

Joint Statement by the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom
September 6, 2013

The Leaders and Representatives of Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America made the following statement on the margins of the Group of 20 Nations Leader's Meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russia:

The international norm against the use of chemical weapons is longstanding and universal. The use of chemical weapons anywhere diminishes the security of people everywhere. Left unchallenged, it increases the risk of further use and proliferation of these weapons.

We condemn in the strongest terms the horrific chemical weapons attack in the suburbs of Damascus on August 21st that claimed the lives of so many men, women, and children. The evidence clearly points to the Syrian government being responsible for the attack, which is part of a pattern of chemical weapons use by the regime.

We call for a strong international response to this grave violation of the world's rules and conscience that will send a clear message that this kind of atrocity can never be repeated. Those who perpetrated these crimes must be held accountable.

Signatories have consistently supported a strong UN Security Council Resolution, given the Security Council's responsibilities to lead the international response, but recognize that the Council remains paralyzed as it has been for two and a half years. The world cannot wait for endless failed processes that can only lead to increased suffering in Syria and regional instability. We support efforts undertaken by the United States and other countries to reinforce

the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

We commit to supporting longer term international efforts, including through the United Nations, to address the enduring security challenge posed by Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Signatories have also called for the UN fact finding mission to present its results as soon as possible, and for the Security Council to act accordingly.

We condemn in the strongest terms all human rights violations in Syria on all sides. More than 100,000 people have been killed in the conflict, more than 2 million people have become refugees, and approximately 5 million are internally displaced. Recognizing that Syria's conflict has no military solution, we reaffirm our commitment to seek a peaceful political settlement through full implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. We are committed to a political solution which will result in a united, inclusive and democratic Syria.

We have contributed generously to the latest United Nations (UN) and ICRC appeals for humanitarian assistance and will continue to provide support to address the growing humanitarian needs in Syria and their impact on regional countries. We welcome the contributions announced at the meeting of donor countries on the margins of the G20. We call upon all parties to allow humanitarian actors safe and unhindered access to those in need.

European signatories will continue to engage in promoting a common European position.

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

Remarks During a Roundtable Discussion With Civil Society Leaders in St. Petersburg, Russia
September 6, 2013

Well, I just want to say thank you to all the participants in this roundtable. This is a incred-

ible and very diverse group of civil society leaders. And this is something that I really enjoy

doing at every country that I visit because it is my firm belief that a country's strength ultimately comes from its people, and that as important as government is—and laws—what makes a country democratic and effective in delivering prosperity and security and hope to people is when they've got an active, thriving civil society.

And all of these leaders, ranging from business leaders to youth leaders to environmental leaders, those who are advocating on behalf of a free press or the rule of law, all of them contribute in one way or another to continuing to strengthen Russian society and helping to make progress on behalf of all people.

And the same is true in the United States. I'm now in government, but I got my start as a community organizer, somebody who was working in what would be called an NGO in the international community. And the work I was doing was helping poor communities have a voice in what was happening in their lives.

The President's Weekly Address *September 7, 2013*

Almost 3 weeks ago in Syria, more than a thousand innocent people, including hundreds of children, were murdered in the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century. And the United States has presented a powerful case to the world that the Syrian Government was responsible for this horrific attack on its own people.

This was not only a direct attack on human dignity, it's a serious threat to our national security. There's a reason governments representing 98 percent of the world's people have agreed to ban the use of chemical weapons: not only because they cause death and destruction in the most indiscriminate and inhumane way possible, but because they can also fall into the hands of terrorist groups who wish to do us harm.

That's why, last weekend, I announced that, as Commander in Chief, I decided that the United States should take military action against the Syrian regime. This is not a deci-

And I got elected as President by engaging people at a grassroots level.

So the kinds of activities that are represented here are critically important to Russia's development, and I'm very proud of their work. And I think it is important for us to remember that in every country—here in Russia, in the United States, around the globe—that part of good government is making sure that we're creating a space for civil society to function effectively: freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, making sure that people can join together and make common cause around the issues that they care deeply about.

So I appreciate taking the time. I'm not going to do all the talking here. I want to spend most of my time listening. But I want to thank you again and hope all of you continue the good work. Good.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza St. Petersburg Airport hotel.

sion I made lightly. Deciding to use military force is the most solemn decision we can make as a nation.

As the leader of the world's oldest constitutional democracy, I also know that our country will be stronger if we act together, and our actions will be more effective. That's why I asked Members of Congress to debate this issue and vote on authorizing the use of force.

What we're not talking about is an open-ended intervention. This would not be another Iraq or Afghanistan. There would be no American boots on the ground. Any action we take would be limited, both in time and scope, designed to deter the Syrian Government from gassing its own people again and degrade its ability to do so.

I know that the American people are weary after a decade of war, even as the war in Iraq has ended and the war in Afghanistan is winding down. That's why we're not putting our troops in the middle of somebody else's war.