

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

## **Remarks at a United Nations General Assembly Leaders' Reception in New York City**

*September 25, 2024*

*The First Lady.* Good evening.

Aren't all of our U.S. military musicians spectacular? Thank you for all that you—for joining us this evening. It's great to be with so many friends here.

For Joe, diplomacy is personal. It's why, for more than 50 years, he's created deep personal bonds with world leaders. He shows up for our allies and our partners. He listens and is always eager to debate complex international issues to find common ground.

Serving as First Lady has been—of the United States is the honor of my life. This is our—[*applause*]. Thank you.

This is our United Nations—our final United Nations General Assembly as President and First Lady. So tonight I want to take this moment to celebrate Joe and honor the relationships he's built with all of you—[*applause*—to honor these relationships with all of you to shape a brighter future for people around the world.

Please join me in welcoming my husband, President Joe Biden.

*The President.* [*Laughter*] That was worth the trip. [*Laughter*]

Well, welcome everyone. I'm delighted to see you all. You know, my fellow leaders and friends we've honored here, it's an honor to welcome you here tonight.

I should start off by saying we owe a special thanks tonight to Mayor Bloomberg. He's not the mayor right now, but he's still the mayor. [*Laughter*] Mr. Mayor, thank you for all you've done.

I want to begin by quoting someone who I wish was here tonight: my mom, Catherine Eugenia Finnegan Biden. Growing up, my mom had an expression. She had a lot of expressions. She had a backbone like a ramrod. But my mom, she used to say, "Joey, remember, never bow, never bend, never yield, and never give up."

Folks, as I said yesterday at the United Nations, I recognize the challenges the world faces: Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Haiti, war, hunger, poverty, climate change. But my message to you tonight is this: We must never, ever, ever bow, bend, yield, or give up. And most importantly, we must never lose faith—lose faith in our abilities to do so much.

I was first elected to the United States Senate when I was 29 years old, 280 years ago. [*Laughter*] Since then, I've seen the impossible become—the impossible become reality, for real. I've seen the Berlin Wall come down. I've seen Poland leave the—[*inaudible*]—I shouldn't go on, I guess. But I've seen apartheid end. I've seen humanity pull together to prevent a nuclear war. I've seen war criminals and dictators face justice and accountability for human rights violations. And I've seen countries in the Middle East make peace. We must always remember.

In America, I was—[*inaudible*]—I spent a lot of time with Xi of China, and we were in the Tibetan Plateau, and it was one of my 90-some hours alone with him. And he looked at me; he said, "Can you define America for me?" This is an absolutely true story. He said, "Can you define America for me?" I said, "Yes, in one word: possibilities—possibilities." We believe anything is possible. No, I really mean it. Remember, nothing is impossible.

And, folks, look, in our time, we turn the page on the—on a whole range of issues. We turned the page. Nothing is impossible, as I said, but we turned the page on the worst pandemic in a century. We defended Ukraine as a tyrant threatened to wipe it off the map. We made the largest investment in history to fight climate change, the existential threat to humanity.

And, folks, time and again—and I mean this sincerely—time and again, our Nation and our world found a way forward. But make no mistake: It didn't happen by accident. Nothing was inevitable. It took people like all of you assembled here tonight refusing to give up, rejecting the forces that pull us apart, believing that change is possible, and fighting to make it so every single day. That's what you in this room assembled have done.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's our change. Together, we can broker deals, end wars and suffering. We can stop the spread of disease and dangerous weapons alike. We can make AI empower people, not shackle them. We can cut our emissions and achieve our climate ambitions. We can leave our children, literally, a better world.

That's our obligation, and we can. We can do this.

I can say to you—and I mean this sincerely—I've never more optimistic in my life because of all of you, and I mean it from the bottom of my heart.

So thank you, thank you, thank you. Keep it up.

And every time I'd walk out of my grandpop's house up in Scranton, he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith." My grandmother would go, "No, Joey, spread it." Spread it. Spread it. Spread it.

Folks, remember, nothing is beyond our capacity when we work together. Nothing at all.

So, thank you, thank you, thank you for all you're doing. I appreciate it very, very much.

It's an honor to be with you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:50 p.m. in the Carroll and Milton Petrie European Sculpture Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; President Xi Jinping of China; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : United Nations General Assembly leaders reception in New York City.

*Locations:* New York City.

*Names:* Biden, Jill T.; Bloomberg, Michael R.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* China, President; Climate change; COVID-19 pandemic; New York, President's visit; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; United Nations General Assembly.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202400822.