

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President William Ruto of Kenya
May 23, 2024

President Biden. Well, welcome to the White House. The White House never looked this good.

There is a bright light in the White House tonight with our guests. They have been impressive and accommodating. And you know, Jill and I are honored to have you here and representing, including many members of the African diaspora.

One just left: Barack. The—[laughter]. He's been very gracious. He met the President this morning, and he was just here a little while ago.

And what I'd like to do—President Ruto, we share a strong respect for the history that connects us together. You know, as you know, President Carter was the first President to host leaders of Kenya at an official breakfast—I mean, excuse me, at a dinner.

And in his own dinner toast, he said—your counterpart said that—he called the two nations "neighbors." And like neighbors—I've got to get his quote exactly right. And like neighbors, he said, not—do not share borders, but share beliefs. We share the belief in freedom, democracy, dignity, and equality.

And for ourselves and for everyone else, we want to share that with everyone here. The fact is, these are shared beliefs that give both our nations strength.

And—so let me end with a toast—an Irish toast, if you don't mind an Irish toast: May the road rise to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warmly on your face, and may the rains fall softly on your fields. Until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

To Kenya. To our guests. Cheers.

[At this point, President Biden offered a toast.]

Enjoy your dinner.

President Ruto. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I thank you, Mr. President, very sincerely for your invitation for me to undertake this state visit. The welcome we have received, the hospitality of the American people have been exceptional.

The openness, good will, authenticity, and generosity of the American people greatly enhances our appreciation of your achievements and in keeping this Nation as a thriving global powerhouse, and it magnifies our experience of the beauty and the greatness of this land.

We are proud of the robust social, economic, security, technological, and the people-to-people ties between our two nations and the shared values which form a very strong bond of friendship between us.

We gather here on behalf of the people of our nations to further strengthen the friendship, solidarity, and mutual endeavor that have united us for many decades. This partnership has kept us strong, effective, and dynamic in our pursuit of freedom, equality, and prosperity.

As we do so, we proudly take a firm stand, shoulder to shoulder, for democracy in a world where troubles have shaken the faith of many; for security as the engine for freedom and as

guarantor for all aspirations of trust, enterprise, and innovation; and for prosperity as the ultimate good that our nations and our people so richly deserve.

I am encouraged by our achievements over the past 60 years, which have given people hope, saved lives, increased wealth and investment, and made the world more integrated and secure.

What we have accomplished during my visit is nothing short of phenomenal. We can now face a complex and challenging future with greater confidence in the knowledge that our collective commitment to our shared values stand us in good stead and that as long as we hold our ground and stay the course, we will deliver to our people a world in which it is safe to dream, to work, and to prosper.

Madam First Lady, you have been so kind. We have shared your home for days and have been treated with touching and manifest generosity. This is a warm, wonderful, beautiful place, and we are blessed to have been privileged to visit.

It is now my honor to ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to raise your glasses and join me in a toast to the continued well-being and long life of President Joe Biden and of First Lady Jill, to the continued security and prosperity of the people of the United States, and to the enduring bonds of friendship, partnership, and solidarity between Kenya and the United States.

To the President.

[President Ruto offered a toast.]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:40 p.m. on the South Lawn of the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Barack Obama. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 24.

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