

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

**Remarks at the United States-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue**  
*July 27, 2009*

Thank you. Good morning. It is a great honor to welcome you to the first meeting of the Strategic Economic Dialogue between the United States and China. This is an essential step in advancing a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship between our countries. I'm pleased that President Hu shares my commitment to a sustained dialog to enhance our shared interests.

President Hu and I both felt that it was important to get our relationship off to a good start. Of course, as a new President and also as a basketball fan, I have learned from the words of Yao Ming, who said, "No matter whether you are new or an old team member, you need time to adjust to one another." Well, through the constructive meetings that we've already had, and through this dialog, I'm confident that we will meet Yao's standard.

I want to acknowledge the remarkable American and Chinese leaders who will cochair this effort. Hillary Clinton and Tim Geithner are two of my closest advisers, and they have both obtained extraordinary experience working with China. And I know that they will have extremely capable and committed Chinese counterparts in State Councilor Dai and Vice Premier Wang. Thank you very much for being here.

I'm also looking forward to the confirmation of an outstanding U.S. Ambassador to China, Governor Jon Huntsman, who is here today. Jon has deep experience living and working in Asia, and unlike me, he speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese. He also happens to be a Republican who cochaired Senator McCain's campaign. And I think that demonstrates Jon's commitment to serving his country and the broad, bipartisan support for positive and productive relations between the United States and China. So thank you, Jon, for your willingness to serve.

Today we meet in a building that speaks to the history of the last century. It houses a national memorial to President Woodrow Wilson, a man who held office when the 20th century was still young and America's leadership in the world was emerging. It is named for Ronald Reagan, a man who came of age during two World Wars and whose Presidency helped usher in a new era of history. And it holds a piece of the Berlin Wall, a decades-long symbol of division that was finally torn down, unleashing a rising tide of globalization that continues to shape our world.

One hundred years ago, in the early days of the 20th century, it was clear that there were momentous choices to be made, choices about the borders of nations and the rights of human beings. But in Woodrow Wilson's day, no one could have foreseen the arc of history that led to a wall coming down in Berlin, nor could they have imagined the conflict and upheaval that characterized the years in between. For people everywhere, from Boston to Beijing, the 20th century was a time of great progress, but that progress also came with a great price.

Today, we look out on the horizon of a new century. And as we launch this dialog, it's important for us to reflect upon the questions that will shape the 21st century. Will growth be stalled by events like our current financial crisis, or will we cooperate to create balanced and sustainable growth, lifting more people out of poverty and creating a broader prosperity around the world? Will the need for energy breed competition and climate change, or will we build partnerships to produce clean power and to protect our planet? Will nuclear weapons spread

unchecked, or will we forge a new consensus to use this power for only peaceful purposes? Will extremists be able to stir conflict and division, or will we unite on behalf of our shared security? Will nations and peoples define themselves solely by their differences, or can we find common ground necessary to meet our common challenges and to respect the dignity of every human being?

We can't predict with certainty what the future will bring, but we can be certain about the issues that will define our times. And we also know this: The relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century, which makes it as important as any bilateral relationship in the world. That really must underpin our partnership. That is the responsibility that together we bear.

As we look to the future, we can learn from our past, for history shows us that both our nations benefit from engagement that is grounded in mutual interest and mutual respect. During my time in office, we will mark the 40th anniversary of President Nixon's trip to China. At that time, the world was much different than it is today. America had fought three wars in East Asia in just 30 years, and the cold war was in a stalemate. China's economy was cut off from the world, and a huge percentage of the Chinese people lived in extreme poverty.

Back then, our dialog was guided by a narrow focus on our shared rivalry with the Soviet Union. Today, we have a comprehensive relationship that reflects the deepening ties among our people. Our countries have now shared relations for longer than we were estranged. Our people interact in so many ways. And I believe that we are poised to make steady progress on some of the most important issues of our times.

My confidence is rooted in the fact that the United States and China share mutual interests. If we advance those interests through cooperation, our people will benefit and the world will be better off, because our ability to partner with each other is a prerequisite for progress on many of the most pressing global challenges.

Let me name some of those challenges. First, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interests in a lasting economic recovery. The current crisis has made it clear that the choices made within our borders reverberate across the global economy, and this is true not just in New York and Seattle, but in Shanghai and Shenzhen as well. That is why we must remain committed to strong bilateral and multilateral coordination. And that is the example we have set by acting aggressively to restore growth, to prevent a deeper recession, and to save jobs for our people.

Going forward, we can deepen this cooperation. We can promote financial stability through greater transparency and regulatory reform. We can pursue trade that is free and fair and seek to conclude an ambitious and balanced Doha round agreement. We can update international institutions so that growing economies like China play a greater role that matches their greater responsibility. And as Americans save more and Chinese are able to spend more, we can put growth on a more sustainable foundation, because just as China has benefited from substantial investment and profitable exports, China can also be an enormous market for American goods.

Second, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interest in a clean, secure, and prosperous energy future. The United States and China are the two largest consumers of energy in the world. We are also the two largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world. Let's be frank: Neither of us profits from a growing dependence on foreign oil, nor can we

spare our people from the ravages of climate change unless we cooperate. Common sense calls upon us to act in concert.

Both of our countries are taking steps to transform our energy economies. Together we can chart a low carbon recovery, we can expand joint efforts at research and development to promote the clean and efficient use of energy, and we can work together to forge a global response at the climate change conference in Copenhagen and beyond. And the best way to foster the innovation that can increase our security and prosperity is to keep our markets open to new ideas, new exchanges, and new sources of energy.

Third, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interests in stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. Make no mistake: The more nations acquire these weapons, the more likely it is that they will be used. Neither America nor China has an interest in a terrorist acquiring a bomb or a nuclear arms race breaking out in East Asia. That is why we must continue our collaboration to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and make it clear to North Korea that the path to security and respect can be traveled if they meet their obligations. And that is why we must also be united in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and urging the Islamic Republic to live up to its international obligations.

This is not about singling out any one nation. It is about the responsibility of all nations. Together we must cooperate to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world, which will be a focus of our global nuclear summit next year. And together we must strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by renewing its basic bargain: Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy. A balance of terror cannot hold. In the 21st century, a strong and global regime is the only basis for security from the world's deadliest weapons.

And fourth, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interests in confronting transnational threats. The most pressing dangers we face no longer come from competition among great powers. They come from extremists who would murder innocents, from traffickers and pirates who pursue their own profits at the expense of others, from diseases that know no borders, and from suffering and civil wars that breed instability and terror. These are the threats of the 21st century, and that is why the pursuit of power among nations must no longer be seen as a zero-sum game. Progress, including security, must be shared.

Through increased ties between our militaries, we can diminish causes for dispute while providing a framework for cooperation. Through continued intelligence sharing, we can disrupt terrorist plots and dismantle terrorist networks. Through early warning and coordination, we can check the spread of disease. And through determined diplomacy, we must meet our responsibility to seek the peaceful resolution of conflict, and that can begin with a renewed push to end the suffering in Darfur and to promote a comprehensive peace in Sudan.

All of these issues are rooted in the fact that no one nation can meet the challenges of the 21st century on its own nor effectively advance its interests in isolation. It is this fundamental truth that compels us to cooperate. I have no illusion that the United States and China will agree on every issue nor choose to see the world in the same way. This was already noted by our previous speaker. But that only makes dialog more important, so that we can know each other better and communicate our concerns with candor.

For instance, the United States respects the progress that China has made by lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. Just as we respect China's ancient and

remarkable culture, its remarkable achievements, we also strongly believe that the religion and culture of all peoples must be respected and protected and that all people should be free to speak their minds, and that includes ethnic and religious minorities in China as surely as it includes minorities within the United States.

Support for human rights and human dignity is ingrained in America. Our Nation is made up of immigrants from every part of the world. We have protected our unity and struggled to perfect our Union by extending basic rights to all our people, and those rights include the freedom to speak your mind, to worship your God, and to choose your leaders. These are not things that we seek to impose; this is who we are. It guides our openness to one another and to the world.

China has its own distinct story that shapes its own worldview. And Americans know the richness of China's history because it helped to shape the world and it helped to shape America. We know the talent of the Chinese people because they have helped to create this great country. My own Cabinet contains two Chinese Americans. And we know that despite our differences, America is enriched through deeper ties with a country of 1.3 billion people that is at once ancient and dynamic, ties that can be forged through increased exchanges among our people and constructive bilateral relations between our governments. That is how we will narrow our divisions.

Let us be honest: We know that some are wary of the future. Some in China think that America will try to contain China's ambitions; some in America think that there is something to fear in a rising China. I take a different view, and I believe President Hu takes a different view as well. I believe in a future where China is a strong, prosperous, and successful member of the community of nations, a future when our nations are partners out of necessity, but also out of opportunity. This future is not fixed, but it is a destination that can be reached if we pursue a sustained dialog like the one that you will commence today and act on what we hear and what we learn.

Thousands of years ago, the great philosopher Mencius said: "A trail through the mountains, if used, becomes a path in a short time, but, if unused, becomes blocked by grass in an equally short time." Our task is to forge a path to the future that we seek for our children, to prevent mistrust or the inevitable differences of the moment from allowing that trail to be blocked by grass, to always be mindful of the journey that we are undertaking together.

This dialog will help determine the ultimate destination of that journey. It represents a commitment to shape our young century through sustained cooperation and not confrontation. I look forward to carrying this effort forward through my first visit to China, where I hope to come to know better your leaders, your people, and your majestic country. Together, I'm confident that we can move steadily in the direction of progress and meet our responsibility to our people and to the future that we will all share.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Yao Ming, center, Houston Rockets; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., of Utah; Sen. John McCain of Arizona, 2008 Republican Presidential candidate; Secretary of Energy Steven Chu; and Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Chu, Steven; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Dai Bingguo; Geithner, Timothy F.; Hu Jintao; Huntsman, Jon M., Jr.; Locke, Gary F.; McCain, John; Wang Qishan; Yao Ming.

*Subjects:* Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Security; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; China : Defense relationship with U.S.; China : Democracy and human rights issues; China : Economic growth and development; China : Energy cooperation with U.S.; China : Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies; China : Energy, foreign sources; China : North Korea, role in six-party talks; China : President; China : President Obama's visit; China : Relations with U.S.; China : State Councilor; China : Strategic and Economic Dialogue, U.S.-China; China : Trade with U.S.; China : U.S. Ambassador; China : Vice Premier; Civil rights : Freedom of religion; Civil rights : Freedom of speech; Civil rights : Minorities :: Minority rights and ethnic tolerance; Commerce, Department of : Secretary; Commerce, international : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Stabilization efforts; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Unrest; Commerce, international : Piracy; Developing countries : Doha Development Agenda; Developing countries : Poverty; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Foreign sources; Energy, Department of : Secretary; Environment : Climate change; Environment : Climate change ; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Science and technology : International cooperation; Science and technology : Research and development; State, Department of : Secretary; Sudan : Darfur, conflict and human rights crisis; Terrorism : Global threat; Treasury, Department of the : Secretary; Utah : Governor.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD200900601.