

Remarks Prior to a Virtual Meeting With Prime Minister Micheál Martin of Ireland

March 17, 2022

President Biden. Well, Taoiseach, I'm really deeply sorry you—for the inconvenience that we're having to meet virtually again this year, although I did, at a little distance, for 7½ minutes get to see you yesterday, but—and your beautiful wife. But—and especially after your flying all the way here to Washington and with a lot going on up in the Hill and the rest.

But just as we did last year, the tradition of this beautiful bowl, the tradition of these beautiful shamrocks I have here with me.

And we're meeting in a moment when demands on unity in the world are really accelerating. And we have to be united, and we certainly are. And—but I—Putin's brutality and what he's doing and his troops are doing in Ukraine is just inhumane.

And so, you know—as you know, your predecessor and you occasionally kid me about always quoting Irish poets. But—but Yeats had a great line in "Easter Sunday, 1919" [Easter, 1916].* He said, "All has changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty has been born." He was talking about his Ireland and what was going to come, which had turned out to be better than—than worse.

But all has changed. I think that your leadership on the global stage has really been noticeable and impressive. You're now a member of—temporarily for the—as you are a member of the Security Council. Your leadership on the global stage within the EU as well. And—and your condemnation of Putin's aggression and support of the—of the sanctions. And it's costing Ireland. It's costing Ireland. But as usual, you're basing it on principle and moral standing of the country.

And—but I also want to emphasize this administration's unequivocal support for the Good Friday accords—for the Good Friday Agreement. I've made that clear, as you probably heard, to the Prime Minister and others: I think it's—too much blood, sweat, and tears have been shed to get that done. And this is no time to change it.

And we have a full agenda to discuss, I know. And—but deepening our cooperation—Ireland and the United States—bilaterally and through the European Union is—is—and taking on climate change, looking at economic opportunities we both have, and combating COVID combined is something that we're going to work closely together on.

We have a lot to talk about, but I'm talking too much. Let me yield the floor to you, Taoiseach. And—and you have my best wishes for—I know you're looking good, feeling good, but I'm looking forward to you getting cleared as quickly as you can.

[At this point, Prime Minister Martin spoke via videoconference from the Blair House.]

Prime Minister Martin. Well, thank you very much indeed, President. And last year, we met virtually across the Atlantic. This year, we're meeting virtually across the road. *[Laughter]* So, we're getting closer.

* White House correction.

But I'm feeling good. And I think that reminds us of the importance of vaccines, and—because vaccines prevent severe illness. And it reminds us of that can—central message we give to people: Get vaccinated if you're not vaccinated.

But, of course, it is unfortunate, but it's no more than that.

And I share with you our horror at the barbaric attack on the civilians of Ukraine. And I want to take this opportunity to genuinely salute your leadership—it's firm, it's determined, it's strong, it's measured in the teeth of this crisis—and, particularly, your capacity to marshal like-minded democracies. The U.S., the European Union, the United Kingdom, the other—Canada, and other like-minded democracies are coming together to respond in an unprecedented way to this barbaric attack on the women and children of Ukraine.

Our thoughts are with them and all the young people who are dying because of this unjustifiable and immoral war on their people by the regime of Vladimir Putin.

And I think it's extremely important that we keep this unity of purpose over the coming while.

And Ireland stands ready to do everything we possibly can on the humanitarian front and in supporting the broadest and widest sanctions possible to keep the pressure on and to get this war ended, because there's simply too much suffering. And it's heartrending to see the appalling loss of life and also the terrible trauma on the children of Ukraine and their mothers as they flee this war zone.

And we're very seized by this in Ireland. And the response has been—has been great to behold, in terms of the people of Ireland who want to do everything they possibly can here.

May I also just thank you again, in respect of the Good Friday Agreement, your steadfast support, and that of Speaker Pelosi and our friends on the Hill, in giving a very clear message in respect of how important the Good Friday Agreement is in respect of—of stability and peace on the island of Ireland. And over the vast number of days, as I've been here, we've also witnessed once again that two-way, very robust economic relationship between the United States and—and Ireland. It's a two-way relationship. I met Irish companies yesterday who are creating 100,000 jobs in the U.S. now. And that's because of that partnership between Ireland, Europe, and the U.S.

So I look forward to discussing these issues in greater detail. But, again, to say that it's wonderful to meet with you. And we met in Glasgow recently. We had a good chinwag there, in respect of a number of issues. But, again, that—that also illustrated that partnership between Europe and the U.S. in terms of the existential crisis of our time—climate change. So, great to have this opportunity to meet with you, President.

President Biden. I want to say one thing while the press is here before they leave, and that is: What Ireland is doing now, what you are doing, taking in Ukrainian refugees, speaks so loudly about your principles. And it's amazing, and I want to publicly compliment you for it.

I think you've already brought in over 7,000 or so refugees from Ukraine, and you're prepared to do more. So you've—thank you. Thank you. I just want to make sure everybody knows that. Thank you.

Prime Minister Martin. It's our duty.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:22 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mary O'Shea, wife of Prime Minister Martin; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and former Prime Minister Leo Varadkar of Ireland.

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