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President Bush Meets with President Mbeki of South Africa

Oval Office

 [In Focus: Global Diplomacy](#)

2:12 P.M. EST

PRESIDENT BUSH: It's been my honor to welcome a man for whom I have a great deal of respect, and that is the President of South Africa, President Mbeki, here back to the Oval Office. I so very much appreciate the time you've given and the great discussion we've just had.

We talked about a wide range of subjects. We talked about Darfur and the need for South Africa and the United States and other nations to work with the Sudanese government to enable a peacekeeping force into that country to facilitate aid and save lives. And I expressed my concerns about the situation with the President. He shares my concerns that the situation is dire. And now is the time for action. And I appreciate your thoughts, Mr. President.

We talked about, interestingly enough, the Darfur [sic] round. The President is concerned about whether or not the World Trade Organization round will go forward. He recognizes, like I recognize, that trade will lift more people out of poverty than any other mechanism. And I told the President I am committed to the Darfur [sic] round. I believe in trade. And I believe in the necessity of trade. And so we'll work to see if we can't get that issue solved.

We talked about a lot of issues. We talked about Iran, we talked about the Middle East, we talked about our bilateral relations and his government's commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS and our willingness to provide over \$600 million to the folks in South Africa to help deal with this terrible pandemic.

I would call our relations strong and good and necessary. And Mr. President, welcome back, and the floor is yours.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: Thank you very much, President. Well, I was very glad, indeed, that we had this



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President's Remarks

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opportunity to meet with the President, to discuss precisely these matters that he has indicated. Of course of immediate importance to us is the support we get from the President and the U.S. government with regard to the resolution of these African conflicts.

And, indeed, we are, all of us, keenly interested that we must increase the troops deployed in Darfur, to address these issues that the President mentioned, and hopefully the Security Council will move quickly on that to do that larger deployment of troops. It's very urgent, very necessary, and we will absolutely do everything to make sure that, from the African side, we remove any obstacle there might be to such bigger deployment in Darfur. It's very necessary.

The President also mentioned, I discussed with the President the impact of the situation in Darfur on the neighboring countries, particularly Chad and the Central African Republic. But also the difficult situation in Somalia --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT MBEKI: -- and the President, together, we are very keen that, indeed, something must move there. This was a failed state. It's necessary to support the transitional government, to restoring a government and to reunify the country, and so on. It's an important thing because the problem, one of the big problems is that as it is, it provides a base for terrorists, find safe haven there and then can spread out to the rest of the continent. It's something that is of shared concern.

But again, of course, I was very, very reassured when the President said he is committed to the success of the WTO negotiations. It's a very important part, in terms of addressing the agenda of the poor of the world. We need these market access issues addressed, and so on. I was very, very pleased, indeed, that President said indeed we must work to make sure that WTO negotiating process succeeds.

We -- finally, President, I'd like to say I was very pleased that, indeed, you said we shall need to work even -- together even more intensely than we have in the past, because with effect from the 1st of January, South Africa of course joins the Security Council as a non-permanent member. I was very glad that the President said that's going to mean we'll need better interaction so that we could work together, indeed, to help to find solutions to all these wide range of issues that are on the agenda of the Security Council.

But thank you very much, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Proud you're back. Thank you, sir.

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