But it is equally obvious to me, as I mentioned this morning, that systematic consideration of those kinds of issues can be a complement and can be a

catalyst for the bilateral talks and for progress in the bilateral talks, and, of course, the bilateral talks remain the heart of the peace-making process.

We regret that three of the regional parties invited to attend—Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinians—are not here today. We continue to believe that these three parties could make a significant contribution to the work of these multilateral negotiations, and we encourage them to participate as this process evolves. At the same time, we believe this process can work to their benefit.

Palestinians, in particular, we think, have much to gain from such participation. As Minister Kozyrev and I made clear earlier today—publicly and to the Palestinians—we would be supportive of Palestinian requests to include diaspora representatives in appropriate working groups, such as refugees and economic development, after the Moscow meeting. However, the terms of reference for this meeting, as reflected in the original invitations, call for Palestinian representation based on the Madrid formula, and they should not be changed at the last minute if this entire process is to continue to have credibility with all of us. We regret that the Palestinians are not here. They have chosen not to come, and, in my view, they have once again passed up an important opportunity.

We also regret that the United Nations, which was invited to attend, is not here. We hope for full UN participation in the working groups as the process moves ahead. UN specialized agencies could play an important role in supporting this process.

Now, with the active participation of those here today and with the potential future involvement of others, I think it is time to get to work. And, I think that we have before us a reasonable framework for collective and constructive action.

Tomorrow morning at 10:00, we will begin to discuss five initial working groups—working groups in arms control and regional security, economic development, water, environment, and refugees.

These discussions will be followed this spring by a range of specific follow-up steps, from missions to the region to seminars and perhaps further meetings.

—The European Community has indicated its willingness to play a leading role in promoting regional economic development.

—Japan is considering a mission to the region to explore possibilities for environmental cooperation in the Gulf of Aqaba. It has also made clear its readiness to help regional parties address some broader environmental challenges.

—The water group will be discussing timing, venue, and possible agenda for a first seminar on regional water cooperation.

—I am pleased to confirm that the United States is prepared to host a seminar on arms control and regional security.

—The refugee group will consider practical ways of improving the lot of people throughout the region who have been displaced from their homes. I am particularly pleased that Canada has indicated its readiness to play a leading role in promoting regional cooperation in this area.

In addition, we think consideration should be given to forming an ad hoc steering group. The purposes of such a group would be to provide continuity, to monitor the efforts of the five initial working groups as and when they are formed, and to consider the formation of additional groups.

As we prepare for tomorrow's meetings, I think there are several things we should keep in mind.

First, I think we ought to all remember, because we've all spoken about it up here, the opportunity created by these multilateral discussions. They offer a real and valuable chance to address issues of major importance that do not lend themselves to discussion of the bilateral framework.

Secondly, we should not forget the potential for the multilateral talks to help create a political environment in which the bilateral talks are more likely to accomplish what we all want in the areas of peace, territory, and security.

Third, we should take full advantage of the experience, the expertise, and resources of others, both inside and outside the region.

Fourth, while keeping our horizons and ambitions broad, it might be best if we were to focus initially on some small, practical steps that provide a foundation on which we can build.

Fifth, we should recognize that consensus among all the parties directly concerned is the only sensible way to move ahead in the working groups. Peace is not going to be imposed from the outside; neither can various forms of regional cooperation be imposed. Progress on regional issues requires effort and commitment, particularly by regional parties themselves.

No one should expect immediate breakthroughs toward multilateral cooperation in the Middle East, but neither should we neglect the possibilities for cooperation which exist at this unique moment in the history of the region and at this unique moment in the history of the world.

Look around you, ladies and gentlemen, at the parties gathered at this table. Who would have imagined 50 years ago that the nations of Europe, many of whom were for centuries the fiercest of enemies, would find lasting common purpose in a vibrant European Community? And, who would have imagined even 5 years ago that the United States would launch a new partnership with a democratizing Russia? Who really knows what kinds of cooperation, however improbable it might seem today, might be possible in the Middle East over the rest of this decade?

So, in closing, let me again thank Andrei Kozyrev and his government for their gracious hospitality and for undertaking the logistical difficulties of putting on a conference such as this on short notice. And, my friends, let us all press ahead with renewed determination and renewed energy to make multilateral cooperation a reality in a region which has already known far more than its share of conflict.