

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Remarks With President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission on the United States-European Union Agreement on Steel and Aluminum Trade in Rome, Italy

October 31, 2021

President Biden. Good afternoon, everyone. As you know, I'll be holding a press conference later today, and—when I look forward to taking your questions. But right now I'm not going to take any questions. I'm going to head back down to the meeting downstairs, but I will be able to take your questions later today.

Right now I'm here with the European Commission President von der Leyen, who's been a great partner, because the United States and the European Union have reached a major breakthrough that will address the existential threat of climate change while also protecting American jobs and American industry.

Together, the United States and the European Union are ushering in a new era of transatlantic cooperation that's going to benefit all of our people, both now and, I believe, in the years to come. And it's a testament to the power of our strong partnership and to what the United States can accomplish by working together with our friends.

Here's what this deal does: It immediately removes tariffs on European Union—on the European Union, on a range of U.S. products and lowers cost to American consumers. It ensures a strong and competitive U.S. steel industry for decades to come and creates good-paying union jobs at home and—and—demonstrates how by harnessing our diplomatic and economic power, we can reject the false idea that we can't grow our economy and support American workers while tackling the climate crisis; we can do all three of those things. We can and we must do both.

The American workers are a central part of the solution to the climate crisis. And I would argue—I've said before, or—that when I think climate, I think jobs; I think of good-paying jobs around the world. You know, I think it's possible for us to do both, as I said. And the workers are a central part of this solution.

Building on our close partnership on our shared values, the United States and the European Union have committed to negotiate a carbon-based arrangement on steel and aluminum trade. This—these arrangements will, one, lift up U.S. aluminum and steel, which is among the greatest steel in the world—that's somewhat prejudiced on my behalf; incentivize emission reductions in one of the most carbon-intense sectors of the global economy; restrict access to our markets for dirty steel from countries like China; and counter countries that dump steel in our markets, hammering our workers and harming them badly along with the industry and our environment.

Today is a testament of the power of American diplomacy and strong partnerships to deliver tangible benefits for American workers and the middle class families in America.

I thank Gina Raimondo and—our Secretary—and Ambassador Katherine Tai for their leadership to get this done. But they had a really first-rate person to work with to get it done. And I want to thank the European Commission President von der Leyen for her team and her partnership. She's been straightforward from the very beginning as we worked to come up with a creative solution that benefits all of our people.

Over the past 9 months, the United States and the European Union have come together to take on major global challenges by looking to all that unites us and the shared interests we have

both in Europe and the United States. We resolved the 17-year Boeing-Airbus dispute. And we've been close partners to the—to address COVID-19 and combat climate change.

As we move forward, we're going to continue together to update the rules of the road and the 21st-century economy, and prove to the world that democracies—democracies—are taking on hard problems and delivering sound solutions. And the European Union and the United States will continue to be the closest of friends and partners as we work together to solve the 21st-century challenges.

So I thank you again, President von der Leyen. And now I turn the podium over to you. Thank you.

President von der Leyen. Thanks a lot.

President Biden. I think I'm over there.

President von der Leyen. Thank you very much, Mr. President, dear Joe. Thank you very much.

And I'm also very pleased to announce that, Mr. President, you and I, we have today agreed to suspend the tariffs on steel and aluminum and to start the work on the new Global Sustainable Steel Arrangement. And this marks a milestone in the renewed EU-U.S. partnership. And it is our global first in our efforts to achieve the decarbonization of the global steel production and trade.

It is a big step forward in fighting climate change. The arrangement is, of course, open to all likeminded partners. Steel manufacturing is one of the highest carbon emission sources globally. And for steel consumption and trade to be sustainable, we must address the carbon intensity of the industry. We must also address problems of overcapacity.

And this is what the Global Sustainable Steel Arrangement is all about. We will work together with the United States to ensure the long-term viability of our industry and to encourage the production and trade of low-carbon steel.

This new global initiative will add a new powerful tool in our quest for sustainability. It will be a major step forward in achieving climate neutrality. And it will ensure a level playing field for our industries.

It is yet another key initiative for our renewed, forward-looking transatlantic agenda with the United States. Since the beginning of the year—as you said, Mr. President, dear Joe—we have restored trust and communication. We put to rest our disputes on aircraft subsidies. We set up our Trade and Technology Council. We created a vaccine partnership. We reached an agreement on global minimum tax. And now we have found a solution on EU-U.S. steel and aluminum trade.

I thank you, Mr. President, dear Joe, for your announcement that the United States will remove U.S. tariffs on EU steel and aluminum up to previous trade levels. This will alleviate a major part of the existing trade irritants. It will allow trade to—transatlantic trade in steel and aluminum between us to come back to the levels recorded before these tariffs were put in place. And following this U.S. decision, I am pleased to announce that the Commission will also propose to suspend the tariffs that we had introduced.

I'm also pleased to join President Biden in announcing the pausing of our dispute on this issue in the World Trade Organization.

And as you did, Mr. President, dear Joe, I would like to thank Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Katherine Tai, and Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis for their and their team's tireless efforts in the last month.

This is a major step forward in our renewed relationship, and many thanks for that. Looking forward to working more on this deal.

Thanks a lot.

President Biden. Thank you.

President von der Leyen. Thank you very much.

President Biden. Thank you, folks.

Q. How soon will it——

Q. Why did it take so long?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. at La Nuvola convention center.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Steel and aluminum trade, U.S.-European Union agreement in Rome, Italy; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : European Union, Commission President von der Leyen.

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