

have been pushing for so many years, as you know, to achieve the internal market, to develop the interconnections, and to have a true European energy policy. And I believe now among leaders—we have discussed this and the chairmanship of Herman Van Rompuy in the last European Council—there is a great awareness and commitment of this. This was a wakeup call—very, very strong—for Europe to go forward in terms of the energy integration and also a policy for energy security.

*Q.* But would you like the U.S. to export more oil and gas?

*President Barroso.* The U.S., they are already exporting more. But for that point of view, it's better for President Obama to give you the elements. He already informed us in the G-7 meeting and just today that there are licenses already given that, in fact, are equivalent to the supply of gas to Europe, but they are traded in the global market. We certainly don't expect that gas to be earmarked for any kind of specific market. We are believers in free trade. We don't want that to be the case.

It's good news, and it's up to the American President to confirm it, but I think I can say it here that there is potential still—that's what the President just told us—even to increase more of these licenses. So this is certainly good news. But we are not relying just on that. We have to do also our homework here in the European Union.

*Moderator.* Okay. Thank you for your attention.

*President Obama.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:42 p.m. at the Council of the European Union. In his remarks, President Van Rompuy referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Victorovich Lavrov of Russia; and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Andriy Deshchytysya of Ukraine. He also referred to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). President Barroso referred to Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Brussels, Belgium *March 26, 2014*

*President Obama.* Well, let me just say how much I appreciate the opportunity once again to meet with Secretary General Rasmussen. I have to say that in the entire time that he has served in this position he has done an outstanding job. His leadership, his vision, his clarity, and his political skills—because there are a lot of NATO members—have all been on display, and as a consequence, the transatlantic alliance is stronger, more robust than it was without him. And so we're very grateful for his extraordinary work.

At a time when the situation in Ukraine, I think, has focused everyone's attention on the importance of the transatlantic relationships, we spent most of our discussion reaffirming the importance of NATO, that it is the bedrock of America's security as well as European security. We share the view that Russia's illegal in-

cursor into Ukraine and the violations of territorial integrity and sovereignty have to be condemned, but it also reminds us that the NATO commitments that we've made under article 5 are something that are not just items on a piece of paper, but are critically important to all NATO members. And we have to have the resources and preparation to make sure that every member of NATO feels confident in article 5's effect.

We've already made a series of decisions to help underscore the importance of NATO and collective defense in the wake of what has happened in Ukraine. There will be a ministerial summit coming up, at which I have asked the United States delegation to work cooperatively with the Secretary General's office and evaluate all the additional steps that we might take

in order to bolster that confidence among all NATO members.

And we also talked about a project that the Secretary General has been working on for quite some time to continue to develop the joint capabilities of NATO. And I think that at this moment, as I said at the press conference earlier today, both the United States and Europe are going to have to make sure that we are stepping up our game and making the contributions that are required in order for us to give full effect to our NATO obligations.

One of the things that I've been very proud of in working with Secretary Rasmussen is the degree of unanimity that he has been able to forge on a whole range of issues. One of his biggest jobs has been dealing with the situation in Afghanistan as we end our combat mission in Afghanistan and we transition to a train-and-advise situation. He has helped to oversee that process. We do not yet have a bilateral security agreement that fully clarifies what the nature of our mission will be post-2014, but working together, we're confident that we can prepare for any eventuality and that we can continue to maintain both the counterterrorism commitments as well as the commitments to help develop an Afghan security force that can ensure that Afghanistan does not end up being, once again, a safe haven for terrorism and that it can be a stable and secure country that serves the prosperity and the security of the Afghan people.

So we—finally, we touched on the continued interest that NATO has in partnering with other countries and helping them to train and develop their capacities for security. The more that we have effective partners, the greater reach that we have, and I think Anders has been very effective and visionary in suggesting approaches to all NATO members about how we can extend our reach in that fashion.

So overall, with a very busy agenda and a very full plate, General—Secretary General Rasmussen has done an outstanding job. He's been a great partner to us. He's going to be transitioning, but he will have left his mark not just on NATO, but I think on the long-term security of both his native Europe as well as the

United States of America, and for that, we're very grateful.

*Secretary General Rasmussen.* Thank you very much, Mr. President, for those very kind words. I'm very grateful for your support throughout my tenure as Secretary General, and I look forward to working with you to prepare a substantive summit in Wales in September.

I thank you very much for your strong leadership and for your steadfast commitment to our alliance. The transatlantic bond between North America and Europe is the bedrock of security in Europe and in North America. We—I really appreciate your reaffirmation of the commitment of the United States to our shared defense and security, and I welcome the steps that the United States has taken in response to Russia's reckless and illegal military actions in Ukraine.

Clearly, collective defense of our allies is a core task for NATO, and I join you in your call for additional measures to enhance our collective defense, including updated and further developed defense plans, enhanced exercises, appropriate deployments. Our commitment to the defense of our allies is unbreakable, and at the same time, we are firm in our support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will intensify our military cooperation with the Ukraine, and—including helping the Ukrainians to modernize their armed forces.

As we prepare for our next summit in Wales later this year, we will review the viability of our relationship with Russia, we will enhance cooperation with our partners, we will further strengthen our collective defense, and we will reinforce the transatlantic bond. NATO is a force for peace, but also unmatched militarily. We do not seek confrontation, but we will not waver if challenged. And our alliance is more than just a military alliance. We are a community of values that also brings hope for all people seeking freedom and peace.

Thank you.

*President Obama.* Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:33 p.m. at The Hotel.