

beginning to end and participating in only one press conference together and speaking with one voice—and as I'm sure you probably know, Russia has reached an agreement to join the Paris Club—it has enabled this body to go from a purely economic focus to deal with the common challenges that we have in the world we're about to enter and the one we face today.

For example, the work we're doing in nuclear cooperation would be impossible if Russia were not our partner here. And there are many other things that we're going to do together. So I think that this is a cause for celebration not only in Russia but in the other countries here.

Let me just say one final thing. I consider this day and all these things that are happening that are positive a tribute, first of all, to the support of the Russian people for democracy and reform and, second, to the unusual combination of vision and persistence that President Yeltsin has displayed over so many years. It's quite a hopeful moment for the world, I think, and I give him a lot of credit.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. at the Brown Palace Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on the Tobacco Agreement

June 20, 1997

Less than one year ago, my administration announced an historic rule to protect children from the harm caused by tobacco products. Two months ago, a court in North Carolina issued a landmark ruling confirming my decision that the Food and Drug Administration has authority to regulate tobacco products to protect our children's health. These victories for the public health drove the tobacco companies to the bargaining table and extracted concessions from them that would have been unimaginable just a short time ago.

I commend the attorneys general and other people working with them, including children's health leaders, for their hard work in negotiating this agreement in a way that seeks to advance our struggle to protect the

health of children against the dangers of tobacco. They deserve our thanks for doing so.

We must now carefully consider whether approving this proposed settlement will protect the public health—and particularly our children's health—to the greatest extent possible. Until now, we have not had the opportunity to review the actual terms of the agreement, and we have not concluded whether it is in the best interests of the public health. Over the next several weeks, we will undertake a thorough public health review. I am asking Bruce Reed, my Domestic Policy Adviser—along with Donna Shalala, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services—to engage in extensive consultations with the public health community and others to subject this agreement to the strictest scrutiny. They will report to me on whether this agreement represents the best means of protecting the Nation's public health interests.

In the meantime, we will fight as hard as ever to ensure that the FDA rule stands. Each day, 3,000 young people become regular smokers; 1,000 of them will have their lives cut short as a result. Protecting the health of the public and these children will be our measure of this proposed agreement.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

June 13¹

The President announced his intention to appoint Abraham H. Foxman, Jay Mazur, and Aletta Schaap to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

¹ This release was not received in time for inclusion in the appropriate issue.