

implementing the initiative for countering improvised explosive devices; in the GCTF, on strengthening the institutions of criminal justice and on the objective of countering violent extremism; and in APEC, on enhancing the security and stability of critical infrastructure. Our countries are cooperating closely as founders and co-chairs of the Global Initiative to Counter Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), which already counts 85 participant states.

The joint efforts of the United States and Russia, including in the context of the Counterterrorism Working Group of the Bilateral Presidential Commission, are focused on preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of terrorists, and halting the funding of terrorist activities, the recruitment and training of those who commit terrorist acts, and the actions of lone terrorists.

Another cause of serious concern is the terrorists' use of contemporary information and communication technologies for staying in touch, collecting information, spreading their

ideology, attracting new adherents and financial resources, planning, organizing, and carrying out terrorist acts. With due respect for the freedom to express opinions, as provided for in international law, we intend to use all legal means to counter the abuse of the Internet for terrorist or other criminal purposes.

The United States and Russia intend to continue to develop their counterterrorism partnership with the business community, including in the field of protecting the tourist sector. Providing security for major sporting and public events, including the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, is to be an important area of interaction.

We reiterate our firm resolve to join in countering terrorism in accordance with national laws and the fundamental principles of international law, including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia on a New Field of Cooperation in Confidence Building *June 17, 2013*

We, the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation, recognize the unprecedented progress in the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), the new capacity they create for the economies and societies of our countries, and the increasing interdependence of the modern world.

We recognize that threats to or in the use of ICTs include political-military and criminal threats, as well as threats of a terrorist nature, and are some of the most serious national and international security challenges we face in the 21st Century. We affirm the importance of cooperation between the United States of America and the Russian Federation for the purpose of enhancing bilateral understanding in this area. We view this cooperation as essential to safeguarding the security of our countries, and to achieving security and reliability in the use

of ICTs that are essential to innovation and global interoperability.

Demonstrating our commitment to promoting international peace and security, today we affirm the completion of landmark steps designed to strengthen relations, increase transparency, and build confidence between our two nations:

- To create a mechanism for information sharing in order to better protect critical information systems, we have established a communication channel and information sharing arrangements between our computer emergency response teams;
- To facilitate the exchange of urgent communications that can reduce the risk of misperception, escalation and conflict, we have authorized the use of the direct communications link between our Nu-

clear Risk Reduction Centers for this purpose;

- Finally, we have directed officials in the White House and the Kremlin to establish a direct communication link between high-level officials to manage potentially dangerous situations arising from events that may carry security threats to or in the use of ICTs.

We have decided to create (in the framework of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission) a bilateral working group on issues of threats to or in the use of ICTs in the context of international security that is to meet on a regular basis to consult on issues of mutual interest and concern. This working group is to assess emerging threats, elaborate, propose and coordinate concrete joint measures to ad-

dress such threats as well as strengthen confidence. This group should be created within the next month and should immediately start its practical activities.

These steps are necessary in order to meet our national and broader international interests. They are important practical measures which can help to further the advancement of norms of peaceful and just interstate conduct with respect to the use of ICTs. To further deepen our relationship, relevant agencies of our countries plan to continue their regular dialogue and to identify additional areas for mutually-beneficial cooperation in combating threats to or in the use of ICTs.

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Remarks Following a Meeting With President François Hollande of France in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland June 18, 2013

President Obama. Well, I just had an excellent conversation with President Hollande and his delegation. At the end of G-8, it's very important and appropriate that the United States meet with our oldest ally, France. And obviously, we coordinate on a whole range of international issues. And the bilateral relationship is as strong as ever.

The topics that we covered were wide ranging. Today we spent some time discussing the transition in Afghanistan, where there have been some important developments. Afghan forces are now in the lead in Afghanistan, fulfilling the milestone that we agreed to at the NATO summit in Chicago.

We also discussed Qatar's announcement that an office is opening in Doha for the purposes of negotiations between Afghans so that we have a parallel political track that matches up with the transition that's taking place militarily in Afghanistan and the elections that will be coming up next year. Both President Hollande and I agree that an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process is the best way to end the violence and to ensure lasting stability

in Afghanistan and the region. And so this is an important first step towards reconciliation. Although it's a very early step—we anticipate there will be a lot of bumps in the road—but the fact that the parties have an opportunity to talk and discuss Afghan—the Afghanistan's future I think is very important.

The one thing that we do believe is that any insurgent group, including the Taliban, is going to need to accept an Afghan Constitution that renounces ties with Al Qaida, ends violence, and is committed to the protection of women and minorities in the country.

And over the last several months, I've discussed this issue frequently with President Karzai and also the Amir of Qatar. So I want to publicly commend President Karzai for taking this courageous step and his determination to end the conflict and build a future of security and peace and prosperity for the Afghan people. And I know that President Hollande shares my view on this.

We're going to continue to support these efforts in partnership with the Afghan Government. I want to repeat: We don't anticipate this