

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks to Members of the Press With Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany in Berlin, Germany
October 18, 2024

Chancellor Scholz. Mr. President.

Dear Joe, it is my great pleasure to welcome you here to the Chancellery in Berlin as a friend of Europe, as a friend of Germany, and, above all, as my friend. Welcome.

[At this point, Chancellor Scholz spoke in German, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

Dear Joe, our cooperation the past 3 years was extraordinarily close and full of trust. I know that this is not something that we can take for granted, even among good partners as the U.S. and Germany have been for many, many decades.

I would like to take this opportunity here and today to express my gratitude and say thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

The times in which we're living are extremely challenging indeed. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, war has returned back to Europe. The European security order has been shaken in its very foundations.

It is all the more important that we reacted decisively and stood closely together and unequivocally condemned this blatant violation of international law and stand by our Ukrainian friends' side.

It is thanks to your leadership that Putin's plans failed, that Ukraine wasn't overrun within a few days. But it is thanks to the bravery of Ukrainian armed forces and the support of many states—above all, the United States and Germany—Ukraine stands up to imperialist Russia since more than 2½ years.

Together, we commit to Ukraine's sovereignty and integrity so that Russia cannot subjugate Ukraine by force. We stand by Ukraine's side as long as it is necessary. Putin has miscalculated. He cannot sit and ride out this war.

Together, therefore, we decided, with our G-7 partners, to support Ukraine with a loan package to the tune of 50 billion U.S. dollar by the end of this year.

Together, we commit to a strong NATO alliance which defends every square inch of its territory. Every member of our alliance can rely on that. And together, we commit to the fundamental principles of the free world as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. President, from the very beginning of the war, we closely coordinated ourselves across the Atlantic. It has made us strong. It has made the alliance strong, and we will continue to do that.

Our position is clear. We continue to support Ukraine as strongly as possible. At the same time, we are making sure that NATO does not become a party to this war so that this war does not lead to an even bigger catastrophe. We are very much aware of this responsibility, and no one can shoulder this responsibility for us.

Of course, the situation in the Middle East is also on our agenda. The barbaric terrorist attacks of Hamas on Israel of October 7 has massively destabilized the situation.

Israel has the right to defend itself. It is important to me to say this very clearly. We stand by Israel's side, and we fully agree that it is now more important than ever before to prevent further escalation and a regional conflagration.

With the death of Hamas leader Sinwar, who was responsible for the horrific terrorist attacks, we hopefully now see a tangible prospect of a cease-fire in Gaza, an agreement that leads to the release of hostages held by Hamas.

Joe, your efforts—we always supported your efforts in this conflict, and we will continue to do so. Our common objective remains a credible political process towards a two-state solution, and we will continue to be fully committed to that.

In Lebanon, we're working towards a situation that the conflict leads to a diplomatic process as soon as possible. It is clear, the people in northern Israel have to be able to live free of fear and insecurity. Lebanon deserves a future in self-determination, stability, and security.

Originally, your visit was scheduled to take place last Friday and had to be postponed due to the severe hurricanes. And I'm delighted that you were able to come today. It affords us the opportunity to talk about the challenging global situation in great detail bilaterally, but also together with the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and the British Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, who will join us later.

In my view, we need such talks at highest levels to make progress in the most important, pressing issues.

[Chancellor Scholz concluded in English as follows.]

Dear Joe, thanks again for taking the time for this visit. It is a strong signal of our transatlantic unity and of our friendship.

Please.

President Biden. Well, Chancellor—Olaf, it's great to see you again, and I do apologize for having to cancel first time around, but we did have a crisis in our southeastern border with hurricanes and tornadoes. But we're here because Germany is—Germany is—my country's closest and most important of allies.

When Putin launched his brutal invasion in Ukraine, you reminded us all why this alliance is so essential. Under your leadership, Chancellor, Germany rose to meet the moment. You showed the wisdom to recognize that this war marked a turning point in the history, an assault on the very principles that have protected peace and security in Europe for more than 75 years.

And then you summoned the resolve to act, remaking Germany's foreign policy to reckon new realities—with new realities to stand strong and steadfast with Ukraine.

America and Germany are the two largest supporters of Ukraine in its fight for survival as a free and independent nation. As Ukraine faces a tough winter, we must—we must—sustain our resolve, our effort, and our support.

And I know the cost is heavy, but make no mistake, it pales in comparison to the cost of living in the world where aggression prevails, where large states attack and bully smaller ones simply because they can.

Today the Chancellor and I are going to discuss ongoing efforts to surge support to Ukraine's military; to shore up Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure, which is under constant assault and bombardment from Russia; and to help Ukraine recover by unlocking the value of frozen Russian assets.

I also want to recognize Germany's decision to spend 2 percent of your gross domestic product on defense. Please keep it up, because it matters.

Our alliance with Germany extends far beyond Ukraine and Europe. It's global. Today the Chancellor and I will discuss regional security in the Middle East, including the ongoing domestic efforts regarding Lebanon and Gaza.

The death of the leader of Hamas represents a moment of justice. He had the blood of Americans and Israelis, Palestinians and Germans, and so many others on his hands.

I told the Prime Minister of Israel yesterday: Let's also make this moment an opportunity to seek a path to peace, a better future in Gaza without Hamas. And I look forward to discussing Iran.

Olaf and I spoke the morning after Iran launched 200 ballistic missiles at Israel earlier this month. With our G-7 counterparts, we agreed to coordinate our response through sanctions and other measures, and that is what we have done.

I'm grateful for Germany's cooperation holding Iran accountable for destabilizing policies, including providing missiles and drones to Russia to use against Ukraine.

And just this week, the European Union followed Germany, the U.K., and France in sanctioning Iran's leading airlines. This followed our own oil sanctions. This coordination is going to have to continue.

I also want to thank Germany for standing firm against a vicious surge of anti-Semitism, hatred, and extremism we're witnessing today, some of it fueled by foreign misinformation.

As domestic—as democratic allies, we have to remain ever vigilant against what I call the "old ghosts in new garments," ancient hatreds resurfacing. Our charge is to make sure that the forces holding our societies together and binding us in the common cause of human dignity and freedom remain stronger—stronger—than the forces seeking to pull us apart.

And finally, Chancellor, I deeply appreciate your partnership and the many times you've forsaken the easy choice to make the right choice. Your act of statesmanship and friendship has made possible the safe return and unjustly detained Americans and Germans and the reunion of brave Russian dissidents to their families. I want to thank you, thank you, thank you.

I value our conversations, and I look forward to them—this one is—particularly. And I want to—I really mean it—I want to thank you for your friendship, not only personally, but I don't see how we maintain stability in Europe and around the world without a tight German-U.S. relationship. And you're the leader to do it.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President, when will the—when will NATO proceed—when will Ukraine receive NATO membership, sir?

Q. Who supported—[inaudible]—plan, Mr. President?

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12:40 p.m. at the German Chancellery. In his remarks, he referred to Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, who was killed in an Israeli military operation in Gaza, Palestinian Territories, on October 17; and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Chancellor Scholz referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences, Germany, Chancellor Scholz; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Germany, Chancellor Scholz.

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