

Remarks With President William Ruto of Kenya in a Meeting With Business Leaders

May 22, 2024

President Biden. Hello, everyone. It's great to be here. I—Secretary Raimondo, thank you for the update you gave us. And I want to thank all the folks around this table for prioritizing a partnership that I think is really, really important and will deliver dividends for both our countries.

And finally, Mr. President, I can't thank you—think of a better way to kick off this visit. When I visited Nairobi as Vice President, I said that the true strength of Kenya was its people and the students, workers, founders, activists, innovators, entrepreneurs, and so many people like you who really do depend on democracy and support democracy.

President Ruto. Thank you.

President Biden. And today, as we honor 60 years of ties between our countries, it's clear that our people are the true strength of this partnership and a partnership that's working well. Nowhere is it more important than in the realm of innovation. That's why we have so many business leaders around this table.

From Silicon Valley to Silicon Savannah—[laughter]—our people have brought us forward, and they've pioneered new technologies that are transforming millions of lives—I mean, literally, millions of lives, and it's going to go beyond that. And we've invested in new industries that have generated billions of dollars economically, and they've created new opportunities that have lifted up our countries across both our continents.

And our people and our innovators have also brought together—we've—are all excited about this. I mean, I've not seen my team so excited about a visit in a long time. And I think it's all because of the American companies that are here, but—oh, I'm only kidding. [Laughter]

As—and, President, as you and I discussed—and we'll discuss tomorrow—we're launching a new era of technology—technological cooperation between Kenya and America, including new exchanges and investments in key fields of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and semiconductors. And this progress is thanks in large part to the leaders around this table.

So my message is really straightforward and simple. Thank you and thank you, and keep it up. We're going to see more technological change in the next 10 years—I've been saying this for a long time, and I mean it—than we've seen in the last 50 years.

And we need your help to seize this moment. We really do. And we need your—we need you to help us find opportunities to bring the public and private sectors together. And we need you to help us strengthen the supply chains and industries of the future, including clean energy and e-commerce as well. And we need you to keep investing in the diversity of our democracies, which will make this innovation possible.

So, in return, I promise we'll prioritize technological partnerships between our countries. And as Ambassador Whitman—and by the way, she's smarter than I am. [Laughter] She's handling everything.

I was amazed. We had a meeting earlier. I'm going to—this is ad-libbing—but she sat there, and she had more statistical data to spout off without any piece of paper in her hand. It amazed me. I don't know. It reminded me of my sister. [Laughter]

But—[laughter]—but look, I think we really can seize the moment. In return, I think, as I said, we're going to prioritize the technological partnership between our countries and—and the former CEO—who was also a former CEO, is going to make sure that happens.

And Vice President Harris is already building a new public-private partnership to increase investments in innovation.

And because our cooperation matters, it's not just for our own people, but for people around the world. If this relationship continues to grow, as it is, I think it benefits not only the United States and Kenya, but will lead and will have positive benefits literally around the world.

So thank you again for being here. And look forward to working with you, and you know, we'll keep investing in the true strengths of our nations, our people, and—in the years ahead.

And with that, Mr. President, I'm going to turn it over to you. You've got it.

President Ruto. Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And, on behalf of my delegation and I, to, in a very special way, thank you for extending an invitation to me to undertake this state visit.

I bring you very warm greetings from the people of Kenya and our brothers and sisters from across the continent. And I undertake this state visit from the background of 60 years of solid friendship between the United States and Kenya.

And specifically, Mr. President, on the subject we are driving today here on the digital space, on technology, and the whole space around investment, trade, and the relationship that we have managed to build over the years to confirm to you that Kenya is a young tech country.

And as you have said correctly, we have spent a lot of time working with our technology companies, our technology investors. We've had twinning relationships between Silicon Savannah in Kenya and Silicon Valley in the U.S.

And this meeting is about what we can do together around digital jobs, business-process outsourcing, research and development. And, Mr. President, one very important aspect is the CHIPS Act, which, hopefully, we will be able to have a conversation about in the coming days.

And, Your Excellency, it speaks to the wealth of opportunity that exists between Kenya and the United States. Our young population—talented, educated, innovative—and American technology that is cutting edge and investment capital and investors that are hungry for opportunities not just in Kenya, but in our continent is a perfect match for this moment.

I think we have a historic moment to explore investment opportunities between Kenya and the United States.

And, Mr. President, under your leadership, we believe that as we celebrate these 60 years of relationship between our two countries, we also celebrate the opportunities that come with a friendship that exists between our two countries.

And, as you have said correctly, the space around artificial intelligence, space around cybersecurity, and investments that come with it, we are expanding our footprint in the digital space. We are rolling out 100,000 kilometers of fiber optic in Kenya and connecting every ward and every village to fiber by backbone to make sure that e-commerce, digital jobs, and digital learning, we can access to every child in Kenya.

And we are very proud that we are going to work with American companies. Last month, Secretary Raimondo was in Kenya. And we agreed with her on the kind of investments, the level of investment, the type of investment that needs to be fashioned between our two sides. And my

being here today is a confirmation that we are moving from ideas into action and from opportunities into investments.

And hopefully, we will be able to sign off some of those investments. We have semiconductor companies here from Kenya. We have large corporates—fintech corporates in Kenya, one of them M-PESA. And we are going to be discussing the opportunities in that space.

And I look forward, Mr. President, to consummating some of the discussions around this table into concrete investments going into the future.

President Biden. Looking forward to it.

Thank you, all.

Q. Mr. President, do you welcome Netanyahu addressing Congress?

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 23.

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