

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia

November 15, 2014

Thank you so much! Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. Hello, Brisbane! Oh, it's good to be back in Australia. I love Australia, I really do. The only problem with Australia is, every time I come here, I've got to sit in conference rooms and talk to politicians instead of go to the beach. [*Laughter*]

To Chancellor Story, Professor Høj, faculty and staff, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and most of all, the students of the University of Queensland: It is great to be here at UQ. I know that we are joined by students from universities across this city and some high school students as well. And so I want to thank all of the young people especially for welcoming me here today.

On my last visit to this magnificent country 3 years ago, I had the privilege to meet some of the First Australians; we're joined by some today. So I want to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land and by paying my respects to your elders, past and present.

This university is recognized as one of the world's great institutions of science and teaching. Your research led to the vaccine that protects women and girls around the world from cervical cancer. Your innovations have transformed how we treat disease and how we unlock new discoveries. Your studies have warned the world about the urgent threat of climate change. In fact, last year, I even tweeted one of your studies in my 31—to my 31 million followers on Twitter. [*Laughter*] Just bragging a little bit. I don't think that's quite as much as Lady Gaga, but it's still pretty good. [*Laughter*] That's still not bad.

I thank Prime Minister Abbott and the people of Brisbane and Queensland for hosting us at the G-20 summit. This city, this part of Australia, is just stunning. "Beautiful one day, and then perfect the next." [*Laughter*] That's what I understand. We travel a lot around the world. My staff was very excited for "Bris Vegas." [*Laughter*] When I arrived they advised I needed some four-X. [*Laughter*] You have some? [*Laughter*]

Part of the reason I have fond memories of Australia is I spent some time here as a boy when I was traveling between Hawaii and Indonesia, where I lived for several years. And when I returned 3 years ago as President, I had the same feelings that I remembered as a child: the warmth of the people of Australia, the sense of humor. I learned to speak a little "strine." [*Laughter*] I'm tempted to "give it a burl." That's about as far as I can go, actually.

But I do want to take this opportunity to express once again the gratitude of the American people for the extraordinary alliance with Australia. I tell my friends and family and people that I meet that there is an incredible commonality between Australia and the United States. And whether that's because so many of us traveled here as immigrants, some voluntary, some not; whether it's because of the wide open spaces and the sense of a frontier culture, there's a bond between our two countries.

And Australia really is everything that you would want in a friend and in an ally. We're cut from the same cloth: immigrants from an old world who build a new nation. We're inspired by the same ideals of equality and opportunity, the belief everybody deserves a fair go, a fair shot. And we share that same spirit—that confidence and optimism—that the future is ours to make, that we don't have to carry with us all the baggage from the past, that we can leave this world a

better, safer, more just place for future generations. And that's what brings me here today: the future that we can build together, here in the Asia-Pacific region.

Now, this week, I've traveled more than 15,000 miles, from America to China to Burma to Australia. I have no idea what time it is right now. [*Laughter*] I'm completely upside down. But despite that distance, we know that our world is getting smaller. One of Australia's great writers spoke of this, a son of Brisbane and a graduate of this university, David Malouf. And he said, "In that shrinking of distance that is characteristic of our contemporary world, even the Pacific, largest of oceans, has become a lake." Even the Pacific has become a lake.

And you see it here on this campus, where you welcome students from all across Asia and around the world, including a number of Americans. You go on exchanges, and we're proud to welcome so many of you to the United States. You walk the streets of this city, and you hear Chinese, Vietnamese, Bahasa Indonesia, Korean, Hindi. And in many neighborhoods, more than half the people you meet were born somewhere else. This is a global city in a globalized world.

And I often tell young people in America that, even with today's challenges, this is the best time in history to be alive. Never in the history of humanity have people lived longer, are they more likely to be healthy, more likely to be enjoying basic security. The world is actually much less violent today—you wouldn't know it from watching television—than it once was.

And that's true here in the Asia-Pacific as well. Countries once ravaged by war, like South Korea and Japan, are among the world's most advanced economies. From the Philippines to Indonesia, dictatorships have given way to genuine democracies. In China and across the region, hundreds of millions of people have been lifted from poverty in the span of one generation, joining a global middle class. Empowered by technology, you—the young people, in particular, of this region—are connecting and collaborating across borders and cultures like never before as you seek to build a new future.

So the opportunities today are limitless. And I don't watch a lot of Australian television, so—as you might imagine, because I'm really far away. [*Laughter*] So I don't know whether some of the same tendencies that we see in the United States—a focus on conflict and disasters and problems—dominate what's fed to us visually every single day. But when you look at the facts, opportunities are limitless for this generation. You're living in an extraordinary time.

But what is also true that—is that alongside this dynamism, there are genuine dangers that can undermine progress. And we can't look at those problems through rose-tinted glasses. North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, that's a problem. Disputes over territory, remote islands and rocky shoals that threaten to spiral into confrontation.

The failure to uphold universal human rights, denying justice to citizens and denying countries their full potential. Economic inequality and extreme poverty that are a recipe for instability. And energy demands in growing cities that also hasten trends towards a changing climate. Indeed, the same technologies that empower citizens like you also give oppressive regimes new tools to stifle dissent.

So the question that we face is, which of these futures will define the Asia-Pacific in the century to come? Do we move towards further integration, more justice, more peace? Or do we move towards disorder and conflict? Those are our choices. Conflict or cooperation? Oppression or liberty?

Here in Australia, 3 years ago, in your Parliament, I made it clear where the United States stands. We believe that nations and peoples have the right to live in security and peace; that an effective security order for Asia must be based not on spheres of influence or coercion or intimidation, where big nations bully the small, but on alliances of mutual security, international law, international norms that are upheld, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

We believe in open markets and trade that is fair and free; a level playing field where economies play by the same rules; where the purpose of trade is not simply to extract resources from the ground, but to build true partnerships that raise capacity and living standards in poor countries; where small-business owners and entrepreneurs and innovators have the freedom to dream and create and flourish; and how well a country does is based on how well they empower their individual citizens.

And we believe in democracy: that the only real source of legitimacy is the consent of the people; that every individual is born equal with fundamental rights, inalienable rights; and that it is the responsibility of governments to uphold these rights. This is what we stand for. That is our vision, the future America is working towards in the Asia-Pacific, with allies and with friends.

Now, as a Pacific power, the United States has invested our blood and treasure to advance this vision. We don't just talk about it, we invest in this vision. Generations of Americans have served and died in the Asia-Pacific so that the people of the region might live free. So no one should ever question our resolve or our commitment to our allies.

When I assumed office, leaders and people across the region were expressing their desire for greater American engagement. And so as President, I decided that—given the importance of this region to American security, to American prosperity—the United States would rebalance our foreign policy and play a larger and lasting role in this region. And that's exactly what we've done.

Today, our alliances, including with Australia, are stronger than they have ever been. American exports to this region have reached record levels. We've deepened our cooperation with emerging powers and regional organizations, especially in Southeast Asia. We expanded our partnerships with citizens as they've worked to bolster their democracies. And we've shown that, whether it's a tsunami or an earthquake or a typhoon, when our friends are in need, America shows up. We are there to help. In good times and in bad, you can count on the United States of America.

Now, there have been times when people have been skeptical of this rebalancing. They've—they're wondering whether America has the staying power to sustain it. And it's true that in recent years, pressing events around the world demand our attention. As the world's only superpower, the United States has unique responsibilities that we gladly embrace. We're leading the international community in the fight to destroy the terrorist group ISIL. We're leading in dealing with Ebola in West Africa and in opposing Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which is a threat to the world, as we saw in the appalling shoot-down of MH17, a tragedy that took so many innocent lives, among them your fellow citizens. And as your ally and friend, America shares the grief of these Australian families, and we share the determination of your nation for justice and accountability. So yes, we have a range of responsibilities. That's the deal. It's a burden we gladly shoulder.

But even in each of these international efforts, some of our strongest partners are our allies and friends in this region, including Australia. So meeting these other challenges in the

world is not a distraction from our engagement in this region, it reinforces our engagement in this region. Our rebalance is not only about the United States doing more in Asia, it's also about the Asia-Pacific region doing more with us around the world.

So I'm here today to say that American leadership in the Asia-Pacific will always be a fundamental focus of my foreign policy. It won't always make the headlines. It won't always be measured in the number of trips I make, although I do keep coming back. *[Laughter]* But day in and day out, steadily and deliberately, we will continue to deepen our engagement using every element of American power: diplomacy, military, economic, development, the power of our values and our ideals.

And so with the time I have left, I want to describe specifically what America intends to do in the coming years. First, the United States will continue strengthening our alliances. With Japan, we'll finalize new defense guidelines and keep realigning our forces for the future. With the Republic of Korea, we'll deepen our collaboration, including on missile defense, to deter and defend against North Korean threats. With the Philippines, we'll train and exercise more to prepare for challenges from counterterrorism and piracy to humanitarian crises and disaster relief. And here in Australia, more U.S. marines will rotate through to promote regional stability, alongside your "diggers."

Although I will say when I went out to Darwin to inaugurate the new rotation of our U.S. marines there, that the mayor, I think it was, took out crocodile insurance, which disturbed me. *[Laughter]* I mean, I was flattered that he took out insurance on my behalf. *[Laughter]* But I did ask my Ambassador what this was all about. *[Laughter]* And he described to me how crocodiles kill more people than sharks, and there are just a lot of things in Australia that can kill you. *[Laughter]* But that's an aside. *[Laughter]*

We have an ironclad commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and security of every ally. And we'll expand cooperation between allies, because we believe we're stronger when we stand together.

The United States will continue to modernize our defense posture across this region. We'll deploy more of our most advanced military capabilities to keep the peace and deter aggression. Our presence will be more distributed, including in Southeast Asia with partners like Singapore. And we'll increase military training and education, including working with the military partners we have in this region around the respect for human rights by military and police. And by the end of this decade, a majority of our Navy and Air Force fleets will be based out of the Pacific, because the United States is and will always be a Pacific power.

And keep in mind, we do this without any territorial claims. We do this based on our belief that a region that is peaceful and prosperous is good for us, and it's good for the world.

The United States will continue broadening our cooperation with emerging powers and emerging economies. We intend to help Vietnam pursue economic reforms and new maritime capabilities. We'll continue to move ahead with our comprehensive partnership with Indonesia, which is a strong example of diversity and pluralism. We'll continue to expand ties with Malaysia, a growing center of entrepreneurship and innovation. And we support a greater role in the Asia-Pacific for India, which is the world's largest democracy.

The United States will continue expanding our engagement with regional institutions, because together, we can meet shared challenges, from preventing the horror of human trafficking to countering violent extremism, to stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. Together, we can improve maritime security, upholding the freedom of navigation and

encouraging territorial disputes are resolved peacefully. We'll work with partners to develop the East Asia Summit into the region's leading forum for addressing political and security challenges. And we'll support ASEAN's effort to reach a code of conduct with China that reinforces international law in the South China Sea.

And speaking of China, the United States will continue to pursue a constructive relationship with China. By virtue of its size and its remarkable growth, China will inevitably play a critical role in the future of this region. And the question is, what kind of role will it play? I just came from Beijing, and as I said there, the United States welcomes the continuing rise of a China that is peaceful and prosperous and stable and that plays a responsible role in world affairs. It is a remarkable achievement that millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in China because of the extraordinary growth rates that they've experienced. That is a good thing. We should want and welcome that kind of development.

And if in fact China is playing the role of a responsible actor that is peaceful and prosperous and stable, that is good for this region, it's good for the world, it's good for the United States. So we'll pursue cooperation with China where our interests overlap or align. And there are significant areas of overlap: more trade and investment, more communications between our militaries to prevent misunderstandings or possible conflict, more travel and exchanges between our people, and more cooperation on global challenges, from Ebola to climate change.

But in this engagement, we are also encouraging China to adhere to the same rules as other nations, whether in trade or on the seas. And in this engagement, we will continue to be frank about where there are differences, because America will continue to stand up for our interests and principles, including our unwavering support for the fundamental human rights of all people.

We do not benefit from a relationship with China or any other country in which we put our values and our ideals aside. And for the young people here, practicality is a good thing. There are times where compromise is necessary. That's part of wisdom. But it's also important to hang on to what you believe, to know what you believe and then be willing to stand up for it. And what's true for individuals is also true for countries.

The United States will continue to promote economic growth that is sustained and shared. So we're going to work with APEC to tear down barriers to trade and investment and combat the corruption that steals from so many citizens. We'll keep opposing special preferences for state-owned companies. We'll oppose cybertheft of trade secrets. We'll work with partners to invest in the region's infrastructure in a way that's open and transparent. And we'll support reforms that help economies transition to models that boost domestic demand and invest in people and their education and their skills.

We'll keep leading the effort to realize the Trans-Pacific Partnership to lower barriers, open markets, export goods, and create good jobs for our people. But with the 12 countries of the TPP making up nearly 40 percent of the global economy, this is also about something bigger. It is our chance to put in place new, high standards for trade in the 21st century that uphold our values. So, for example, we are pushing new standards in this trade agreement, requiring countries that participate to protect their workers better and to protect the environment better and protect intellectual property that unleashes innovation and meet baseline standards to ensure transparency of—and rule of law.

It's about a future where instead of being dependent on a single market, countries integrate their economies so they're innovating and growing together. That's what TPP does. That's why it would be a historic achievement. That's why I believe so strongly that we need to get it done, and not just for our countries, but for the world.

But that's also why it's hard, because we're asking all these countries at various stages of development to up their game. And it requires big transitions for a lot of these countries, including for the United States. And TPP is just one part of our overall focus on growing the global economy. That's what the G-20 meetings are all about.

Over the last few years, the United States has put more people back to work than all other advanced economies combined. But America can't be expected to just carry the world economy on our back. So here in Brisbane, the G-20 has a responsibility to act: to boost demand and invest more in infrastructure and create good jobs for the people of all our nations.

As we develop, as we focus on our economy, we cannot forget the need to lead on the global fight against climate change. Now, I know that's—[*applause*]
—I know there's been a healthy debate in this country about it. [*Laughter*] Here in the Asia-Pacific, nobody has more at stake when it comes to thinking about and then acting on climate change.

Here, a climate that increases in temperature will mean more extreme and frequent storms, more flooding, rising seas that submerge Pacific islands. Here in Australia, it means longer droughts, more wildfires. The incredible natural glory of the Great Barrier Reef is threatened. Worldwide, this past summer was the hottest on record. No nation is immune, and every nation has a responsibility to do its part.

And you'll recall at the beginning, I said the United States and Australia has a lot in common. Well, one of the things we have in common is, we produce a lot of carbon. Part of it is this legacy of wide-open spaces and the frontier mentality and this incredible abundance of resources. And so, historically, we have not been the most energy efficient of nations, which means we've got to step up.

In the United States, our carbon pollution is near its lowest levels in almost two decades. I'm very proud of that. Under my climate action plan, we intend to do more. In Beijing, I announced our ambitious new goal: reducing our net greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by the year 2025, which will double the pace at which we're reducing carbon pollution in the United States. Now, in a historic step, China made its own commitment, for the first time, agreeing to slow, peak, and then reverse the course of China's carbon emissions. And the reason that's so important is because if China, as it develops, adapts the same per capita carbon emissions as advanced economies like the United States or Australia, this planet doesn't stand a chance, because they've got a lot more people.

So them setting up a target sends a powerful message to the world that all countries—whether you are a developed country, a developing country, or somewhere in between—you've got to be able to overcome old divides, look squarely at the science, and reach a strong global climate agreement next year. And if China and the United States can agree on this, then the world can agree on this. We can get this done. And it is necessary for us to get it done. Because I have not had time to go to the Great Barrier Reef—[*laughter*]
—and I want to come back, and I want my daughters to be able to come back, and I want them to be able to bring their daughters or sons to visit. And I want that there 50 years from now.

Now, today I'm announcing that the United States will take another important step. We are going to contribute \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund so we can help developing nations deal with climate change. So along with the other nations that have pledged support, this gives us the opportunity to help vulnerable communities with an early warning system, with stronger defenses against storm surge, climate-resilient infrastructure. It allows us to help farmers plant more durable crops. And it allows us to help developing countries break out of this false choice between development and pollution; let them leapfrog some of the dirty industries that powered our development, go straight to a clean energy economy that allows them to grow, create jobs, and at the same time, reduce their carbon pollution.

So we're very proud of the work that we have already done. We are mindful of the great work that still has to be done on this issue. But let me say, particularly again to the young people here: Combating climate change cannot be the work of governments alone. Citizens, especially the next generation, you have to keep raising your voices, because you deserve to live your lives in a world that is cleaner and that is healthier and that is sustainable. But that is not going to happen unless you are heard.

It is in the nature of things, it is in the nature of the world that those of us who start getting gray hair are a little set in our ways, that interests are entrenched, not because people are bad people, it's just that's how we've been doing things. And we make investments, and companies start depending on certain energy sources, and change is uncomfortable and difficult. And that's why it's so important for the next generation to be able to step in and say, no, it doesn't have to be this way. You have the power to imagine a new future in a way that some of the older folks don't always have.

And the same is true when it comes to issues of democracy and human rights. There are times where when we speak out on these issues we are told that democracy is just a Western value. I fundamentally disagree with that. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, they have built thriving democracies. Filipinos showed us the strength of people power. Indonesians just voted in a historic election. I just came from Burma; this is a place that for 40 years was under the grip of a military junta, one of the most closed and oppressive nations on Earth. And there, I was inspired by citizens and civil society and Parliamentarians who are now working to sustain a transition to a democratic future. I had a town hall meeting with young people like you, in which they were asking, what does it mean to create rule of law? And how should we deal with ethnic diversity in our city? You could feel the excitement. What does a free press look like, and how does it operate? And how do we make sure that journalism is responsible? And this incredible ferment and debate that's taking place.

Those young people, they want the same things that you do. The notion that somehow, they're less interested in opportunity or less interested in avoiding arbitrary arrest or less interested in being censored is fundamentally untrue. Today, people in Hong Kong are speaking out for their universal rights.

And so here in Asia and around the world, America supports free and fair elections, because citizens must be free to choose their own leaders, as in Thailand, where we are urging a quick return to inclusive, civilian rule. We support freedom of assembly and freedom of speech and freedom of the press, a free and open Internet, strong civil societies, because the voices of people must be heard and leaders must be held accountable, even though it's uncomfortable sometimes. I promise you, if you lead a country, there are times where you are aggravated with people voicing opinions that seem to think you're doing something wrong.

[*Laughter*] You'd prefer everybody just praise you. I understand. [*Laughter*] But that's not how societies move forward.

We support strong institutions and independent judiciaries and open government, because the rule of force must give way to the rule of law.

And in that same fashion, the United States will continue to stand up for the inherent dignity of every human being. Now, dignity begins with the most basic of needs: a life free of hunger and disease and want. So yes, we'll speak out on behalf of human rights, but we are also going to invest in the agriculture that allows farmers to feed their families and boost their incomes. We'll invest in the development that promotes growth and helps end the injustice of extreme poverty in places like the Lower Mekong Delta. We intend to partner with all the countries in the region to create stronger public health systems and new treatments that save lives and realize our goals of being the first AIDS-free generation.

And what we've learned from the Ebola outbreak is that in this globalized world, where the Pacific is like a lake, if countries are so poor that they can't afford basic public health infrastructure, that threatens our health. We cannot build a moat around our countries, and we shouldn't try. What we should be doing is making sure everybody has some basic public health systems that allow for early warning when outbreaks of infectious disease may occur. That's not just out of charity. It is in our self-interest.

And again, I want to speak to young people about this. When we talk about these issues of development, when we invest in the well-being of people on the other side of the globe, when we stand up for freedom, including occasionally having to engage in military actions, we don't do that just because we are charitable. We do that because we recognize that we are linked and that if somebody, some child is stricken with a curable disease on the other side of the world, at same point, that could have an impact on our child.

We'll advance human dignity by standing up for the rights of minorities, because no one's equality should ever be denied. We will stand up for freedom of religion—the right of every person to practice their faith as they choose—because we are all children of God and we are all fallible. And the notion that we, as a majority, or the state, should tell somebody else what to believe with respect to their faith is against our basic values.

We will stand up for our gay and lesbian fellow citizens, because they need to be treated equally under the law. We will stand up for the rights and futures of our wives and daughters and partners, because I believe that the best measure of whether a nation is going to be successful is whether they are tapping the talents of their women and treating them as full participants in politics and society and the economy.

And we're going to continue to invest in the future of this region, and that means you, this region's youth—all of you—your optimism, your idealism, your hopes. I see it everywhere I go. I spend a lot of time with young people. I spend a lot of time with old people too. But I prefer spending time with young people. [*Laughter*] I meet them in Tokyo and Seoul and Manila and Jakarta. It's the spirit of young men and women in Kuala Lumpur and Rangoon, who are participating in our Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative. And like you, they're ready to lead.

To the young woman with an idea who dreams of starting her own business—if she just had a network, if she just had the capital—America wants to be her partner, because we believe in the entrepreneur that you can be, the innovations you can spark, and the jobs you can create. And when you succeed, we'll all be more prosperous.

To the young man who's working late in a clinic, tending to a patient, who dreams not just of treating diseases, but preventing them—"If I just had the resources, if I just had the support"—we want to be your partner, because we believe in the advocate that you can be and in the families you can reach and the lives you can save. And when you succeed, our world will be better.

To the young woman tired of the tensions in her community, who dreams of helping her neighbors see beyond differences—if she could just start a dialogue, if she knew how others had walked the same path—well, America wants to be your partner, because we believe in the activist that you can be and the empathy that you can build and the understanding you can foster between people. And when you succeed, our world will be a little more peaceful.

And to the young man who believes his voice isn't being heard, who dreams of bringing people like him together across his country—if he just knew how to organize and mobilize them—we want to be your partner, because we believe in the leaders that you can be, in the difference you can make to ignite positive change. And when you succeed, the world will be a little more free.

So that's the future we can build together. That's the commitment America is making in the Asia-Pacific. It's a partnership not just with nations, but with people, with you, for decades to come, bound by the values we share, guided by the vision we seek. I am absolutely confident we can advance the security and the prosperity and the dignity of people across this region. And in pursuit of that future, you will have no greater friend than the United States of America.

So thank you very much. God bless Australia. God bless America. God bless our great alliance. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:11 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to John Story, chancellor, and Peter Høj, vice-chancellor, University of Queensland; musician Stefani J.A. "Lady Gaga" Germanotta; former Mayor Graeme Sawyer of Darwin, Australia; and former U.S. Ambassador to Australia Jeffrey L. Bleich. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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efforts; Energy : Carbon dioxide emissions, reduction; Energy : Greenhouse gas emissions, regulation; Environment : Climate change; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Foreign policy, U.S. : Democratization; HIV/AIDS : International prevention and treatment efforts; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Japan : Defense relationship with U.S.; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Philippines : Defense relationship with U.S.; South Korea : Defense relationship with U.S.; Thailand : Democracy efforts; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.

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