

people. I support this effort, especially since it's aimed at increasing choice and competition and lowering cost. So I want to thank all of you for sticking with it, for all those late nights, all the long weekends that you guys have put in. With so much at stake, this is well worth all of our efforts.

It is now my pleasure to sign the memo that will direct Secretary Sebelius to get started on that medical home demonstration. So let's do that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:39 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

## Exchange With Reporters in Oslo, Norway December 10, 2009

### *Signing Norwegian Nobel Institute Guest Book*

Q. What did you write, Mr. President?

*The President.* I wrote, "Thank you." No, what I did write, actually, is worth mentioning. In addition to being honored to receive it, I think it's important to congratulate the Nobel Committee for the work that it's done over the course of history to highlight the cause of peace, but also to give voice to the voiceless and the oppressed around the world.

When you look at the wall, Michelle and I were commenting on the fact that when Dr. King won his prize it had a galvanizing effect around the world, but also lifted his stature in the United States in a way that allowed him to be more effective. And that's a legacy of the Nobel Committee that we're very grateful for.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:46 a.m. at the Norwegian Nobel Institute. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway and an Exchange With Reporters in Oslo December 10, 2009

*Prime Minister Stoltenberg.* Mr. President, it is a great pleasure and honor to welcome you here in Oslo. And once again, I would like to congratulate you on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2009. You have really created a new climate of international cooperation through your very strong emphasis on the need for dialogue. And I, personally, very much appreciate this opportunity to continue our dialogue from the NATO summit in Strasbourg and from the U.N. this fall.

Norway and the United States are close allies. We are partners in NATO, and we enjoy close, longstanding relationships. We cooperate in the high north, and we work closely on a number of different global issues. Today we have discussed the most pressing challenge of our time, climate change. We need a strong political agreement in Copenhagen, and I briefed the President on the Norwegian-Mexican initia-

tion on financing, which is a key issue in Copenhagen.

Developed countries must provide more funding for climate action in the developing world. We need money both for the short term and the long term, and we need funding both from the public and from the private sector. The cap and trade system championed by your administration, Mr. President, is truly in keeping with our approach here in Norway. By capping emissions, we reduce emissions and we put a price on carbon, which is very, very important. This will bring strong incentives to develop new and cleaner technologies.

We have agreed that Norway and the U.S. will work together to ensure that efforts to reduce emissions from tropical forests will be an important element in a deal in Copenhagen. U.S. leadership is crucial if you are to succeed

in combating climate change. Mr. President, you are providing that leadership.

We discussed Afghanistan. I welcome the stronger and broader U.S. involvement aimed at ensuring development and stability. Norway is committed to continuing our military and civilian efforts in Afghanistan. And I am pleased to announce that Norway will increase its financial contribution to the Afghan National Army and police to a total of 110 million U.S. dollars for the period 2010 to 2014. We must enable Afghans to take responsibility for their own security.

We touched upon the situation in the Middle East. As chair of the international donors group, I expressed my support for the U.S. efforts to bring the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians back on track.

And we have agreed to work together for U.N. Millennium Development summit in New York next autumn.

We recognize our collective effort on global health issues, including maternal and child health and strengthening of health systems. We need to scale up efforts to ensure the health and safety of every woman and child in connection with childbirth.

We are ready to work together with you, Mr. President, to meet these and other challenges. Mr. President, we are delighted to have you in Oslo. The floor is yours.

*President Obama.* Thank you so much. Well, it is a great honor to be here in Norway. I appreciate the extraordinary hospitality of the Norwegian people, and I thank Prime Minister Stoltenberg for his friendship and his extraordinary leadership here in his country. I only wish that my family could stay longer in this wonderful country, but I still have a lot of work to do back in Washington, DC, before the year is done.

Norway is a close friend and an ally, and the relationship between the American and the Norwegian people has always been extraordinarily strong. It's been noted that there are probably more Norwegians, or at least persons of Norwegian descent, in the United States than there are here in Norway. Norwegians were among the earliest settlers on our shores, and many Norwegian Americans rank as dis-

tinguished American citizens. I should also note that, as I was driving through—this being my first visit to Norway—I understood why they all moved to Wisconsin and Minnesota, some of our northern States, because they look identical to Norway.

Today, our relationship thrives on the basis of our common values and our shared aspirations for a better world. To that end, our cooperation spans a broad range of issues, as the Prime Minister indicated, including building stability and security in Afghanistan and the Balkans, confronting nuclear proliferation and climate change, advancing human rights, and global health.

Something that, obviously, is pressing right now is the issue of climate change, and the Prime Minister and I discussed the ongoing meeting in Copenhagen, in which we're both strongly committed to a positive outcome. The United States has done a lot of work this year to transform the way we think about energy and our use back home and to help to move international climate negotiations forward in an effective way. And I look forward to coming back this way next week during the leaders' summit that ends the conference.

Prime Minister Stoltenberg and I also discussed how we can work together and with other countries to protect forests, something that he has personally championed. And I'm very impressed with the model that has been built between Norway and Brazil that allows for effective monitoring and ensures that we are making progress in avoiding deforestation of the Amazon. And we all understand that it's probably the most cost-effective way for us to address the issue of climate change, having an effective set of mechanisms in place to avoid further deforestation and, hopefully, to plant new trees.

The Prime Minister and I also reaffirmed our mutual commitment to improving global health. We committed to work together to deal with maternal child and newborn health, to promote research and innovation and strengthen health systems.

I discussed our strategy in Afghanistan, and I want to add that we are grateful to the people of Norway and the sacrifices that they've

made on behalf of this effort. Norway has consistently stood alongside the United States and, as is true in so many other areas of international relations, I indicated to the Prime Minister an expression that we use in America—it's a boxing term—Norway punches above its weight. It is a very effective actor internationally, and it has been here on the issue of Afghanistan. And I appreciate the Prime Minister's announcement of the total of \$110 million for the Afghan security force trust fund. It will be absolutely critical for us to build capacity, and that's something that is at the core of the effort that we're embarking in over the next several years.

Finally, I want to thank His Majesty King Harald V and the Royal Family for the extraordinary hospitality that they are showing Michelle and myself. We look forward to the extraordinary honor of the events associated with the Nobel Peace Prize. I want to thank the people of Norway.

And with that, perhaps we can take some questions.

#### *Nobel Peace Prize/The Presidency*

*Q.* Good morning.

*President Obama.* Hi, how are you?

*Q.* Giving the peace prize to you, Mr. President, has been described as premature. How can you use the prize, do you think, to make some of your good intentions materialize and then counter that criticism?

*President Obama.* Well, you know, first of all, as I said upon receiving the news of the prize, it was a great surprise to me. I have no doubt that there are others who may be more deserving. My task here is to continue on the path that, I believe, is not only important for America, but important for lasting peace and security in the world. That means pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons over time and strengthening our mechanisms to avoid nuclear proliferation. That means addressing climate change in an effective way. It means stabilizing countries like Afghanistan and mobilizing an international effort to deal with terrorism that is consistent with our values and our ideals. It means addressing issues of development, because we understand the connection between economic justice and peace.

So on a whole host of initiatives that I've put forward this year, some of which are beginning to bear fruit, the goal is not to win a popularity contest or to get an award, even one as esteemed as the Nobel Peace Prize. The goal has been to advance America's interests, to strengthen our economy at home, and to make ourselves a continuing force for good in the world, something that we've been for decades now.

And if I'm successful in those tasks, then hopefully, some of the criticism will subside, but that's not really my concern. And if I'm not successful, then all the praise and the awards in the world won't disguise that fact.

Okay, I think we've only got time for two, and I've got to make sure that one of our poor Americans who traveled here and are very exhausted at this point because they didn't get enough sleep—is Ben [Ben Feller, Associated Press] around? There you are, Ben. I guess you're not the only one tired. [Laughter] I missed you.

#### *Arrest of U.S. Citizens in Pakistan/Muslim Americans/Military Operations in Afghanistan*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about national security. There's been a lot of debate about the July 2011 deadline; that date in your Afghanistan speech. Can you assure the American public that that is when American forces will begin to come home, or is it possible that that date could slip? And also, I'd like to get your reaction to the arrests of five American—young American Muslims in Pakistan on charges of terrorism?

And to the Prime Minister, if I could, I'd like to get your reaction to my colleague's question about the debate over the President's Nobel Peace Prize. What is your reaction to this concern that it may be premature?

*President Obama.* First of all, with respect to the five young men who were arrested in Pakistan, I think the details are still forthcoming. There will undoubtedly be a series of investigations surrounding these events, so I'd prefer not to comment on them at this point.

I think what has been remarkable over the course of the last 8, 9 years since 9/11 is the degree to which America has reaffirmed the

extraordinary contributions of the Muslim American community and how they have been woven into the fabric of our Nation in a seamless fashion. On the other hand, the degree to which the fierce loyalty towards America, the fierce patriotism and integration of Muslim Americans into America life have helped to avoid some of the problems that we've seen in other countries on this issue.

Now, the Muslim American community is vast, so we have to constantly be mindful that some of these twisted ideologies are available over the Internet and can affect our young people. But I think we've got a good story to tell here and one that we need to build on.

With respect to Afghanistan, I think General McChrystal said it as well as it could have been said in his testimony. We believe we've got the right strategy. We believe we can execute the strategy, that we can build Afghan capacity, protect population centers, and blunt and degrade the Taliban capacity so that beginning on July of 2011, we are beginning to transfer responsibility to the Afghan people and Afghan security forces.

I've been unambiguous about this, so there should not be a debate. Starting in July 2011, we will begin that transition, that transfer of responsibility. The pace at which that takes place, the slope of a drawdown, how it occurs tactically, those are all going to be conditions based. And so, just as in Iraq, there was a constant monitoring of the situation and continues to be, and there's discussion on an ongoing basis between myself and General Odierno and our national security team, so will those kind of conversations be taking place in Afghanistan.

And as I indicated to the Prime Minister, I think it's very important to understand that we're not going to see some sharp cliff, some precipitous drawdown. Our whole concept here is to train and partner with Afghan forces and to transfer to them even as our troops are fighting alongside each other. It's also important to understand that several years after U.S. combat troops have been drastically reduced in the region, and ISAF troops have been reduced in the region, the Afghan Government

is still going to need support for those security forces. We are still going to have an interest in partnering with Afghans and Pakistanis and others in dealing with the remnants of terrorist activity there.

So that's not going to go away. Our commitment to Afghan development, to their civilians, to increasing their agricultural production, all those things are going to continue. But July 2011 will signal a shift in our mission.

*Prime Minister Stoltenberg.* Let me just say some words about your question. First of all, I would like say that, in my opinion, the Nobel Peace Prize to President Barack Obama is a very well deserved and important award, because the whole idea with the Nobel Peace Prize, as it is expressed in the last will of Alfred Nobel, is that it shall contribute to peace based on an assessment on what a person has done the last year. And I cannot think about anybody else who has done more for peace during the last year than Barack Obama, because he has become President and he has taken initiatives when it comes to disarmament, when it comes to nonproliferation, when it comes to a world without nuclear weapons, and also when it comes to important issues regarding preventing conflicts. For instance, fighting global warming, taking leadership as he has done when it comes to trying to reach an agreement in Copenhagen, is an important part of creating a world with less conflicts, more peace, and less ground for war and conflicts.

And the whole new agenda the President has created when it comes to the importance of international cooperation, dialogue, and the importance that we are solving common problems together, is a strong and bold initiative which is promoting peace.

So it is a well deserved peace prize, and hopefully, it is really in the best spirit of Alfred Nobel, because it can contribute in itself to strengthening the efforts of the President to work for peace. So I support the Nobel Committee. It is an independent committee, but I support the decision; I think it's a very bold and an important decision.

*President Obama.* Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Prime Minister's office. In his remarks, he referred to Ahmad Abdulminni, Umar Farooq, Waqir Hussain Khan, Aman Hasan Yamer, and Ramys Zamzam, who were arrested on December 7 in Sargodha, Pakistan, for suspected terrorist activity; Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal,

USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; and Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. Audio was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

## Remarks on Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo *December 10, 2009*

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, distinguished members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, citizens of America, and citizens of the world: I receive this honor with deep gratitude and great humility. It's an award that speaks to our highest aspirations, that for all the cruelty and hardship of our world, we are not mere prisoners of fate; our actions matter and can bend history in the direction of justice.

And yet I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the considerable controversy that your generous decision has generated. [*Laughter*] In part, this is because I am at the beginning and not the end of my labors on the world stage. Compared to some of the giants of history who've received this prize—Schweitzer and King, Marshall and Mandela—my accomplishments are slight. And then there are the men and women around the world who have been jailed and beaten in the pursuit of justice, those who toil in humanitarian organizations to relieve suffering, the unrecognized millions whose quiet acts of courage and compassion inspire even the most hardened cynics. I cannot argue with those who find these men and women, some known, some obscure to all but those they help, to be far more deserving of this honor than I.

But perhaps the most profound issue surrounding my receipt of this prize is the fact that I am the Commander in Chief of the military of a nation in the midst of two wars. One of these wars is winding down. The other is a conflict that America did not seek, one in which we are joined by 42 other countries, including Norway, in an effort to defend ourselves and all nations from further attacks.

Still, we are at war, and I'm responsible for the deployment of thousands of young Ameri-

cans to battle in a distant land, and some will kill, and some will be killed. And so I come here with an acute sense of the costs of armed conflict, filled with difficult questions about the relationship between war and peace and our effort to replace one with the other.

Now, these questions are not new. War, in one form or another, appeared with the first man. At the dawn of history, its morality was not questioned; it was simply a fact, like drought or disease, the manner in which tribes and then civilizations sought power and settled their differences.

And over time, as codes of law sought to control violence within groups, so did philosophers and clerics and statesmen seek to regulate the destructive power of war. The concept of a just war emerged, suggesting that war is justified only when certain conditions were met: if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defense; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence.

Of course, we know that for most of history, this concept of just war was rarely observed. The capacity of human beings to think of new ways to kill one another proved inexhaustible, as did our capacity to exempt from mercy those who look different or pray to a different God. Wars between armies gave way to wars between nations, total wars, in which the distinction between combatant and civilian became blurred. In the span of 30 years, such carnage would twice engulf this continent. And while it's hard to conceive of a cause more just than the defeat of the Third Reich and the Axis powers, World War II was a conflict in which the total number of civilians who died exceeded the number of soldiers who perished.