

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan and an Exchange With Reporters**

*February 24, 2009*

*President Obama.* Well, I would just like to say welcome to the Prime Minister. Obviously, the friendship between the United States and Japan is extraordinarily important to our country. It is for that reason that the Prime Minister is the first foreign dignitary to visit me here in the Oval Office. I think it's a testimony to the strong partnership between the United States and Japan.

The alliance that we have is the cornerstone of security in East Asia. It's one that my administration wants to strengthen. We think that we have an opportunity to work together not only on issues related to the Pacific rim but throughout the world, and Japan has been a great partner on issues ranging from climate change to Afghanistan. We're going to have a very busy session, and I'm very grateful that the Prime Minister agreed to come, and I'm looking forward to a very constructive dialog.

*Prime Minister Aso.* Do I have to say something? Well, first of all, thank you very much for inviting a foreign official, a foreign guest, to the White House. On behalf of not only Japan but as a nation, we are very honored to be here as the first of foreign guests.

Nowadays there are so many issues we will have to fight against, and we are the number one and second biggest economies of the world; we will have to work together, hand in hand. And I think we are the only two nations which can offer enough to solve those very critical, vital issue of the world. I do hope our cooperation will help for the future generation of the world.

*President Obama.* All right. Thank you, guys.

*President's Meeting With Prime Minister Aso*

Q. Why Japan?

*President Obama.* It's a great partner, and as I said, a cornerstone of security as well as one of our strongest economic partners. Thank you very much, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Japan, Prime Minister Aso.

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*Names:* Aso, Taro.

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