

all work together for greater transparency so that taxpayers receive every dollar they're due from the extraction of natural resources.

So these are just some of the steps that we're taking. And today is just the beginning of a partnership that will only grow, as Secretary Clinton leads our effort on behalf of the United States, as these nearly 40 nations develop their own commitments, as we share and learn from each other and build the next generation of tools to empower our citizens and serve them better.

So that's the purpose of open government. And I believe that's the essence of democracy. That's the commitment to which we're committing ourselves here today. And I thank all of you for joining us as we meet this challenge together.

I want to thank you very much for your participation. And with that, I would like to turn over the chair to my cochair, President Rousseff.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

## Remarks at the Closing of an Open Government Partnership Event in New York City *September 20, 2011*

Well, thank you, Rakesh, for that wonderful testimony. Thank you all to the leaders who shared their action plans and the steps that they're taking and your willingness to participate in this initiative. We are extraordinarily grateful.

As I said earlier, today is just the beginning of this partnership. Those who are the founding members have to go back home and work to meet the commitments that we've made and to be held accountable. The 38 nations joining us today will be working on their own action plans. And we look forward to our next meeting in Brazil next year, when our partnership welcomes more countries who share our commitment to open government.

I want to thank all the participants. I particularly want to thank the civil society organizations that are doing extraordinary work.

I very much appreciated the statement by the representative from the United Kingdom that this is not always comfortable, if done right, because governments are human institutions, which means that even with the best of

intentions we are flawed and we make mistakes, and it's a natural human impulse to try to cover up mistakes and to resist the kind of openness that's been discussed here today.

But as Rakesh, I think, said so well, the more open we are, the more willing we are to hear constructive criticism, the more effective we can be. And ultimately, governments are here to serve the people, not to serve those in power.

And so I'm very grateful for all of you for participating. Thank you for embracing this challenge to make sure our governments are as open and accountable and as effective as they can be so that we can meet the aspirations of all our citizens.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rakesh Rajani, head, Twaveza; and Francis Maude, chairman, Open Government Partnership.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City *September 20, 2011*

*President Obama.* Well, I want to welcome Prime Minister Erdogan and his delegation to

New York City and to the United States. Turkey is a NATO ally, a great friend and partner

on a whole host of issues. I want to thank him for all the work that we've done together: the cooperation in Afghanistan; the work that we most recently did in trying to provide freedom for Libya; and in addition, the NATO obligations that both of us carry out together, most recently symbolized by the agreement of Turkey to host a missile defense radar.

Prime Minister Erdogan has shown great leadership on a range of issues and promoting democracy. And we are very grateful to him for the work that we've done together.

I do want to stress my deepest condolences for the loss of life through the explosion that took place in Ankara. And I understand that the investigation is ongoing, but I think that this reminds us that terrorism exists in many parts of the world and that Turkey and the United States are going to be strong partners in preventing terrorism. And we look forward to working with you on these issues.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your service, and thank you for your friendship.

*Prime Minister Erdogan.* Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm very pleased that we have this occasion to meet during this week as we meet here for the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations.

And as you have described the relationship between Turkey and the United States, we have a model partnership. And this is a process which is ongoing in which we have taken some very important steps and we will continue to take some important steps. One of those issues that is very common to both of us is fighting against terrorism and fighting against terrorism based on a common platform. We have, unfortunately, lost three citizens today as a result of the blast in Ankara, but in the later hours there was another attack in Siirt, in a city in the eastern part of Turkey, where four young girls

were killed as a result of an attack in a car, and these were civilian citizens. And so these are events which give us great sadness. And this is an area which we have to work on.

As for whether or not we can completely eradicate terrorism, I'm not very optimistic in thinking that perhaps we can completely eradicate it. But I think that we have a lot of room to work together to make sure that we minimize terrorism to the lowest possible extent. And to do that we have to keep working together on many areas of this effort, work together in planning, use technology so that we can continue to take joint steps in trying to fight against terrorism. And those are some of the issues that we all will talk about.

I have also recently visited Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, and we have also worked together in those countries, and Afghanistan as well, and also in Iraq. So these are many of the areas where we will continue to talk to each other so that Turkey and the United States continue with this model partnership to move into a better future.

And let me take this opportunity to—also to thank you for your hospitality today.

*President Obama.* Thank you very much, everybody.

#### *Middle East*

*Q.* [Inaudible]

*Q.* Was there any discussion of the Palestinian—[inaudible]?

*President Obama.* We're starting the meeting now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

## Statement on the Repeal of the United States Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy

*September 20, 2011*

Today the discriminatory law known as "don't ask, don't tell" is finally and formally re-

pealed. As of today, patriotic Americans in uniform will no longer have to lie about who they