

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks at a Reception Honoring World Ambassadors

October 5, 2010

Hello, everybody. Good afternoon, and welcome on behalf of Michelle and myself. We are thrilled to have you at the White House. It's good to see all of you, including the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, from Djibouti, Ambassador Olhaye. It's wonderful to see you again.

Like our reception last year, this is an opportunity to thank you for your partnership, for the cooperation between our nations, and for the hospitality that your countries show our diplomats each and every day.

As ambassadors, I know you all have a very difficult job. You have to understand the complexities of other cultures and countries—unlike diplomats of a century ago who—for example, there was a diplomat who, when planning an international ceremony, invited Switzerland to send its navy. [*Laughter*]

You have to adapt to quickly changing events around the world—unlike President Jefferson, who said of an American ambassador to Europe, "We haven't heard from him in 2 years. If we don't hear from him next year, I'll have to write him a letter." [*Laughter*]

Today, our nations and peoples are more interconnected than at any time in human history. We've got extraordinary opportunities to advance our national interests and our common interests, which can reinforce each other. We can advance the aspirations of our people, who, despite any differences, basically seek the same things: to live in security and dignity, to seek progress and justice, and to realize a better future for their children.

And that's why, since I've taken office, I've pursued a new era of engagement with the world, a new commitment to diplomacy and partnership based on mutual interest and mutual respect. Today I want to thank you and your countries for joining us and for the progress that we've made together.

Together, we've strengthened old alliances; we have forged new partnerships; we have pursued an international order where the rights and responsibilities of all nations are upheld. We've put the global economy back on the path of growth so we can create jobs and opportunity for all of our people.

Together, we're working to confront violent extremism, to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and to secure vulnerable nuclear materials. We're engaged in the hard work of pursuing peace, from the Middle East to Sudan, and promoting development to give people and nations a path out of poverty. In short, we are doing together what none of us can achieve by ourselves.

But, as I've said in my visits around the world, building the future we seek cannot be the work of governments and diplomats alone. It must also be the work of our societies and our people. That's why we're expanding partnerships and exchanges between our business leaders and entrepreneurs, students and scientists, civil society and faith communities.

And it's why I am so pleased that many of you are embracing the opportunity to experience America beyond Washington, visiting cities and towns across our country, like Atlanta next week, just like I understand that you visited my hometown of Chicago. I understand that you took in the incredible architecture, the culture, the people, even our

world-famous Chicago-style hot dogs. *[Laughter]* They are hard to resist. I noticed, though, that you did not go in January to experience our wonderful January weather in Chicago. *[Laughter]* That is easy to resist. *[Laughter]*

The spirit you felt across America is the spirit we need in our work: the idea that no matter where you come from or who you are, we can come together and work together. It's the same spirit I've seen in all the young people that I've met, from Strasbourg to Ankara, to Cairo to Shanghai; in civil society leaders in Moscow and the extraordinary young African leaders that I welcomed to this very room here in the White House.

One of them—a young woman—stood up and looked at me and asked just how committed the United States is to this new era of partnership. I want to conclude by telling you exactly what I told her. I said, yes, as President of the United States, my first responsibility is to look out for the people and interests of the United States. And I always will. But I also said America wants all of you to succeed as well, whether it's in Africa or in Latin America, in Europe or in Asia, because when your nations and people succeed and prosper, it's not only in your interests, it's in America's interests. And that's why our commitment to this new era of engagement will remain a cornerstone of my foreign policy.

So in that spirit, Michelle and I are honored to welcome all of you. I'm mindful of that old saying about diplomacy, that sometimes more can be accomplished at 1 party than 20 serious conversations. *[Laughter]* So have a wonderful evening, have a wonderful party, and I look forward to all that we can accomplish together, tonight and beyond.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shamima Muslim, a participant at the White House Young African Leaders Forum.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : World Ambassadors reception.

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