

next several days, that there will be a rethinking of the process that's been put forward.

We have already put in place the architecture for us to apply financial and economic consequences to actions that are taken. But our strong preference is to resolve this diplomatically. And as you heard the Prime Minister say, this idea that somehow the Ukrainian people are forced to choose between good relations with the West or good relations with Russia, economic ties with the West or economic ties with Russia, is the kind of zero-sum formulation that in the 21st century, with a highly integrated, global economy, doesn't make any sense and is not in the interests of the Ukrainian people.

I actually think, in the end, it's not in the interests of Russia either. Russia should be thinking about how can it work with Ukraine to further strengthen its economic ties and trade and exchanges with Europe. That will make Russia stronger, not weaker. But obviously, Mr. Putin has some different ideas at this point.

We do not know yet what our diplomatic efforts will yield, but we'll keep on pressing. In the meantime, the main message I want to

send is that we are highly supportive of a government in Kiev that is taking on some very tough decisions, is committed to law and order, inclusivity, committed to the rights of all Ukrainian people, and is committed to fair and free elections that should settle, once and for, all any questions that there may be about what's transpired since former President Yanukovich left the country.

And the most important thing to remember is, this is up to the Ukrainian people. It's not up to the United States. It's not up to Russia. It's up to the Ukrainian people to make a decision about how they want to live their lives. That's what all of us should support. And certainly that's the reason why I'm so pleased to have the Prime Minister here today. All right?

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine, who left the country after being removed from office in February by a vote in Parliament; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Joint Statement by Group of Seven Leaders on the Situation in Ukraine *March 12, 2014*

We, the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, call on the Russian Federation to cease all efforts to change the status of Crimea contrary to Ukrainian law and in violation of international law. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately halt actions supporting a referendum on the territory of Crimea regarding its status, in direct violation of the Constitution of Ukraine.

Any such referendum would have no legal effect. Given the lack of adequate preparation and the intimidating presence of Russian troops, it would also be a deeply flawed process which would have no moral force. For all these reasons, we would not recognize the outcome.

Russian annexation of Crimea would be a clear violation of the United Nations Charter; Russia's commitments under the Helsinki Final Act; its obligations to Ukraine under its 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership; the Russia-Ukraine 1997 basing agreement; and its commitments in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. In addition to its impact on the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea could have grave implications for the legal order that protects the unity and sovereignty of all states. Should the Russian Federation take such a step, we will take further action, individually and collectively.

We call on the Russian Federation to de-escalate the conflict in Crimea and other parts of Ukraine immediately, withdraw its forces

back to their pre-crisis numbers and garrisons, begin direct discussions with the Government of Ukraine, and avail itself of international mediation and observation offers to address any legitimate concerns it may have. We, the leaders of the G-7, urge Russia to join us in working together through diplomatic processes to resolve the current crisis and support progress for a sovereign independent, inclusive and

united Ukraine. We also remind the Russian Federation of our decision to suspend participation in any activities related to preparation of a G-8 Sochi meeting until it changes course and the environment comes back to where the G-8 is able to have a meaningful discussion.

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

Remarks to Women Members of Congress and an Exchange With Reporters *March 12, 2014*

The President. Well, it's an honor for me to welcome these outstanding women Members of Congress.

And I think that over the last several weeks and months, what the American people have seen is my single most important priority domestically is to make sure that everybody in this country has opportunity, that if you're willing to work hard and take responsibility, you can make it. At a time when the economy is growing, at a time when corporate profits are high and the stock market is doing well, we want to make sure that everybody is benefiting from that growth, because what we know is, when everybody has opportunity, when everybody is on the field, America's economy grows faster, the middle class expands, and that in turn fosters more growth.

Now, recently, my economic team did a report that delivered some good news. It turns out that women are succeeding in colleges and graduate education like never before. They are more represented in professions and occupations that previously they were restricted from participating in. And what we've seen in our own families and our own lives is that there are doors that have been opened to women that previously were closed.

And yet, despite that progress, despite that good news, what we also know is, women are still making 77 cents on the dollar, including when they enter into these high-paying professions, they're making less money. We know that women continue to be disproportionately represented in low-wage professions, which means that something like an increase in the

Federal minimum wage is going to have a disproportionate impact on them. And women are still the ones that are carrying the greatest burden when it comes to trying to balance family and work. Because of inadequate childcare or the inability to get paid leave for a sick child or an ailing parent, they end up suffering the burdens, and by the way, that means families are suffering the burden, because, increasingly, women are a critical breadwinner for families all across the country.

So it is with that in mind that we've been working on—many of the women who are here today and other Members of Congress—on organizing a White House Summit on Working Families that is going to take place this summer on June 23. And this will give us an opportunity to build on the work that we're doing here in the White House around issues like minimum wage, around issues like family leave, around issues like equal pay. But we're also going to be able to invite other stakeholders, folks outside of Washington, people who are able to tell their story, talk about their experiences—Governors and mayors, business leaders—all of whom can work together with us to make sure that we're advancing not just the interests of women, but the interests of families and the interests of the middle class and people who are trying to get into the middle class.

So I'm tremendously grateful for the leadership that the Members of Congress have already shown on this issue. I am proud that we have taken some initiatives on our own, because sometimes, Congress is a little stubborn