

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Michel Martelly of Haiti February 6, 2014

President Obama. Well, it's a great pleasure to welcome President Martelly of Haiti to the Oval Office. Our two countries really brought about the trend towards independence in the Western Hemisphere, and we have had a long-standing relationship of many years. The bonds between our two peoples are extraordinarily strong, including the contributions made by Haitian Americans, who in all walks of life make enormous contributions to our own country.

Obviously, over the last several years, our relationship has been shaped in part by our desire to help Haiti rebuild after the devastating earthquake that took place. We're now at the 4-year anniversary of that tragic event that devastated such a large portion of Haiti—not only Haiti, but also devastated the Haitian economy. The good news is that because of not just the mobilization of international support, which the U.S. helped to lead, but also because of strong leadership from the Haitian people themselves and President Martelly, we've begun to see progress. The economy is growing, security is improving, infrastructure is getting rebuilt, rubble has been removed, health facilities are beginning to open up, schools are starting to get back into place, and businesses are starting to return to Haiti.

It's been a very slow and difficult process, and I think we are all recognizing that we have a lot more work to do. But my main message today to the President and to the people of Haiti is that the American people are committed to standing with you in this process. We want to make sure that all the children of Haiti can look forward to lives of opportunity and prosperity and security. And I'm very encouraged by the fact that Haiti has now made prog-

ress on an election law that could ensure elections this year and help to resolve some of the political roadblocks that stalled some progress in the country, and I appreciate the President's efforts on that front.

I'm looking forward to hearing where we can help in other reforms that I know he cares about, such areas as human rights and prison reform, the judiciary, dealing with issues of corruption that are inhibitors to progress in any country, including ours. And we will continue to stand by Haitian democracy, Haitian leadership, and the Haitian people in this slow and steady progress that needs to take place.

So, Mr. President, welcome. We're very proud of our relationship with Haiti, and we look forward to deepening it in the years to come.

President Martelly. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to first thank the people of the United States, the Government, and you, Mr. President, for always standing by the Haitian people. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the First Lady, Michelle Obama, in Haiti after the earthquake. I'd like to thank her for her support also.

Through this meeting, Mr. President, I hope we have a chance to discuss matters pertaining to security: security in Haiti, security in the region, our ability to fight together narcotraffic, and of course, talk also about my engagement in building a strong democratic state.

So thank you for hosting me. It's an honor to be here.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Signing the Agricultural Act of 2014 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan February 7, 2014

The President. Hello, Spartans! Go Green!
Audience members. Go White!

The President. [Laughter] Oh, thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat here.