

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in Singapore

November 15, 2009

President Obama. Everybody set up? Well, I just had an excellent meeting once again with President Medvedev. We discussed two primary topics; one is our efforts to conclude a deal on the START Treaty. As many of you know, in our first meeting when I traveled to Moscow, we arrived at an understanding that it made sense for our two countries to begin reducing further our nuclear stockpiles. Our negotiators have made excellent progress over the last several months. Our goal continues to be to complete the negotiations and to be able to sign a deal before the end of the year. And I'm confident that if we work hard and with a sense of urgency about it, that we should be able to get that done. And I very much feel as if both sides are trying to work through some difficult technical issues but are doing so in good faith. And so I thank President Medvedev for his initiative and leadership on that issue.

The second issue that we discussed was the issue of Iran. Again, in my first meeting with President Medvedev, I emphasized to him our desire to try to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear capacity in a constructive fashion. And it was my strong belief that if countries like the United States and Russia were able to present two paths, two roads to the Islamic Republic of Iran, one that led to further integration, the ability to obtain peaceful nuclear energy, but a insistence on Iran forsaking nuclear weapons, that that would be the most positive outcome.

The alternative would be an approach that would involve increasing pressure on Iran to meet its international obligations. These concerns were further heightened with the Qom facility that had not been properly disclosed. And since that time, we have continued to consult closely with the Russians in terms of providing Iran a very concrete, specific, and fair proposal for some confidence-building measures, including a proposal to get low-enriched uranium out of Iran, processed, and then sent back to Iran, to display their ability, essentially, to have peaceful nuclear energy without weaponization capacity.

Unfortunately, so far at least, Iran appears to have been unable to say yes to what everyone acknowledges is a creative and constructive approach. And that's not just the U.S. position, that's been the position of the IAEA and the Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei.

We are now running out of time with respect to that approach. And so I discussed with President Medvedev the fact that we have to continue to maintain urgency and that our previous discussions confirming the need for a dual-track approach are still the right approach to take. And we believe that the United States and Russia will continue to urge Iran to take the path that leads them to meeting its international obligations. We can't count on that, and we will begin to discuss and prepare for these other pathways.

The last thing I just want to mention is that we discussed some other issues, both economic and security-related issues, including Afghanistan. And I have found, as always, President Medvedev frank, thoughtful, and constructive in his approach to U.S.-Russia relations. And I am somebody who genuinely believes that the reset button has worked and that we are moving in a good direction.

Thank you.

President Medvedev. I'd like to say that we have indeed enjoyed constructive and the friendly atmosphere which is characteristic of our relations with President Obama. This is how we spent—we discussed a number of topics President Obama just outlined. Indeed, we've talked a lot about the future START Treaty and limitations of offensive weapons. We've agreed to give additional impetus to those negotiations, find solutions on remaining issues, because in some cases, those are technical issues. Some require political solution, but that is precisely why we discuss matters on level of the President. We'll task our aides to continue working on those matters.

I hope that, as was agreed initially during our first meeting in London, was reaffirmed during later meetings, we will be able to finalize the text of the document by December. This will be our joint contribution in strengthening global security, because this is precisely an issue where the position of Russian Federation, the United States, defines the overall environment on the limit of strategic forces, the launches.

And the world is watching. Even in the past, the situation and the world depended on us. It is all the more important now since there are no longer the old ideological barriers, and now we try to friendly and constructively resolve issues we face together.

Another topic we discussed with President Obama is Iran. Indeed, recently we've had a series of consultations where both parties participated. We have reached certain results, but I believe that, thanks to our joint efforts, this process did not stop, did not become a stumbling stone which is impossible to bypass. It is still underway. But nonetheless, we're still not satisfied with the pace of advancement of the process.

And I hope that as a result of our joint efforts with Iran, we will be able to reach agreements we've anticipated earlier and Iranian program will be peaceful and will not raise as many questions as our countries and the international community has at the moment. But to reach that, certain efforts are yet to be taken.

At the same time, as reasonable politicians, I hope we understand that any process must be terminant. Negotiation process is not for the pleasure of the process itself, but it is done in order to reach practical, specific outcomes. In this case, our goal is clear: It is transparent, up-to-date, peaceful program, not a program that would raise questions or concerns from the international community. We're prepared to work further, and I hope that our joint work will yield in positive results. In case we fail, the other options remain on the table in order to move the process in a different direction.

We've also talked about different issues with Mr. President. Luckily, our relations do not limit to just the START Treaty or global problems. We discussed economics. We talked of what needs to be done so as to finally bring peace to the long-suffered Afghani land, what needs to be done to create more adequate state which would be capable of tackling very different issues that Afghanistan is facing today. We are ready to work in that direction together.

I would like to thank my colleague, President Barack Obama, for discussing once again various issues in a good, friendly atmosphere, for his efforts to find solutions to problems that concern all the world. Thank you, Barack.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. at the Shangri-La Hotel. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Russia, President Medvedev.

Locations: Singapore.

Names: ElBaradei, Mohamed; Medvedev, Dmitry A.

Subjects: Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia, proposed expansion; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; Atomic Energy Agency, International (IAEA); Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Russia : Nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; Russia : President; Russia : President Obama's visit; Russia : Relations with U.S.; Russia : Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with U.S., proposed expansion; Singapore : President Obama's visit.

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