

## Remarks at the Opening Plenary Session of the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, South Korea

*March 27, 2012*

Thank you very much, President Lee, for welcoming us here today and for the extraordinary hospitality and accommodations that have been provided by the Republic of Korea. We are very grateful to you, and we are grateful to the Korean people for the outstanding leadership in bringing us here together in Seoul.

Like the G-20 summit 2 years ago, this gathering is a tribute to the nations that contribute to security and peace that's playing a leading role around the globe and that's taking its rightful place on the world stage. When I hosted the first Nuclear Security Summit 2 years ago in Washington, there were those who questioned whether our nations could summon the will to confront one of the gravest dangers of our time. In part because it involves a lot of technical issues, in part because the world was still grappling with a whole host of other issues like the economy and the global recession, there was some skepticism that we would be able to sustain an effort around this topic. But that's exactly what we've done.

We've agreed that nuclear terrorism is one of the most urgent and serious threats to global security. We agreed to the goal of securing the world's nuclear materials in 4 years. We committed ourselves to specific and concrete actions. And to get this done, we agreed a new effort of sustained and effective international cooperation was required, that we would need to create an architecture in which we could share best practices, help to enforce many of the commitments that we had already made, and continue to improve every aspect of this issue.

Over the past 2 years, the questions have been different: Would we back up our words with deeds? Would we sustain our cooperation? Today here in Seoul, we can answer with a resounding yes. We are fulfilling the commitments we made in Washington: We are improving security at our nuclear facilities; we are forging new partnerships; we are removing nu-

clear materials and, in some cases, getting rid of these materials entirely. And as a result, more of the world's nuclear materials will never fall into the hands of terrorists who would gladly use them against us.

Of course, what's also undeniable is that the threat remains. There are still too many bad actors in search of these dangerous materials, and these dangerous materials are still vulnerable in too many places. It would not take much—just a handful or so—of these materials to kill hundreds of thousands of innocent people. And that's not an exaggeration; that's the reality that we face.

And that's why what's required continues to be a serious and sustained effort, and why I'm so encouraged by the excellent participation today, which is, again, a testimony to President Lee's leadership. More nations have come to the table, this time more than 50, not to talk, but to take action. As a consequence of this summit, more commitments will be made, more real, tangible steps. As a consequence, more of our citizens will be safer from the danger of nuclear terrorism.

I think we all understand that no one Nation can do this alone. This is one of those challenges in our interconnected world that can only be met when we work as an international community. And what we did in Washington, what we're now doing in Korea, becomes part of a larger global architecture designed to reduce the dangers of nuclear weapons and nuclear terrorism, but also allows us, then, to more safely and effectively pursue peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

So again, I want to thank President Lee for his leadership. I want to thank all the leaders who are participating here today. I know people's schedules are extraordinarily busy. We've come a long way in a very short time, and that should encourage us. And that should not lead us to complacency, however; it should fortify our will as we continue to deal with these issues.

I believe we can maintain that will and that focus. I believe we must, because the security of the world depends on the actions that we take.

So, President Lee, thank you again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:22 a.m. at the Coex Center.

## Remarks With President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and President Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev of Russia and an Exchange With Reporters at the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul

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*President Nazarbayev.* Well, probably all of you know that Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was one of the largest nuclear test sites in the world, together with Nevada. And about 500 nuclear tests have been carried out on this test site, 70 of them in the open air.

And Polygon was closed by my first decree as the President of Kazakhstan 20 years ago, and since then, together with Russia and the United States, we have been working to rehabilitate the territory around the Semipalatinsk test site. And since 2004, we're able to rehabilitate from radiation about 3,000 square kilometers of that Polygon. The total polluted area is about 40,000 square kilometers. And as a result of tests in the past, about 1.5 million people have been radiated.

And this is a very good example of close collaboration when all three countries also worked on getting rid of the military infrastructure on that Polygon. And you probably know that about 100—1,100 warheads have been deployed on military missiles on the territory of the Polygon in military launching shafts. And we closed that also, together with the help of Russian and American partners. And we are very grateful, the people of Kazakhstan are very grateful for that assistance, and we hope that we'll be able to work together in the future for a safer world on nuclear nonproliferation.

*President Obama.* Well, I'm going to just make a very brief statement here. We wanted to do this brief appearance to highlight one of the most significant examples of what we've been doing through this Nuclear Security Summit and what our three countries have been able to accomplish through some painstaking cooperation over the last several years.

As President of Kazakhstan indicated, this was a major site for nuclear operations during the cold war. There was a lot of loose nuclear material that was vulnerable to potential smuggling, to potential infiltration. And as a consequence of extraordinary cooperation between our three countries—that actually predates my administration, but was accelerated as a consequence of this Nuclear Security Summit—we've been able to effectively lock down and secure all this vulnerable material.

So we have been able to do this in part because of the outstanding leadership of President Nazarbayev and the people of Kazakhstan. We've also been able to do it because the United States and Russia over the last several years have shown ourselves to have a mutual interest in making sure that nuclear materials are secured and that they do not fall into the wrong hands.

And so this kind of multilateral cooperation is being duplicated as a consequence of this Nuclear Security Summit. And it gives you a specific example of the kind of progress that we're making. We're going to need to make more progress over the next several years. But I am confident that we can actually meet the goal that we set in the first Washington summit, which is in 4 years to have made extraordinary progress in making sure that loose nuclear material is not vulnerable to smuggling or to potential terrorist plots.

*President Medvedev.* Summits are held not only to conduct meetings, not only to shake hands, not only to declare good goals, but it is also held to demonstrate examples, concrete examples, of cooperation. I believe that this is precisely one of such concrete examples.