

Remarks at the Group of Eight Summit in Camp David, Maryland
May 19, 2012

Good afternoon, everybody. It has been a great pleasure to host the leaders of some of the world's largest economies here at Camp David. I think the surroundings gave us an opportunity to hold some intimate discussions and make some genuine progress.

For the past 3 years, our nations have worked together and with others first to rescue a global economy from freefall, then to wrestle it back to a path of recovery and growth. Our progress has been tested at times by shocks like the disaster in Japan, for example. Today, it's threatened once again by the serious situation in the euro zone.

As all the leaders here today agreed, growth and jobs must be our top priority. A stable, growing European economy is in everybody's best interests, including America's. Europe is our largest economic partner. Put simply, if a company is forced to cut back in Paris or Madrid, that might mean less business for manufacturers in Pittsburgh or Milwaukee. And that might mean a tougher time for families and communities that depend on that business.

And that's why, even as we've confronted our own economic challenges over the past few years, we've collaborated closely with our European allies and partners as they've confronted theirs. And today we discussed ways they can promote growth and job creation right now, while still carrying out reforms necessary to stabilize and strengthen their economies for the future.

We know it is possible in part based on our own experience here. In my earliest days in office, we took decisive steps to confront our own financial crisis, from making banks submit to stress tests to rebuilding their capital, and we put in place some of the strongest financial reforms since the Great Depression.

At the same time, we worked to get our own fiscal house in order in a responsible way. And through it all, even as we worked to stabilize the financial sector and bring down our deficits and debt over the longer term, we stayed focused on growing the economy and creating jobs in the immediate term.

Of course, we still have a lot of work to do. Too many of our people are still looking for jobs that pay the bills. Our deficits are still too high. But after shrinking by nearly 9 percent the quarter before I took office, America's economy has now grown for almost 3 consecutive years. After losing hundreds of thousands of jobs a month, our businesses have created more than 4 million jobs over the past 26 months. Exports have surged and manufacturers are investing in America again.

And this economic growth then gives us more room to take a balanced approach to reducing our deficit and debt, while preserving our investments in the drivers of growth and job creation over the long term: education, innovation, and infrastructure for the 21st century.

Europe's situation, of course, is more complicated. They've got a political and economic crisis facing Greece, slow growth and very high unemployment in several countries. And what's more, when they want to decide on a way to move forward, there are 17 countries in the euro zone that need to come to an agreement. We recognize that, and we respect that.

But the direction the debate has taken recently should give us confidence. Europe has taken significant steps to manage the crisis. Individual countries and the European Union as a

whole have engaged in significant reforms that will increase the prospects of long-term growth. And there's now an emerging consensus that more must be done to promote growth and job creation right now in the context of these fiscal and structural reforms. That consensus for progress was strengthened here at Camp David.

Today we agreed that we must take steps to boost confidence and to promote growth and demand while getting our fiscal houses in order. We agreed upon the importance of a strong and cohesive euro zone and affirmed our interest in Greece staying in the euro zone while respecting its commitments. Of course, we also recognized the painful sacrifices that the Greek people are making at this difficult time, and I know that my European colleagues will carry forward these discussions as they prepare for meetings next week.

The leaders here understand the stakes. They know the magnitude of the choices they have to make and the enormous political, economic, and social costs if they don't. In addition to our G-8 meeting, it was—I was able to talk to them individually over the last 2 days, and I reaffirmed that Europe has the capacity to meet its challenges, and America is not only confident in their ability to meet their challenges, but we are supportive of their efforts.

This morning I updated you on the progress we made last night in our discussion of security issues. And today, following our discussion of the economy, we also made progress on a range of other important challenges. We discussed the importance of pursuing an all-of-the-above strategy for energy security in a safe and sustainable way. Leaders agreed to join a new U.S.-led coalition to address climate change, in part by reducing short-lived pollutants. And in the face of increasing disruptions in the supply of oil, we agreed that we must closely monitor global energy markets. Together, we stand ready to call upon the International Energy Agency to take action to ensure that the market remains fully and timely supplied.

We also announced a new alliance on food security with African leaders and the private sector as part of an effort to lift 50 million people out of poverty over the next decade. We discussed our support for a sustainable Afghan economy as we wind down the war, and we reaffirmed our support for the democratic transitions underway in the Middle East and North Africa.

So I'm very pleased that we were able to make some important progress here at Camp David, and we're going to keep at it. Tomorrow we begin our NATO summit in my hometown of Chicago, where we'll discuss our plans to responsibly end the war in Afghanistan. Next week, European leaders will gather to discuss their next steps on the euro zone. Next month, we'll all have the chance to continue this collaboration at the G-20 in Mexico. And I look forward to building on this progress in promoting economic recovery in the weeks and months to come.

Thank you very much, everybody. I hope you've enjoyed the great views and the great weather.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:04 p.m. in the Aspen Lodge.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Group of Eight (G-8) summit in Camp David, MD.

Locations: Camp David, MD.

Subjects: Afghanistan : NATO, role; Africa : Food security, strengthening efforts; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Commerce, international : Financial regulations, strengthening efforts; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Stabilization efforts; Commerce, international : Group of Eight (G-8) nations; Commerce, international :

Group of Twenty (G-20) nations; Developing countries : Economic growth and development; Economy, national : Credit markets, stabilization efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Energy Agency, International; Environment : Climate change; Europe : Financial markets :: Stabilization efforts; Europe : Financial markets :: Unrest; Europe : Trade with U.S.; Greece : European monetary union, participation; Japan : Earthquake and tsunami, damage and recovery efforts; Maryland : President's visits; Middle East : Democracy efforts; North Africa : Democracy efforts; North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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