

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy**  
*March 1, 2024*

*President Biden.* Well, Prime Minister Meloni, thank you for being here again. And I have to admit to you, as she walked in the door—we're good friends—and I played Ray Charles's "Georgia" as she walked in the door. Now, most of you don't know Ray Charles's "Georgia," but anyway.

Look, Italy and the United States are strong allies and really close friends. And as you said when we first met here in the Oval, Giorgia, that we have each other's backs. And we do. And you've demonstrated that from the moment you took office.

And we also have Ukraine's back. That's why I'm urging the House of Representatives to pass the legislation that allows us to, in a bipartisan way, continue to support Ukraine now. They need the security bill now. And the bill includes funding for Ukraine so we can help keep Putin from—his onslaught from succeeding in Ukraine.

And I want to thank you, Giorgia, for Italy's unwavering support for Ukraine and your leadership of the G-7 this year.

Today, also, we're going to discuss the Middle East and yesterday's tragic and alarming event in North Gaza trying to get humanitarian assistance in there. And the loss of life is heartbreaking. People are so desperate that innocent people got caught in a terrible war, unable to feed their families. And you saw the response when they tried to get aid in.

And we need to do more, and the United States will do more. In the coming days, we're going to join with our friends in Jordan and others in providing airdrops of additional food and supplies into Ukraine [Gaza; White House correction] and seek to continue to open up other avenues into Ukraine [Gaza; White House correction], including the possibility of a marine corridor to deliver large amounts of humanitarian assistance.

In addition to expanding deliveries by land, as I said, we're going to insist that Israel facilitate more trucks and more routes to get more and more people the help they need. No excuses. Because the truth is, aid flowing to Gaza is nowhere nearly enough now. It's nowhere nearly enough.

Innocent lives are on the line, and children's lives are on the line, and we won't stand by and let—until they—until we get more aid in there. Because we should be getting hundreds of trucks in, not just several.

And I won't stand by, we won't let up, and we're not going to pull out—trying to pull out every stop we can to get more assistance in.

So—and here's the deal: We've been working, and hopefully, we'll know shortly. And I know you've been informed: We're trying to work out a deal between Israel and Hamas on the hostages being returned and the immediate cease-fire in Gaza for at least the next 6 weeks and to allow the surge of aid through the entire Gaza Strip—not just the south, but the entire Gaza Strip.

And so, Giorgia, we have a lot to discuss today. Not—and then we'll talk about everything from China on. But I'm happy you're here and delighted to—that you came back. I know you're on your way to Canada, right?

*Prime Minister Meloni.* Yes.

*President Biden.* Well, good. The floor is yours, Madam.

*Prime Minister Meloni.* Well, I'm delighted to be here today in my capacity as the G-7 chair, and I look forward, Joe, to hosting you in Puglia next June for the leaders summit. I'm working on a concrete and substantial G-7 summit.

We intend, first and foremost, to reaffirm the rules-based international order, defending freedom and building peace for Ukraine. And, in doing this, I think we need to tackle the narrative that wants the West against the rest. So the dialogue—our dialogue within the G-7, within the Global South is essential.

The crisis in Middle East is of the utmost concern. We need to coordinate our actions in order to avoid an escalation. And, in this regard, we do fully support the U.S. mediation efforts.

The humanitarian crisis is our number-one priority. Italy is concentrating its contribution on this. Meanwhile, we are cooperating with all regional actors that must be part of any future outcome.

We should work together on concrete steps to guarantee the two-state perspective, which is the only long-term, sustainable solution.

And then the Houthis' attack on commercial vessels that endanger freedom of navigation in the Red Sea are unacceptable. EU naval Operation Aspides, this—as you know, is under Italian tactical command, is an important response to the disruption of transit through the Red Sea.

Then, building on Italy's role in the Mediterranean, the G-7 will pay special attention also to the African Continent. We've been discussing it for—many times. But I think we have to remember that Africa is not a poor continent; it is, at the contrary, incredibly rich in human and material resources. But it has been neglected and exploited with a predatory approach for a long time. And I want to reverse this approach, together with you, which is also a root cause of the migration crisis.

We need to support Africa's development on an equal basis and put an end to illegal migration while fighting human trafficking. Human trafficking has become the most financially rewarding crime globally, and we cannot accept it no—any longer. For this reason, I came here today also with a proposal to launch a global alliance against human traffickers.

The G-7 will discuss artificial intelligence as well. AI is a means. It can be a good or a bad one; it depends on our capacity to govern it, to tackle the risks and the impact it can have, for example, on the labor market. We want to develop AI, but, also, we want to be certain that it remains human centered.

And then, last but not least, I came here to boost our strategic cooperation. And our relations are enriched by the presence of more than 20 million Italian Americans.

During our last meeting here in Washington, we said we wanted to improve our bilateral cooperation and our trade, and we did it. For, in 2023, our bilateral trade reached the highest amount ever with \$102 billion of exchange.

So I think we did a good job, but I also think that we can do even better. And I hope this will be our mutual goal for this year.

Thank you, Joe.

*President Biden.* Well, it is. And I tried to help; I married an Italian American. *[Laughter]*

So thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to H.R. 815.

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