

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

**Remarks Following a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia
and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City**

September 23, 2009

President Obama. Well, first of all, I want to welcome President Medvedev to the United States and New York. As you all know, I had the great pleasure of visiting him in Moscow, and he extended extraordinary hospitality to both myself and my family. More importantly, we got a lot of work done that I think will be bearing fruit in the months and years to come.

And I have to say publicly how much I appreciate the excellent working relationship that President Medvedev and I have been able to develop during our meetings, not only bilaterally but also at the various summits that we've attended.

We've had an excellent discussion that touched on a number of areas that our teams have been working on together over the last several months. In particular, we discussed the progress that's being made on the START Treaty. And both of us are confident that we can meet our self-imposed deadline to get an agreement that substantially reduces our nuclear missiles and launchers by the end of the year.

So we spent the bulk of our time talking about Iran. As I said in my speech today, the United States is committed to a strong nonproliferation regime. And we are committed to upholding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that strikes a bargain with all countries. That bargain says that countries are able to pursue peaceful nuclear technology, that they commit not to pursuing nuclear weapons, and those nations that have nuclear weapons make commitments to start reducing their stockpiles.

As the two major nuclear superpowers, we have made a commitment that we will reduce our nuclear stockpiles and move forward on our part of the bargain. And many other countries are abiding by the international commitments and norms that have been established by the NPT.

Unfortunately, Iran has been violating too many of its international commitments. So what we've discussed is how we can move in a positive direction that resolves a potential crisis, not just in the Middle East but that can cause enormous problems to the nonproliferation regime worldwide.

I believe that Russia and the United States shares the strategic objective that Iran can pursue peaceful energy sources but that it should not pursue nuclear weapons. I believe we also share the view that this should be resolved diplomatically, and I am on record as being committed to negotiating with Iran in a serious fashion to resolve this issue.

Russia, as a major leader, I think, believes that such an approach is possible as well. But I think we also both agree that if Iran does not respond to serious negotiations and resolve this issue in a way that assures the international community that it's meeting its commitments and is not developing nuclear weapons, then we will have to take additional actions and that sanctions, serious additional sanctions, remain a possibility.

We have an opportunity for a P-5-plus-1 meeting with Iran in October. I hope that Iran seizes the opportunity to follow the path that both the United States and Russia would prefer in making a decision to live up to its international commitments, abandon nuclear weapons,

and to fully join the international community in a way that, I think, will ultimately enhance the peace of the region and the prosperity of the Iranian people.

And once again, I just want to personally thank President Medvedev, but also the Russian people, for the leadership that they're showing on the world stage. I'm confident that when the United States and Russia work on critical issues like nuclear nonproliferation that the world rallies behind us and that we will be able to bring about the kind of international peace and security that I think we all want.

President Medvedev. I'll try to make my comment briefer because, unlike my colleague, President Barack Obama, I still have to deliver my statement from the United Nations rostrum.

I agree that, indeed, recently we have witnessed very positive changes in our relations, with established, constructive, friendly working relations that allow us to tackle difficult issues that not only the two countries face, but also the entire world.

Today we've discussed a range of issues. Mr. President listed them. Indeed, we communicate on regular basis. We personally meet quarterly, and we talk on the phone regularly. So those personal contacts are not an exotic prank, but rather a manifestation of good working relations.

Indeed, we discussed new START Treaty. We are satisfied with the current pace of work. The teams that were tasked to work on this matter work very successfully. We're satisfied with the work. We believe that they will be able to stick to the time schedule and that in due time we will have every—[inaudible].

We talked about missile defense with my colleague, President Obama. We talked that the decision that he took was reasonable and that reflected the position of the current U.S. administration on missile defense and also takes into consideration our concerns on the missile defense which is needed for Europe and for the world. And we are ready to continue this work with our U.S. colleagues in this direction, as well as with our European colleagues, of course.

We also discussed other issues. We have devoted lots of our time to the Iranian problem my colleague, Mr. President, rightly mentioned. Our task is to create such a system of incentives that would allow Iran to resolve its fissile nuclear program, but at the same time prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons. That's why we, as responsible members of international community and, indeed, two nuclear superpowers, should send great signals in that direction.

I told His Excellency, Mr. President, that we believe we need to help Iran to take a right decision. As to also have sanctions, Russia's belief is very simple, and I stated it recently. Sanctions rarely lead to productive results. But in some cases sanctions are inevitable.

Finally, it is a matter of choice. And we're prepared to continue and to work together with the U.S. administration both on Iranian peaceful program and on other matters.

Most importantly, we've learned to listen to each other once again. And that is of great importance both to the future of relations of the two countries and the two peoples. That is why I would like to give special thanks to you, Barack, for your cooperation on these matters.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

The President's Remarks at the United Nations

Q. What's been the response to your speech?

President Obama. You know, I've been in too many meetings. I don't know. But I'm looking for your review, Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:26 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: New York City; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Russia, President Medvedev.

Locations: New York, New York.

Names: Medvedev, Dmitry A.

Subjects: Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia, proposed expansion; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; Energy : Nuclear energy; Iran : Diplomatic relations with U.S.; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iran : U.N. Security Council sanctions; New York : President's visits; Russia : Nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; Russia : President; Russia : President Obama's visit; Russia : Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with U.S., proposed expansion.

DCPD Number: DCPD200900744.