

rying around rifles, shooting each other on the streets. And we want to be a partner with Somalia in that effort, and we will continue to do so.

And some of it is financial, some of it is developmental, some of it is being able to help basic infrastructure. In some cases, we may try to find a portion of the country that is relatively stable and start work there to create a model that the rest of the country can then look at and say, this is a different path than the one that we're taking right now.

But in the end, I think that this metaphor of the success of the World Cup and the bombing shows that each of you are going to be confronted with two paths. There's going to be a path that takes us into a direction of more conflict, more bloodshed, less economic development, continued poverty, even as the rest of the world races ahead, or there's a vision in which people come together for the betterment and development of their own country.

And for all the great promise that's been fulfilled over the last 50 years, I want you to understand, because I think it's important for us to be honest with ourselves, Africa has also missed huge opportunities for too long. And I'll just give you one example.

When my father traveled to the United States and got his degree in the early sixties, the GDP of Kenya was actually on par—maybe actually higher than the GDP of South Korea. Think

about that, all right? So when I was born, Kenya per capita might have been wealthier than South Korea. Now it's not even close. Well, that's 50 years that was lost in terms of opportunities. When it comes to natural resources, when it comes to the talent and potential of the people, there's no reason why Kenya shouldn't have been on that same trajectory.

And so 50 years from now, when you look back, you want to make sure that the continent hasn't missed those opportunities as well. We want to make sure of that as well. And the United States wants to listen to you and work with you. And so when you go back and you talk to your friends and you say, what was the main message the President had: We are rooting for your success, and we want to work with you to achieve that success, but ultimately, success is going to be in your hands. And being a partner means that we can be there by your side, but we can't do it for you. All right?

Okay, thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; and President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe.

Telephone Remarks to a Town Hall Meeting Hosted by Senator Michael F. Bennet

August 3, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody.

Senator Bennet. Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Sen. Bennet. I'm not going to take any of your time. Thank you for—I'm doing great. How are you?

The President. I'm great.

Sen. Bennet. Good, thanks for joining us. And I'll turn it over to you.

The President. Well, look, everybody, it's great to talk to you. And by the way, I enjoyed Michael's answer on education. He was right on

point. And I want to thank all of you for joining us on this call tonight.

You know, Michael arrived in Washington just as I took office as President, and this was one of the toughest times in our country's history. We'd just gone through nearly a decade of economic policies that weren't working for ordinary families. It culminated in the worst recession of our lifetimes. And so what we needed were leaders who were willing to stand up to the status quo and the special interests and start moving this country in a new direction.

And Michael has been that kind of leader. He's been a breath of fresh air in a town with a lot of hot air. And one of the things that I've discovered in Washington is there are basically two kinds of people who go into politics. There are folks who want to be something, and then there are folks who run because they want to do something, because they care about something bigger than themselves. And that's Michael.

He could have lived a comfortable life. Instead, he's devoted himself to every assignment he's undertaken to make a positive difference for his community and for the people of Colorado.

We saw that when he turned around Denver's public schools, fighting for change and reform, making sure that young people got the opportunity they deserve. All across this country, people who care about school reform admire and know what Michael did in Denver, so he's become the go-to guy for reforming America's public schools in Congress. And he stood up in the Senate again and again these past 18 months on a whole host of issues related to opening up opportunity.

So he stood up to the insurance lobbies to help pass reforms that finally make health insurance affordable and stop people from getting insurance because of preexisting conditions.

He stood up against big corporations that are getting tax breaks for offshoring, when we should actually be giving tax breaks to companies that create jobs here in the United States; stood up to credit card companies that were taking advantage of people with hidden fees and unfair rate hikes, and mortgage lenders who tricked families into buying homes they couldn't afford; and was one of the key people who I needed to make sure we passed Wall Street reform to prevent another financial crisis.

So Michael has been as good of a Senator as I expected him to be when I first met him and he was still head of the public schools out in Denver. And I know there have been a lot of negative ads running against Michael in the last few weeks, which is sort of politics as usual. But when he came to Washington, he came to get things done and not just play the usual political

games. And he's running a campaign that we can be proud of. He's a public servant that we can be proud of. We need more folks like Michael in Washington.

And so the main reason I'm on this call is to make sure that everybody who's listening is thinking not just about the next election but about the next generation. That's how Michael approaches his job. And if you're already supporting Michael, we need you to help in these final weeks, this final week, to knock on doors and make phone calls to everyone you know to get out the vote. And if you're still trying to figure out what to do, I want you to support him, because Michael is somebody who has stood up on behalf of you, and we need to stand up on his behalf right now.

So I just want to say thank you to all of you for taking the time to join us. Thanks for staying engaged and interested. We need people who are involved in this process now more than ever. We've accomplished an incredible amount over the last 18 months, but we've got a lot more work to do. And Michael is the person that I want alongside me when we do it.

So make sure, guys, to go out there and cast your ballots for Michael. And I know that he's going to be one of the best Senators that Colorado's ever had. All right?

Sen. Bennet. Thank you, Mr. President. We deeply appreciate your taking the time to be on the call with everybody and everything you're doing. Let's see if we can't get Elena Kagan confirmed this week.

The President. Oh, I think we're going to get her confirmed. And after that we're just going to keep on going to make sure that we create the kind of economy that's working for all Americans.

So thanks for everything, Michael. Bye-bye.

Sen. Bennet. All right, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:25 p.m. from the Residence at the White House to participants of the teleconference town hall meeting hosted by Sen. Bennet. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the AFL–CIO Executive Council

August 4, 2010

The President. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you.

It is good to spend my birthday with some good friends. [Laughter] And as I look around the room, there are very few of you who I haven't, in some form or fashion, worked directly with on an issue, some of you dating back to when I was in the State legislature, some of you who I've worked with in the United States Senate, and all of you who I've had the opportunity to work with as President of the United States.

So I am grateful. And I want to first of all thank Rich, not only for inviting me here, not only for, I know, making clear my commitment to all of you during an earlier session today, but also for your outstanding leadership of the labor movement. And we very much appreciate everything that you do.

I want to thank Liz and Arlene for bucking up Rich all the time—[laughter]—and making him look good. This is a shared leadership, and we are very proud of them. I want to thank all the members of the executive council, all my brothers and sisters in the AFL–CIO.

Together, you are fighting for the hard-working men and women in this country after nearly 10 years of struggle. The middle class has been struggling now for about a decade, 10 years in which folks felt the sting of stagnant incomes and sluggish job growth and declining economic security, as well as at least 8 years in which there was a profound animosity towards the notion of unions.

It's going to take some time to reverse all that's been done, but we're on the right track. We're moving forward. And that's what I'm going to want to talk to you about briefly today.

I hope you don't mind me interjecting, though, a topic, because it's in the news right now and I want to make sure that all of you are aware of it.

One place in our country where people have faced particular struggles in the last few months is in the Gulf of Mexico, as a result of the BP oil spill. So it was very welcome news when we learned overnight that efforts to stop the well

through what's called a static kill appear to be working and that a report out today by our scientists show that the vast majority of the spilled oil has been dispersed or removed from the water. So the long battle to stop the leak and contain the oil is finally close to coming to an end. And we are very pleased with that.

Our recovery efforts, though, will continue. We have to reverse the damage that's been done. We will continue to work to hold polluters accountable for the destruction they've caused. We've got to make sure that folks who were harmed are reimbursed, and we're going to stand by the people of the region, however long it takes, until they're back on their feet.

Now, beyond the Gulf, many of those who've been hit hardest by the economic upheaval of recent years have been the people that you represent. For generations, manufacturing was the ticket to a better life for the American worker. But as the world became smaller, outsourcing, an easier way to increase profits, a lot of those jobs shifted to low-wage nations. So many who held those jobs went to work in the construction industry, as we had the housing boom. But when the subprime mortgage crisis hit, when those mortgages were called up on Wall Street, that bubble burst, leaving devastation everywhere.

So now we've got millions of our fellow Americans swept up in that disaster, hard-working people who've been left to sit idle for months and even years as their lives have been turned upside down.

And there's one last element to it, obviously. Having been plunged into a recession, it also means that teachers and firefighters and people who are providing public services each and every day are threatened because tax revenues at the State level and at the local levels have crashed. And so you have a perfect economic storm that's hit our middle class directly in every region, every segment of this country.

You know the stories; I don't need to tell you. You know what happens when a plant closes and hundreds of your members are suddenly