

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Emmanuel Macron of France and an Exchange With Reporters in Rome, Italy
October 29, 2021

President Macron. Hello, everybody.

Hello, everyone. I'm very pleased to have the chance to host President Biden at Villa Bonaparte. And thank you very much for coming.

I believe that for the two discussions in September and in October, this is an important meeting because for the—[*inaudible*—AUKUS issue, we very much launched a joint—some joint work and a strengthened cooperation and political—[*inaudible*].

The work undertaken over the past few weeks and what we will be talking about today, first and foremost, enables to clarify—and that was much needed—what is European sovereignty and European defense in itself—what it brings to global security. And together, we very much want to strengthen this cooperation, the strategic partnership between NATO and the European Union. We're both members of NATO, of course.

As to the importance of our discussion, we also want to underscore the importance of the cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and our willingness to cooperate in this region.

Thirdly, and in this respect, I very much would like to thank President Biden for the decisions he already took. It is about our coordination in the fight against terrorism and, in particular, the presence of France in the Sahel, together with many of our European and international partners. And, over the past few weeks, President Biden took some fundamental decisions, which benefited to our armies. And these are very much the—this is the embodiment of the support he expressed.

Then, we acknowledged some bilateral partnerships on armament exportations, the nuclear sector, the space industry, and, of course, the most advanced technology. And we want to have some extended cooperation on regulations, as well.

And then we will continue to work together on the main international issues—climate change, the digital sector, health—which will be on the agenda of this G-20. And we will also upgrade our discussions on arms control, which remains a key issue.

In a few words, this is what was at the heart of our work over the past few weeks, what we will be discussing today. These are very concrete decisions that are being taken to support some initiatives, some joint initiatives, joint actions on all of these matters. And, for me, this is very much the beginning of a process of trust, of confidence, which we're building together.

Thank you very much, President, for the work undertaken over the past few weeks and for your presence here today.

President Biden. Well, let me state the obvious: We have no older or no more loyal, no more decent ally than France. It's been—you've been with us from the beginning. You're the reason, in part, why we became an independent country.

As a matter of fact—we're trying to run this down, but my father always told me, and I have a little medallion—I've not followed up—that my name is "Robinette"—my middle name. The—some of our French relatives came, I'm told, with—over—with Lafayette and didn't go home.

And so, all kidding aside, there's a strong affection, a sense of loyalty and commitment to France. And there is no place in the world where we can't work together and cooperate.

France is value added no matter where it is, and that's how we view it. And so—you know, whether it's the Sahel, where we're working together and you're carrying the burden on dealing with terrorism in that part of the world, or our attitude toward what happens in other areas, from our partnership when we were in Afghanistan together to today.

And so I want to get something clear in front of all the press: We view you as incredibly valuable, serious partners. Article 5 means everything to us. You were there for us; we'll be there for you. There's a lot more work we can do together, guaranteed.

[At this point, President Macron spoke in English as follows.]

President Macron. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Biden. No, no—don't thank me. Thank you. Thank you.

France-U.S. Relations/U.S.-Australia Nuclear Submarine Agreement

Q. Is the relationship repaired?

President Biden. You're asking me? *[Laughter]*

Q. Yes.

President Biden. Well, the answer is: I think what happened was—to use an English phrase, what we did was "clumsy." It was not done with a lot of grace. I was under the impression certain things had happened that hadn't happened.

And—but I want to make it clear: France is an extremely, extremely valued partner—extremely—and a power in and of itself.

And so I don't know any reason that—we have the same values.

Cancellation of French-Australian Military Contract/France-U.S. Relations

Q. What did you think had happened that had not happened?

President Biden. I was under the impression that France had been informed long before that the deal was not going through. I, honest to God, did not know you had not been.

But having said that, look, there's too much we have done together, suffered together, celebrated together, and valued together for anything to really break this up.

And the world—look, we're at one of those inflection points in world history; things are changing, the pieces on the board are moving. And it happens every some 50 to 75 years. It's happening. And I want to be on the same board that France is on.

[Several reporters began speaking at once.]

Q. President Macron, what is your response to what President Biden just said?

Q. President Macron, are you satisfied that the relationship is repaired?

[President Macron spoke in English as follows.]

President Macron. I think we clarified a lot of things.

Q. Hold on. He's speaking.

President Macron. I think we clarified what we——

Q. Say that again, sir?

President Macron. We clarified together what we had to clarify. The U.S. was not the only party at stake, as the President just said. And now what's important is precisely to be sure that such a situation will not be possible for our future. Stronger coordination, stronger cooperation.

But, for me, what's important is that we built, during the past weeks, some very concrete actions in order to strengthen the partnership in the Sahel. This clarification between what European defense means and how this is completely compatible with NATO, what European sovereignty means and how it is important for global security. And this is, for me, an important clarification. Plus, we launched a series of cooperations, as I mentioned.

So, for me, what really matters now is what we will do together in the coming weeks, the coming months, the coming years.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:50 p.m. at Villa Bonaparte, the French Embassy to the Holy See (Vatican City). President Macron spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Rome, Italy; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : France, President Macron.

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