The Carter Center

President Jimmy Carter –

Pres. Carter: Thank you. Well, I want to thank first of all Lord Speaker Baroness D'Souza. I want to thank the members of the House of Commons who are here, the members of the House of Lords and also guests and my personal friends who have joined the audience. I'm very grateful for this invitation to come and speak to you this afternoon. As a matter of fact, this proves that there are at least some times when having been president can be an advantage. Thank you for that.

I remember that soon after I left the White House I went to China for an extended visit and came back through Japan. I was asked to speak at a small college in the southern part of Japan; it was a graduation speech. And since I was just newly out of the White House and this was a very important speech, I noticed that the audience was very nervous. The students, their parents, the professors were all kind of uptight. I decided to put them at ease by telling them maybe a funny story.

But I knew that it took a long time to translate English into Japanese, so instead of using my funniest joke, I used my shortest joke. When it was over, the audience erupted into laughter. In fact, it was the best response I've ever had to telling a funny story. I couldn’t wait to get to the end of my speech so I could ask the interpreter to tell my joke. The interpreter was very evasive, but I persisted and finally he ducked his head and he said, “I told the audience

Rosalynn and I founded The Carter Center in 1982 initially to focus on peace and conflict resolution. And then in the early years we recruited Dr. Bill

exit of the Guinea worm, being careful not to break it so it comes out, in about 20 days. That was the only treatment for thousands of years of Guinea worm before, you might say, The Carter Center came along. You can cut that down to about two or three weeks if you're lucky.

It's believed that this inspired the symbol for medicine. A lot of people think that it's a snake that's kind of wrapped around a rod. It's actually a Guinea worm wrapped around a stick. This is the Staff of Asclepius, which is now the basic symbol for medicine itself. So it's an ancient disease, and a symbol for the entire medical profession is the treatment of Guinea worm.

There is no vaccine and no medical cure for Guinea worm disease once it starts. It's being conquered mainly by health education to keep people from entering water sources when they have a Guinea worm emerging from their body and also by filtering their water in their contaminated pond through a very fine filter cloth so that everybody can drink the water that doesn't have the Guinea worm in it. At times, we also use a mild larvicide called Abate®, which is given to us by BASF, to kill the water fleas and also the larvae in the water.

Guinea worm has a one-year life cycle. If we can filter every drink and keep the people out of the water when they have an emerging worm then the disease transmission in that village stops forever. The Guinea worm campaign has accomplished this now, our campaign, in 23,700 villages in the world. We have Guinea worm now only in 20 villages on earth. Some of you...

[Applause]

Pres. Carter: Some of you may have seen a Guinea worm emerge because it's been quite prevalent in past years. The first time I saw a Guinea worm was in a small village of about 500 people just about 50 miles from Accra, the capital of Ghana. We went into this village, which had about 300 people that had Guinea worm emerging from their bodies. We were in a clearing in the jungle, and over at the edge of the crowd during the ceremonies, when we were explaining the project to the people there in the village, I saw a pretty young woman standing there holding a baby in her right arm. I decided after the speeches were over to go over and just speak to her and ask her the name of the baby. When I got over there I realized, finally, that it was not a baby she was holding in her arm but her right breast, which was about more than a foot long, and it had a Guinea worm emerging from the nipple of her breast. Later that year, she had 11 other Guinea worms emerging from different pla.0TBT1 0 0 o-8(mJETBTl)7( )] TJr6 TJETBT1 0 0 1 366.19 192053 Tm[(fr)6(o

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described. As I said in Oslo a few years ago, and I quote myself, "The bond of our common humanity is stronger than the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices."

I want to thank the Lord Speaker for this opportunity and Her Majesty the Queen, obviously, for making this space available. Thanks to the House of Commons and

derogated or condemned the integrity of some of his fellow senators. Rubio, the young senator from Florida, I think has a better chance ultimately than Ted Cruz.

If I had a choice of Republican nominees, let's just say for instance between Cruz and Trump, I think I would choose Trump, which may surprise some of you. But the reason is that Trump has proven already that he's completely malleable. I don't think he has any fixed opinions that he would really go to the White House and fight for. On the other hand, Ted Cruz is not malleable. He has far right wing policies in my opinion that would be pursued aggressively if and when he might become president.

So that would be my choice. But I don't yet know obviously who either candidate will be. As I said earlier, I'll support either Bernie Sanders or Hillary, whoever gets the nomination. It'll be one of those. I still believe that Hillary has the best chance. But in the Republican side I don't really know. In fact, I don't know either side.

D'Souza: Maybe we'll get a question on eradication of disease.

Pres. Carter: Oh, maybe so.

D'Souza: Andrew Mitchell?

Q: Mr. President, I'm not from the BBC and I'd like to ask you a question about international development. I'm Andrew Mitchell from the House of Commons down at the other end.

Pres. Carter: Yes.

Q: I used to have responsibility for international development during the first part of the coalition government when I was the secretary of state for international development. We worked closely with you on NTDs and particularly on Guinea worm, and we're very proud to use British taxpayers' money to support the fantastic work that you did.

Pres. Carter: Yes.

Q: The question I want to ask you is this:

a huge amount across the piece. But it seems to me that the international architecture needs amendment, and I wondered whether you thought that was so.

Pres. Carter: Well, as you know, WHO is part of the United Nations. When we determined ourselves Guinea worm was to be eradicated, it took us eight years to get WHO to put Guinea worm on the list to be eradicated. And we still don't have two diseases (eradicated), and I mentioned eight diseases total that The Carter Center has now determined can be eradicated. So the bureaucracy of the WHO, like all other bureaucracies, it's troubling to me. I think it's a dedicated organization, does a lot of wonderful things.

I think the Centers for Disease Control, which is right next door to The Carter Center and whom we rely on every day, has learned a lot about the Ebola crisis once it evolved. They were not ready for it, and I think it's more prepared for Ebola the next time it breaks out and that's probably going to happen in the next 10 or 20 years at the latest. And the more recent disease obviously that causes deformed babies, that's caused by mosquito bites— I don't think that's a kind that we have even considered to be possibly eradicated.

As I mentioned in my speech, I think a much more cost-effective way to address these diseases is to target them for elimination in a country or region or eradicate them from the whole world. And we have a lot of them on our list to be worked on. And I, my own personal choice for the next disease would be river blindness or onchocerciasis because The Carter Center has proven in the six Latin American countries that we can get rid of it, and we've also confirmed that, as I mentioned, in Uganda and Sudan and other countries in Africa. So that would be a very possible choice. Measles is another choice that could be made but it has to be officially done by WHO.

We use some of our minimal influence, but it took us eight years to get approval from WHO, and I haven't put it on the top of my priority list yet to get another one endorsed. But I think that the thing that we should do from a moral point of view and an ethical obligation is to help these poor people who suffer because they're just ignorant about what causes their problem and how to get rid of it. And it’s very inexpensive to eradicate these diseases once you target them and concentrate on them. Even polio, which now has about 70 remaining cases at the end of this past year, it's been, I think, cost-effective. I think nobody would deny that. And we obviously see now the advantage of having done smallpox back even when I was president a long time ago.

So to eradicate or eliminate a disease is the best approach in my opinion, as many as possible, and we need to be even more aggressive. I think the governments of the countries, including Great Britain, obviously the United Kingdom, and my government could be very effective in persuading the leaders of WHO to be more

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away with smallpox in other countries that had it. I think that's the best generic approach.

And to publicize what is being done, I think the publicity that we get from this relatively unknown disease of dracunculiasis just because I've been president and I've been involved in it does help to lower the goal, to make the goal to raise some funds easier. We get a good bit of money from Arab countries. I go to these countries and I tell them that my first priority from them is to help Guinea worm, and they don't know what Guinea worm is. And explain it to them and tell them, “Why don't you help us in countries that have a lot of Muslims.” And I said the same thing to the King of Saudi Arabia. He said, "Well, don't you want to help Christians too?" And I said, “Yes sir.” And so, on that visit, he gave me $9 million for Guinea worm. So you have to use all kind of persuasion sometimes.

But I think if you tell even children about Guinea

Q: And obviously, that's the next one that could respond to the same kind of strategy and I hope you will progress to do that after you've eradicated your last Guinea worm. You expressed a wish that you will live to see the last Guinea worm. I hope you change that wish to making sure that last river blindness is also achieved.

Pres. Carter: I'll change my priorities depending on, you know, what's decided by God. I'm praying that I'll survive the Guinea worm. I'll also start praying. I promise you that I'll then be praying to see the last river blindness.

Q: Thank you for today...

Pres. Carter: Thank you.

Q: ... and for your efforts.

Pres. Carter: Thank you very much.

Q: Mr. President, I'm delighted to hear — Matt Ridley, House of Lords. I'm delighted to hear you put the emphasis on eradication in some contrast to the WHO, as you say.

Pres. Carter: Yes.

Q: And unlike smallpox, we can't keep Guinea worm alive in the lab so when it's gone, it's gone.

Pres. Carter: That's right.

Q: For those who have —

deformed babies is also caused by mosquitoes. So I think in the long term there might be an international effort to get rid of mosquitoes as well. That has not been done yet.

Maybe one of the biggest advances made in medical technology in the last 20 years was the development of the insecticide-treated bed nets. Instead of just keeping the mosquito away from a sleeping person, it actually killed the mosquito when it landed on the net. And we've now put two bed nets for instance in every home in Ethiopia that has mosquitoes at that altitude. We're now doing the same thing in Nigeria, and so that helps us with malaria and also with lymphatic filariasis. That's a kind of generic approach that we don't yet know how to do but in the future it might happen. But I won't be particularly grieved when the last mosquito is gone. I'm trying to put Guinea worm in other company and also put it in perspective.

D'Souza: Huw Edwards?

Pres. Carter: Yes.

Q: Mr. President, thank you very much. We had a very illuminating conversation this morning. We discussed your emergence onto the political scene 40 years ago now in January 1976. Your candidacy then was characterized by energy but above all by optimism. You were unrelentingly optimistic about what was possible. And I'm just wondering now four decades later when we look around at the state of the world t5 Tm2/

and that's been a success. But in Egypt and other places it's been a setback. That's been a disappointment to me.

But one of the biggest personal disappointments in my international life has been the failure of us to bring peace to Israel and its neighbors. And one of the most grievous disappointments I've had in the last few years has been the withdrawal, even publicly stated by the president, of the idea that the United States might help bring progress toward peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And my hope is that the European Union and all of its members, including Great Britain, will step in and take the leadership in being aggressive in trying to bring about the general solution on which almost all of the governments in the world agree — except for Israel of course — that is, a two-state solution.

So there have been successes made and setbacks made. When I completed the Camp David accords, part of that was to have peace for 10 years, but in Egypt that's been a permanent agreement. But the other half of it, the part on which we worked mostly, was to give full autonomy or freedom or independence or justice to the Palestinians. That part has not been done, so that's been a setback for me. But I think in general the world is moving toward more accommodation, primarily because of the communication capability now with immediate knowledge of every community about what goes on in the rest of the world. I think that is a basis on which we are inevitably going to make progress on political matters. Thank you.

D'Souza: I think it's good to end on the question about optimism. I think we are coming to the end of our session. We are going to have a drink — a reception, perhaps we should say — in the Royal Gallery in a minute.

Pres. Carter: That is right.

D'Souza: But can I — I've got many, many people that I really want to thank if I may. Thank you all for coming. It's really great to see this room full and indeed used for such beneficial purposes, if I might say. Can I thank Lord Chidgey, for you had initially this idea, and most of all for Kate Chidgey, who has been organizing this, can I thank the Home Office for the work that they've done and in particular also my private office, who have been absolutely wonderful as they always are.

Pres. Carter: Thank you for your good questions.

D'Souza: Thank you for your good questions. But above all, I should mention that such has been the popularity of this that we have actually got an overflow room up in the upper floor, and they're about to troop down and come and join us, are they not? So they've been watching on a live feed. But above all, I would like to thank, on behalf of all these here in the Robing Room, you, President Carter, for coming

and for giving us such an illuminating lecture and for allowing us to learn more about you.

[Applause]

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