

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation CEO Summit in San Francisco, California

November 16, 2023

Good morning. Please, have a seat. Welcome to San Francisco. This Moscone Center is about as big as my State. *[Laughter]*

This is a city of—synonymous with innovation and breaking barriers, where collaboration and coming together have always been key to unlocking our potential. It's a city that has been shaped by centuries of deep ties to the Asia-Pacific region and by contributions of people of Asian and Pacific Island heritage.

So San Francisco is a natural place to gather to innovate and collaborate for the 2023 APEC summit, the CEO Summit, and all the events we're—taking place this week.

And I want to talk to—I want to thank everyone who has made this week possible, especially those serving on APEC's Executive Secretariat, APEC Business Advisory Council, the National Center for APEC, and so many others.

Today, 21 APEC economies make up more than 60 percent—more than 60 percent—of the global GDP. We're almost half the global trade. The Asia-Pacific is projected to be the largest contributor to global growth over the next 30 years.

So the vision we pursue for the economic future of our region will rebound far beyond the Asian Pacific. The choices we make are going to matter—it's not hyperbole to suggest—for the entire world.

It's up to us to harness the dynamism of our economies and tap the entrepreneurial spirit of our people and unleash the potential—the unlimited potential—of our partnerships in order to realize a future that will benefit people not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but the whole world. And I mean that sincerely, people everywhere. A future where our prosperity is shared and is inclusive, where workers are empowered and their rights are respected, where our economies are sustainable and resilient, and the bridges that connect our people open a golden gate of opportunity to create lives of hope. Just lives of hope. Most people are just—just hope.

You know, it's been my approach here in the United States from the moment my administration took office. We're building an economy from the middle out and the bottom up. The trickle-down economy worked okay sometimes, but not a whole lot trickled down to my dad's kitchen table. But when the middle class does well, the poor have a chance, and the wealthy still do very well. Because what happens: The poor have a ladder up, the middle class and the wealthy still do well.

Folks, we're already seeing the results. The last quarter, the American economy grew 4.9 percent—the highest growth rate in 2 years. More people in the United States—*[applause]*—because of many of you sitting here, the CEOs—*[laughter]*—let's give credit where it's due—more people in the United States are in the workforce today than at any time in American history.

Our unemployment has been under 4 percent for 21 straight months. Inflation has come down by 65 percent. More to do. We now have the lowest inflation of any—the lowest inflation rate of any advanced economy in the world. And meanwhile, median household wealth has grown by 37 percent in real terms since before the pandemic.

I acknowledge there's a disconnect between the numbers and how people feel about their place in the world right now, and we can deal with the second part as well. We still have work to do, but our model for growing is delivering real results for all Americans—significant Black unemployment, Latino unemployment, et cetera.

The strength of our economy is driving growth and spurring investment throughout our entire region—and again, because of many of you sitting in front of me made those judgements. And it's drawing investments to the United States, especially from Asia-Pacific economies.

Since the start of my administration, companies from across the Asia-Pacific have invested over \$200 billion in the United States. These are historic investments, creating literally tens of thousands of good-paying jobs. We're—14 million created just since we came to office all across America in the industries that are going to shape the future of this globe: semiconductors, electric vehicles, batteries, critical materials, hydrogen hubs, and other critical and emerging technologies.

I've long said: It's never been a good bet to bet against the American people. Never. *[Applause]* No, I mean it. Think about it. It's never been a good bet, and we're proving it once more.

So my message to all of you here today is: Leaders of government and industry, you can count on the United States. We're delivering on our promises, and we're doubling down on our progress. We'll soon be your strong and steady partner as we continue working together to realize the Asia-Pacific region that is free and open, prosperous and secure, resilient and connected.

By the way, twice since I've been President, I've had the leaders of the Asian Pacific islands come to meet with me in the United States. They're all part of it.

I thought when I left the G-20 and Vietnam desperately wanted to see me and raise the relationship, it brought me back when I stood in front of that monument to John McCain—all my days growing up, I never thought that would ever occur.

Today I'd like to talk a little about the work we've done in the region to get there and how we're going to go about seeing this road forward.

I've said for a long time: The United States is a Pacific power. I had that brief discussion yesterday with President Xi. He asked why we so—he had asked me before; I reminded him why I—we are so engaged in the Pacific. It's because we're a Pacific nation. And because of us, there's been peace and security in the region, allowing you to grow. He didn't disagree. By the way, it was a very good, straightforward meeting.

We aren't going anywhere. For decades, America's enduring commitment to the region has been a springboard that's enabled growth—transformative growth—ensured the open flow of commerce, and lifted millions of people out of poverty.

Today, that relationship goes both ways. The United States remains vital to the future of the region, and the region is more vital than ever to the United States of America.

It's been my administration's outlook from day one, and we have clearly laid out our approach with our Indo-Pacific strategy. We are delivering across the board, including when it comes to our shared economic agenda.

The United States has deep ties with our fellow APEC economies. More than 60 percent of U.S. exports go to fellow APEC economies. Robust, two-way investment between the United States and APEC countries supports good jobs and new opportunities all across the region.

And American businesses—significantly represented here in this auditorium—are the largest source of foreign direct investment into APEC economies. In fact, if we take just the U.S.

companies represented here at this summit and look at their new investments [into; White House correction] APEC economies in the calendar year, it totaled more than \$50 billion so far.

Investments announced today from companies like Amazon, United, Delta, Microsoft to make sure our region is more inclusive and interconnected. Investments announced today from companies like Boeing, Apple, Flexport, and Pepsi cola—the Pepsi company, I should say—to make our economies greener and more sustainable. Investments today from companies like IBM, Organon, Visa—look, they make up—they make our region more resilient, and you all make it more secure.

Here in this world—this world-renowned hub of innovation, leading today—leading tech companies like Anthropic and—I'm going to mispronounce—I'm not going to even try. [Laughter] It's better not to try and not mispronounce than try and mispronounce. [Laughter]

The point is, small and medium-sized businesses and startups are getting into action as well. All of the announcements translate into real country—real outcomes that matter to people's lives. They're proof that a strong, dynamic American economy is an engine of growth—economic growth and innovation throughout the entire region.

And they're testament to the fact that American investment and American ingenuity are in high demand all across the region. Because when you do business with the United States and our companies, you know what you're getting: high standards, fair practices, protections for workers, world-class ideas and innovation, and a commitment to deal with the environment, finally. It's a quality guarantee.

Look, this is how we've been able to mobilize billions in investment, including major new announcements this morning through our Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment.

We also worked closely to deepen our bilateral economic cooperation with partners throughout the region, especially on the issues that will most impact our future economic success. For example, in September, when I traveled to Vietnam, as I mentioned earlier, to mark a historic new phase in our partnership of our countries, we committed to work together to strengthen the semiconductor supply chain.

With India, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Singapore, we've launched new initiatives to shape the technologies and standards that will transform the future. We've deepened economic partnership with the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, and others. We've renewed and elevated our engagement with critical regional bodies, including ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum.

And when we offered to host APEC 2 years ago, we committed to modernizing this institution to make it easier for us to work together as we take on the challenges of a new era. And there are many challenges. We're going to see more changes in the next 10 years than we've seen in the last 50 years.

That brings me back to the summit and where we go from here. The world is fundamentally different than it was 30 years ago at the first annual APEC leaders meeting at Blake Island in Washington State.

The questions we must answer today are not about how much we trade, but about how we build resilience, lift up working people, reduce carbon emissions, and set up our economies to succeed over the long run. How to deliver growth from the bottom up and the middle out so no one gets left behind.

And the idea behind this new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, a partnership among 14 diverse and dynamic nations, all committed to tackling urgent issues like pandemic response, vulnerable supply chains, climate change, natural disasters, which we've learned can gravely impact our economies.

We've announced the framework in May of 2022. And later today we're launching an important new tool to promote sustainable economic growth and create a race to the top, not the bottom.

They are tangible commitments negotiated in record time that are going to deliver meaningful outcomes—meaningful outcomes to make supply chains more resilient, facilitate clean energy transition, and fight corruption.

For example, our new supply chain agreement will allow us to better monitor for supply chain challenges before they become the kind of full-scale disruptions we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure we're better prepared to shift and adapt when disruptions do occur. And they will.

I know you all know better than I, our work is not yet done. This framework will be a platform for ongoing economic cooperation. And we will continue working to better facilitate high-standard trade that advances workers' rights through strong enforceable of labor standards.

And every step—at every step, we have upheld our commitment to unions. Each of the framework pillars includes strong, pro-labor outcomes that will benefit workers of all economies. It's critical to building a stronger, fairer, more resilient economy for families across the Indo-Pacific.

And, this week, my administration has launched our new Global Labor Strategy to ensure that workers' rights are the centerpiece of our economic strategy internationally, as well as domestically. That's a primary concern to me.

Last week in Illinois, I congratulated the UAW on their record contract with the Big Three U.S. auto companies. The contract is going to lead to thousands of new jobs, billions of dollars in plant investment to keep American auto industry strong and competitive.

And I urge any company investing in America to enter into partnerships with the most highly skilled, dedicated, and engaged workers anywhere in the world: American labor.

And, folks, I asked the Treasury Department to do a study: When labor does well, what does that do to people all over—nonlabor folks around the country? Everyone benefits.

And by the way, the reason many of you use labor is because they're the best workers in the world. Union. It's not like you show up one day and say, "I want to be an electrician." You show up one day, and they say, "You've got 5 years to practice." And then you get a card.

I'm also intent on responsibly managing the competition between the United States and the People's Republic of China. That's what we talked a little bit about yesterday—President Xi and I. That's what the world expects of us. And I promise you, that's what we're doing.

I met with Xi yesterday, leader to leader, to make sure there is no miscommunication between us. As always—and I've met with him more than any other world leader, because when I was Vice President, it was concluded that I should get to know him. It wasn't appropriate for the President of the United States to be meeting with the Vice President.

We've had, prior to this, 68 hours of private meetings just he and I, each with a simultaneous interpreter. Our discussions have always been candid and constructive. I again emphasized to President Xi that the United States does not seek conflict. And yesterday we announced resumption of military-to-military communication channels to reduce the risk of accidental miscalculation. And it exists.

This is not—as my generation would say back in the day, this is not all "Kumbaya." But it's straightforward. It's straightforward. We have real differences with Beijing when it comes to maintaining fair and level economic playing field and protecting your intellectual property. We're

going to continue to address them with smart policies and strong diplomacy. We've also taken targeted action to protect our vital national security interest.

But let me be clear: We are derisking and diversifying our economic relationship with the P.R.C., not decoupling. Not decoupling. We'll be firm in standing up for our values and our interests. And I was very straightforward, as he was with me yesterday.

At the same time, on critical global issues such as climate, AI, counternarcotics, where it makes sense to work together, we've committed to work together. We're going to continue our commitment to diplomacy to avoid surprises and prevent misunderstandings.

A stable relationship between the world's two largest economies is not merely good for those two economies, but for the world—a stable relationship. It's good for everyone.

Let me close with this. The leaders statement from that first Blake Island summit 30 years ago captured a shared commitment to, quote, "deepening the spirit of community," end of quote, among our economies. For all that has changed over the past three decades, we have to continue to summon the spirit of community to meet the challenges of today and to seize the enormous possibilities that exist.

My staff is tired of hearing me say this for the last I don't know how many years: The world is at an inflection point where the decisions we make today—this is not hyperbole—are going to shape the direction of the world for decades to come—for decades to come. Just think of AI.

That's particularly true in the Asian Pacific, where so much of the future of our world will be written. And I would argue, each of us has a play—has a part to play in writing that future together.

So today I challenge all of us to measure our successes not based on the bottom lines of our balance sheets but by the lives we lift up through our investments, the potential we unleash with our innovation, and the ability to continue to talk with one another.

Let's build a global economy where everyone has a chance to succeed and workers have a fair shot, a fair share of the value they create.

The United States is stepping up because of many of you in this room. We're not talking the talk; we're backing it up with commitments. And we're going to see us—you're going to see us follow through.

So I want to thank you again for joining us in San Francisco; thank you for your commitment to APEC and the future of the Pacific—Asia-Pacific region; and thank you for everything you've already done to make this summit a success. We can do more.

God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. at the George R. Moscone Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to former President Barack Obama.

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