

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil in Brasilia, Brazil

March 19, 2011

President Rousseff. Your Excellency, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America; ladies and gentlemen; members of the delegation of the U.S. and of Brazil; ladies and gentlemen journalists; ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. President Obama, your visit to my country makes me very happy and arouses the best feelings of our people and honors the historic relationship between Brazil and the U.S. It bears also a very strong symbolic value.

The peoples of our countries have risen the largest—built the largest democracies of the Americas. They also dared to take at the highest level an Afro descent and a woman, demonstrating that the basis of democracy allows to overcome the largest barriers to build societies that will be more generous and live more in harmony.

Here, Mr. President, I am successor of a man that came from the people, my dear friend Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, where—for whom I had the honor to work with. His legacy, his most noble legacy, Mr. President, was to bring to the political scene and social scene millions of men and women that lived marginalized and lacked—were disenfranchised of their rights as citizens.

Of the nine heads of state of the U.S. that have visited officially Brazil, you are the one that sees our country in a most vibrant moment. The combination of a very serious economic policy with sound fundamentals and a consistent strategy of social inclusion has made our country one of the most dynamic markets of the world.

We have strengthened the renewable content of our energy matrix, and we have advanced in developing the environmental policies that protect our important rain forest reserves and also protects our very rich biodiversity. All this effort, Mr. President—President Obama, has created millions of new jobs and have dynamized many regions that before lived marginalized of the economic development. It has allowed Brazil to overcome with success the deepest economic crisis of recent history, keeping until the days of today record creation of new jobs.

But we still face enormous challenges. My administration at this moment is concentrating in the necessary tasks to improve our growth process and to guarantee the long period of prosperity for the Brazilian people.

My essential commitment is building a middle class income society, assuring educational, professional opportunities for the workers and for our immense youth population. I also want to guarantee an institutional environment that will trigger entrepreneurship and will favor productive investment.

My Government will work with dedication to overcome the shortcomings in terms of infrastructure, and we will make all our efforts to consolidate our clean energy, which is an essential, key asset of Brazil. So we will take the necessary steps to reach our place amongst the nations that have full, strong development with democracy and social fairness. This is—this point, President Obama, that I see the best opportunities for the advancements of the relations between our countries.

I follow very closely and I have high hopes on your efforts—your tremendous efforts to recover the vitality of the North American economy. We also have, as the rest of the world, one certainty, that the American people under your leadership will know how to find the best ways for the future of this great Nation.

The kindness of your visit here in the beginning of my administration and the long track record of friendship amongst our peoples have made me—possible to advance—and talk—and mention two issues that I consider central to the future partnerships that we can develop: education and innovation. Drawing closer ties and advancing in our educational experiments, enhancing our exchange programs, and building progress in all fields of knowledge is a key issue for the future of our countries.

On research and innovation, the U.S. has reached the most extraordinary accomplishments in the last decades, fostering the productivity in different economic sectors.

Brazil, Mr. President Obama, is in the—has some important cutting-edge technologies in certain fields, like genetics, biotechnology, renewable sources of energy, and the exploitation of oil in—the exploration of oil in deep waters. To combine our most advanced capabilities in the field of research and innovation certainly will yield the best fruits for our societies.

I would like to mention as an example the pre-salt, the deepwaters oil reserve, which is the longest cutting-edge borderline that Brazil has reached in terms of its technology. We believe that the enormous challenges that we'll face in each stage of exploration of this wealth could gather an unprecedented convergence of knowledge accumulated by the best centers of research in our countries.

But, Mr. President, if we wish to build a relationship that will be much more in depth, it's necessary, frankly, to say—to deal about our contradictions. I am concerned especially with the acute effects that come from the economic imbalances that were created by the recent global financial meltdown. We understand the context and the efforts that was undertaken by your Government for the economic recovery of the U.S., something so important to the rest of the world. Nevertheless, everybody knows that broad-ranging measures sometimes provoke important changes in the relations of currencies around the world. This process is good economic practices and pushes countries towards protectionist measures and defensive measures of all nature.

We are a country that are making all the endeavors to come out of years of very low development rates. That's why we seek more fairness and balanced trade relations. And for us, it's fundamental that we should break away from the barriers that were arisen against our products, like ethanol, beef, cotton, orange juice, airplanes, and so on and so forth. For us, it's fundamental that we should expand the educational and technological partnerships for the future.

I am equally concerned with the slow pace of the reforms in the multilateral institutions that still reflect an old world. We work tirelessly for the reform in governance of the World Bank and of the IMF. And we did that by the U.S., together with Brazil, together with other countries, and we welcome the beginning of the changes that were undertaken in these multilateral institutions, although they're still very limited and belated due to the economic financial crisis.

We also advocated for fundamental reform in designing the global governance, the enhancement of the U.N. Security Council. Here, Mr. President, we're not moved by a minor interest of bureaucratic occupation of spaces of representation. What mobilizes us is the

certainty that a world that is more multilateral will produce benefits for peace and harmony amongst the peoples of the world.

And even more, Mr. President, we're also interested to learn with our own mistakes. It was necessary—a very severe economic crisis—to move conservatism that blocked the reforms of the financial institutions. In the case of the U.N. reform, we now have the opportunities to act in advance.

This country, Brazil, has a commitment with peace, with democracy, and with consensus building. This commitment, it is not something that is transitory, but is part of our permanent values. Tolerance, dialogue, flexibility—these are principles that are written in our Constitution, in our history, and even in the nature of the Brazilian people. We're very proud to live in peace with all of our 10 neighbors of—for more than one century.

One week ago, Mr. President, we were in the effect of a consultative treaty of the South American Union of Nations, which will reinforce even more the unity of our continent. Brazil is redoubling efforts to consolidate peace, security, democracy, cooperation, and growth in this region with social fairness. And within this environment is that we should develop the relations between Brazil and the U.S.

Mr. President, I would like to say that I see with great optimism our common future. In the past, this relationship was very—many times was overshadowed by empty rhetoric that diluted what was truly at stake between the U.S. and Brazil. An alliance between our two countries, above all, if it intends to be a strategic alliance, is something that is a construct—a construct that is common, as you said yourself in your State of the Union very recently—when you delivered your State of the Union. But it has to be a construction amongst equals.

Nevertheless, the differences these countries may have in terms of the size of their territory, the population, productive capacity, or military might, we are countries of continental dimensions that follow the path of democracy. We are multiethnic in our territories, with different and rich cultures. Each one in their own way, we have what a Brazilian poet called—we have "the feeling of the world," quote, unquote.

Your presence in Brazil, Mr. President, will be of great value in the construction that we want to do together.

Once again, President Obama, welcome to Brazil.

Moderator. Now I give the floor to the President of the United States. President Obama has the floor.

President Obama. Thank you, Madam President, for your very kind words. And thanks to you and the people of Brazil for the very warm welcome, that legendary Brazilian hospitality that you've shown me, Michelle, and our daughters. *Muito obrigado.*

President Rousseff. Thank you.

President Obama. Now, in our meeting today, I mentioned that this is my first visit to South America and Brazil is my first stop. This is no coincidence. The friendship between the people of the United States and Brazil spans nearly two centuries. Our entrepreneurs and businesses innovate together. Our scientists and researchers are pioneering new vaccines. Our students and teachers explore new horizons. And every day, we're working to make our societies more inclusive and more just.

Brazil's extraordinary rise, Madam President, has captured the attention of the world. Because of the sacrifices of people like President Rousseff, Brazil moved from dictatorship to democracy. As one of the world's fastest growing economies, Brazil has lifted tens of millions from poverty into a growing middle class.

Today, the United States and Brazil are the hemisphere's two largest democracies and the two largest economies. Brazil is a regional leader promoting greater cooperation across the Americas, and increasingly, Brazil is a global leader, a world leader, going from a recipient of foreign aid to a donor nation, pointing the way to a world without nuclear weapons, and being in the forefront of global efforts to confront climate change.

As President, I've pursued engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect. And a key part of this engagement is forging deeper cooperation with 21st-century centers of influence, including Brazil. Put simply, the United States doesn't simply recognize Brazil's rise, we support it enthusiastically.

And that's why we've made the G-20 the world's premier forum of global economic cooperation, to make sure that nations like Brazil have a greater voice. That's why we've worked to increase Brazil's vote and role at international financial institutions, and it is why I've come to Brazil today.

President Rousseff and I both believe that this visit is a historic opportunity to put the United States and Brazil on a path towards even greater cooperation for decades to come. And today we're starting to seize that opportunity.

Madam President, I want to thank you for your strong personal commitment to strengthening the ties between our two nations. We're expanding trade and investment that create jobs in both our countries. Brazil is one of our largest trading partners, but there's still so much more that we can do.

Later today the President and I will be meeting with business leaders from our two countries to listen and find very concrete steps that we can take to expand our relationship economically. We'll be announcing a series of new agreements, including a new economic and financial dialogue to promote trade, streamline regulations, and expand collaborations in science and technology.

And as Brazil prepares to host the World Cup and the Summer Olympics—which still hurts for me to say—*[laughter]*—we're ensuring that American companies can play a role in the many infrastructure projects needed for these games.

We're creating a new strategic energy dialogue to make sure that the highest levels of our Governments are working together to seize new opportunities. In particular, with the new oil finds off Brazil, President Rousseff has said that Brazil wants to be a major supplier of new stable sources of energy, and I've told her that the United States wants to be a major customer, which would be a win-win for both our countries.

At the same time, we're expanding our clean energy partnership that's vital to our long-term energy security. As a leader in renewable energy, such as biofuels, and as part of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas that I proposed, Brazil is sharing its expertise around the region and around the world. And the new green economy dialogue that we're creating today will deepen our cooperation even further in green buildings and sustainable development.

On the security front, our militaries are working more closely to respond to humanitarian crises, as we did together in Haiti. Our law enforcement communities are partnering against the narcotraffickers who threaten all of us. Brazil is joining the international effort to prevent nuclear smuggling through ports.

I thanked President Rousseff for Brazil's leadership towards establishing a new regional center to promote excellence in nuclear security. And as a member of the Human Rights Council, Brazil joined with us in condemning human rights abuses by Libya.

I want to briefly mention the situation in Libya, because this is something that I've discussed with the President. Yesterday the international community demanded an immediate cease-fire in Libya, including an end to all attacks against civilians. Today Secretary Clinton joined an international coalition of our European and Arab partners in Paris to discuss how we will enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973.

Our consensus was strong, and our resolve is clear: The people of Libya must be protected. And in the absence of an immediate end to the violence against civilians, our coalition is prepared to act, and act with urgency. And I am briefing President Rousseff on the steps that we are taking.

Finally, I'm especially pleased that the United States and Brazil are joining together to advance development and democratic governance beyond our hemisphere. Brazil is helping lead the global initiative that I announced at the United Nations last year to promote open government and new technologies that empower citizens around the world. Today we're launching new efforts to help other countries combat corruption and prevent child labor, and we're expanding our efforts to promote food security and agricultural development in Africa.

I believe this is just the beginning of what our two countries can do together in the world. That's why the United States will continue our efforts to make sure that the new realities of the 21st century are reflected in international institutions, as Madam President mentioned, including the United Nations, where Brazil aspires to a seat on the Security Council.

As I told President Rousseff, the United States is going to keep working with Brazil and other nations on reforms that make the Security Council more effective, more efficient, more representative, and advance our shared vision of a more secure and peaceful world.

So again, with today's progress, I believe we've laid the foundation for greater cooperation between the United States and Brazil for decades to come. I want to thank President Rousseff for her leadership, for making this progress possible. I have not known Madam President long, but I can tell, in speaking to her, the extraordinary passion she has for providing opportunity for all the people of Brazil, lifting everyone up. And that's a passion I share with respect to my citizens in the United States—my fellow citizens in the United States of America.

So I am confident that given this shared spirit, this camaraderie that exists not only at our levels, but among our peoples, that we are going to continue to make progress for a long time to come.

I'm very much looking forward to visiting Rio tomorrow and the opportunity to speak directly to the Brazilian people about what our countries can do together as global partners in the 21st century.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:54 p.m. at the Palacio do Planalto. President Rousseff and a moderator spoke in Portuguese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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