

what will make America strong. That's what will make Europe strong. That's what makes us who we are.

And just as we meet our responsibilities as individuals, we must be prepared to meet them as nations. Because we live in a world in which our ideals are going to be challenged again and again by forces that would drag us back into conflict or corruption. We can't count on others to rise to meet those tests. The policies of your government, the principles of your European Union, will make a critical difference in whether or not the international order that so many generations before you have strived to create continues to move forward or whether it retreats.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy in Rome, Italy March 27, 2014

[Prime Minister Renzi began his remarks in English.]

Prime Minister Renzi. Thank you so much. And obviously, thank you so much to President Obama, because for me, it's a very great pleasure host here in Villa Madama the President Obama. All Italian journalists know very well President Obama is not only a President of United States, obviously, but for me and for my team source of inspiration and model. And so for this reason, I particularly appreciated this opportunity of meeting him.

And now I speak in Italian. And—

[At this point, Prime Minister Renzi continued in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

I wish to thank the United States Government for this wonderful opportunity to meet. I wish to thank President Obama because I think that today's dialogue not only confirms the fact that there's a great friendship and a great partnership between our two countries, but it also confirms the fact that considering the crises that we have to face up to, the role of the Unit-

ed States and Europe and Italy is to be a beacon. We have to safeguard common values and ideals, so cooperation and partnership embrace important international issues and everyday issues.

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NOTE: The President spoke at 6:16 p.m. at the Palais des Beaux-Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Laura Hemmati, cofounder, Leader Arise, and her father Farid Hemmati; and King Philippe, Queen Mathilde, and Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo of Belgium.

I'm happy to say that President Obama has taken a bit of time—will be taking a bit of time to visit some of our monuments and historical places here in Rome, and hopefully, Ambassador John Phillips has prepared some wonderful Italian meals for him, and I'm sure he'll have a taste of the excellent quality of life in this 1½ days that he'll be spending in our country.

When it comes to Italian lifestyle, I think that next year's meeting in Milan at the Expo 2015 is going to be of utmost importance. We're talking there about food, the environment, innovation, and that, of course, is all part of our way of living, and it will be a wonderful opportunity for Italy to host countries from all over the world.

I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for what he said yesterday in Brussels. The great challenge that's been thrown out in the relationship between the U.S. and the European Union is a fascinating

challenge. I do think that in Europe we need reforms, but we also need more growth. I think that Europe must be the place where politics will give hope back to our families.

We spoke today during our meeting, and the President said this in his address yesterday: Our grandfathers had to fight for Europe. The United States had to fight to save democracy in Europe. And in Europe, there was a fratricidal war. I know that my mother used to cry before the Berlin Wall, when that boundary fell, when it broke down. And my generation is the Erasmus generation. I'm thinking of a future generation where there will be a stronger unification process and where in Europe there will be peace and stability, but where there will also be growth and the fight against youth unemployment. We will be investing in our hopes and our prosperity.

So the message delivered yesterday by President Obama was delivered very clearly. And I think that in the EU semester, during which Italy will have the Presidency, we will be delivering the same message. And clearly, Italy will work on the reform and process that is underway. And I don't think we need to talk further about this. I can just confirm that we do want to change Italy, because we are convinced of the fact that if we change Italy, we'll be helping Europe to change as well, and we'll be strengthening our relations with the U.S. evermore.

So from this standpoint, I do confirm the commitment of our country, together with European partners and together with the United States, and in particular in the Mediterranean region. The Mediterranean is the place that the Romans used to call "our sea"—*mare nostrum*. Maybe it's not the most appropriate translation. In other words, in Latin they say *mare nostrum*. But we mean, when we say this that there were youngsters who triggered the Arab Spring and, therefore, we need to support all this. We need to support the desire for freedom and democracy of the Libyans and of the people living in North Africa. So this is what I mean when I say it's "our sea," in particular.

So I wish to reassure President Obama that we want to work together, especially in those areas where Italy's presence and impact can be strong. And I also say that Europe should not consider the Mediterranean as a frontier. It should be seen as the heart of our political and cultural and moral actions.

Now, I also wish to underscore that the relations between the United States and the European Union and Italy are still strong, despite the difficult moment in connection with the Ukrainian crisis. President Obama and European nations in the G-7 meeting discussed, in fact, the crisis in Ukraine, and we shared the view that we do not uphold the decisions made by Russia. This goes against international law. And we tried to convey a message showing our unity, our strength, and our great concern and yet our great resolve, the resolve of the international community.

I also appreciated the words of President Obama at the G-7 meeting when he reiterated the need to look into energy issues more thoroughly. I think that during the Italian Presidency of the EU, we'll be able to work with determination and resolve and tenacity. And I also hope that during our Presidency of the EU, we'll be able to move forward in economic cooperation and also in ICT, for example, and in connection with our traditional values and the hopes that we have in terms of boosting employment and doing this also through the ICT sector.

So for all these reasons, I think that today's meeting was indeed important for our government. And I wish to say to President Obama that your first message, "Yes, we can," is a message that we all remember, and we see this as being a huge potential, showing us that there are possibilities, opportunities. And this is an important message for us in Italy as well, because we have to say in Italy today that we know that things need to change; people don't need to ask us to change from the outside. And all the structural changes that we are working on are reforms that will give this hope back to us, the hope that things can, indeed, change.

So President Obama's visit to Italy isn't just a symbolic gesture, it is a form of encouragement

from our greatest friend. And I think that you are also a political beacon for us. And for Italy and for Europe, it is important to have future relations, and the next chapter is going to have to be written, and I think that we can write that together.

Thank you.

President Obama. Buon pomeriggio. [Laughter] Thank you, Prime Minister Renzi, for your very kind words. To you and the Italian people, thanks for welcoming me today.

The Prime Minister and I and his fine Foreign Minister spent some time in The Hague, but you can never get too much of your Italian friends, and we were able to continue the discussion today.

My day started with the great honor of meeting His Holiness Pope Francis. And like people around the world, I've been incredibly moved by his compassion, his message of inclusion. I was grateful to have the opportunity to speak with him about the responsibilities that we all share to care for "the least of these"—the poor, the excluded. And I was extremely moved by his insights about the importance of us all having a moral perspective on world problems and not simply thinking in terms of our own narrow self-interests.

Of course, it's wonderful to be back in Rome, one of the truly great cities of the world. I should point out, though, that while this is our first official bilateral meeting, I already had the chance to welcome Matteo Renzi to the White House. He came a few years ago as part of a group of mayors, back when he served as the mayor of Florence—*il primo cittadino*. And I look forward to the opportunity to welcome the Prime Minister back, this time as Prime Minister.

I also want to say that I had a wonderful meeting with my good friend President Napolitano, and I think that Italy is lucky to have such an extraordinary statesman to help them guide the country through some challenging times.

Italy and the United States share extraordinary bonds of history and family and culture. We're especially grateful and proud for the Italian Americans who have made enormous

contributions to our country. Italy is one of our closest allies. Our partnership is one of the strongest links binding Europe and the United States together.

And I've made clear throughout this trip that our partnership with Europe is the foundation of America's engagement in the world. It's a cornerstone of our security policy. So I appreciated the opportunity to consult with the Prime Minister on a wide range of issues.

On a more personal level, I want to say that I've just been impressed by the energy and vision that Matteo is bringing to his position. He's—there's a seriousness and ambition of ideas, and I think the spirit and the energy of the Italian people has the opportunity to be unleashed in a way that will be good for Italy, but it will also be good for Europe. And so it's wonderful to see this new generation of leadership coming to the fore.

As the Prime Minister indicated, we focused on the situation in Ukraine, something I've been talking about over the last 3 days, and we continue to see international unity in the face of a violation of international law and Ukraine's territorial integrity. The IMF's announcement today that it reached a preliminary agreement with Ukraine on a loan program is a major step forward. This significant package of support is going to help Ukraine stabilize its economy and meet the needs of the Ukrainian people over the long term because it provides the prospect for true growth. It will require some structural reforms, but it also means that Ukraine can go on a path that countries like Poland have been able to embark on and seen incredible growth over the last several years.

It's also going to reinforce democratic reforms, and it should help unlock some \$27 billion in international support for Ukraine. So it's a concrete signal of how the world is united with Ukraine as it makes tough choices at an incredibly difficult time.

And Ukraine's leaders can show considerable courage and foresight by making the reforms that will help them grow their economy, leave behind the corruption of the past. And today I want to call on the United States Congress to make sure that the United States does

its part with an economic assistance package that helps support the Ukrainian people as they move forward.

As NATO allies, the United States and Italy are going to uphold our solemn obligation to the security of our allies. As G-7 partners, our decision to move ahead with our summit in Brussels without Russia is an example, a signal of Russia's growing isolation. The sanctions that the United States and the European Union have imposed will continue to grow if Russia doesn't change course. But as I said yesterday in Brussels, we are continually hopeful that Russia walks through the door of diplomacy and works with all of us to try to resolve this issue in a peaceful way. And we will continue to coordinate closely with Italy and our other European partners throughout this crisis.

I thanked the Prime Minister as well as President Napolitano for Italy's commitment to NATO. Italian forces have served admirably in Afghanistan, where Italy is one of our largest contributors to the coalition; in Kosovo, where Italians command the NATO force. I would add that Italy both commands and contributes a large number of peacekeepers to the U.N. force in Lebanon. And at the Nuclear Security Summit this week, we announced the complete removal of Italy's excess highly enriched uranium so it can be eliminated. And this was a critical step in our work to make sure that dangerous materials don't fall into the hands of terrorists. And it's one more example of Italian leadership across the board.

We discussed the need to boost economic growth on both sides of the Atlantic so that we're creating jobs for our people, especially young people. And that's why, in addition to the kinds of steps that the Prime Minister has outlined and that he plans to pursue internally, we have an opportunity also to move forward with a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership that can actually boost growth and investment not just for large, but also for small and medium-sized businesses on both sides of the Atlantic.

I commended President—Prime Minister Renzi for his efforts to make it easier for Italian companies to hire more workers and to make

the Italian economy more competitive. And I know that a lot more remains to be done. There are going to be tough choices, but as Italy moves forward and makes the hard decisions, the United States will continue to stand with you.

Finally, we discussed some broader global issues. Italy played a critical role in the NATO air campaign to protect the Libyan people 3 years ago. We're now going to be working together to make sure that they can develop the security forces that can restore order to Libya and make sure that they have a government that is actually serving the Libyan people.

The entire world appreciates the vital role Italy will play in the international effort to destroy Syria's chemical weapons. It's an Italian port where chemicals from Syria's stockpiles will be unloaded and transferred to U.S. ships for elimination. And this is another example of how we work together not just for ourselves, but for the world.

And we are looking forward to being back in Italy, in Milan, hosting the World—or being part of the World Exposition next year that Italy is hosting. I'm proud to announce today that the United States will participate in the Expo. And together with our partners, we're going to put together an outstanding U.S.A. pavilion that showcases American innovation to improve agriculture and nutrition and the health of people around the globe. I know the Milan Expo is going to engage and educate the world as only Italy can. And I will tell you that I already have some volunteers from my staff who want to go and really make sure that the Expo goes smoothly. [Laughter] I suspect that some restaurants and shopping may somewhere be in their agenda.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your friendship and your leadership. I'm confident that together we can build on the progress that we've already made, and I'm even more confident that the bonds between our two nations will continue to grow, rooted in the enduring friendship between our two peoples.

Molte grazie.

Prime Minister Renzi. Grazie.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English.*]

Thank you so much, Mr. President. Thank you so much also for the shopping and the food; it's absolutely important for our economy. So—[*laughter*].

Four questions? Okay.

President Obama. Who's first?

Prime Minister Renzi. For America—okay. TG1. *So che è TG1. Bene.*

European Economy/Italian Economy/President Obama's Meeting With Pope Francis/U.S. Economy

[*The Reporter spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Channel 1 News, Channel 1 News. Good afternoon. Prime Minister Renzi, you said a moment ago that you will be—you are committed to creating a new Europe with less austerity and more growth, less bureaucracy, and we have to be closer to the people. Now, is there an American model to be followed here? Are you asking the U.S. to support that—

[*The reporter continued in English.*]

—this effort by Italy to change, modify the European policies in the economic field? And what kind of Europe would you like to see for better cooperation in the economic field and also in the defense field, which you mentioned yesterday? Thank you.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Italy's first effort is going to be to change Italy. Italy doesn't have alibis any longer. Italy mustn't think that its own problems and its opportunities will come from the outside, from Europe or the U.S. We have to change ourselves. We are a great country, and we are able to change. We have to reduce our oppressing bureaucracy. We have to reduce, downsize our political class and the costs. And we have to work on our labor mar-

ket; we—because our international investors have to know that this is a great place for their ideas and their businesses to grow.

So this is why we say to Italians and to all our fellow citizens that we shouldn't be looking for an excuse. Nobody is going to do this from the outside. We have to change ourselves from within. And of course, if we have that credibility, which is needed, if we believe in ourselves, then Europe is going to have to focus more on growth and less on bureaucracy. I think that this is how it should be. And I spoke to Angela Merkel, François Hollande, Dave Cameron about this. We will be discussing this during our semester of Presidency.

So can the U.S. be a model? You asked that. Of course.

Over the years, under the leadership of President Obama, the United States has chosen an ambitious course. They have been rebuilding their economy in America. In fact, that's a message that we've received. We decided to call our measures "Jobs Act." This is the same term used in the U.S., more or less, and this is a way of helping youth have more credibility, have more space, more room; we have to make sure that our investors want to come. So of course, the U.S. can be seen as a model.

And the important point is that Italy has to do its homework. In other words, Italy must finally put into practice the structural reforms that we've been waiting for, for the past 20 years. And my government and our credibility over the next 4 years is going to come from that. We want to change ourselves, and clearly we're doing it in an interconnected, global world. We know that Europe has to think a bit more about the future and a bit less about the past. And the friendship and cooperation and partnership with the U.S., therefore, are an unrelinquishable beacon for us.

President Obama. Well, before I talk about the future, let me just talk about the recent past, because I think that Europe has taken some important steps and they deserve credit. As recently as a year and a half, 2 years ago, we were very worried about the euro spinning out of control. There were enormous challenges

across the board. I think because of strong coordination within the euro zone, because of some smart actions by the European Central Bank, the financial situation has stabilized.

I also think that there were countries that were under enormous market pressure; borrowing rates were skyrocketing. And because of some tough decisions, you've seen those—the ability of countries to borrow on the international markets stabilizing. All that was necessary, and it was important, and it could not have happened had it not been for a coordinated response among a lot of European leaders. We've also seen some movement towards banking union, which I think is helpful. And there are some other multilateral reforms that are taking place that we have encouraged.

Now, having said that, what is also true is, is that Europe's growth is still very slow and its unemployment rate is still very high. And nobody knows that better than Prime Minister Renzi. That's part of his mission, is to reinvigorate the Italian economy. Each country is going to have a different set of issues that it's going to have to address because each country has both strengths and weaknesses in their economy. And I think that Prime Minister Renzi has identified some of the structural reforms that Italy needs to engage in in order for it to be more competitive and more successful. And I'm confident that he's going to be able to move Italy forward, in part because Italy is ready to move forward.

As far as Europe as a whole, I do think that the old debate about growth versus austerity is a sterile debate. I think you need to have your public finances in order, but you also have to grow. And the more you grow, the easier it is to get your public finances in order. There are different capacities within Europe. And I've said before, and I will repeat again, that those countries that have substantial surpluses have more room to help boost Europeanwide demand. And that, in turn, will help countries that are still in deficit. That will lift Europe as a whole, and that means that everybody is growing.

And so in my conversations with President Barroso and Van Rompuy yesterday at the Eu-

ropean Union, I encouraged them to continue to identify ways in which countries with surpluses can do more to boost demand while still being prudent about their public finances.

The last point, I guess, I would make is, in terms of the United States and how we can be helpful, part of it is us making sure that we're taking care of our own issues. It's not as if we don't have a lot of work to do ourselves. We've grown faster than Europe, and I think we recovered in part because we took some smart steps, but we also have some fundamental problems that many advanced nations face, and then in fact, I had discussed with His Holiness Pope Francis this morning, and that is an increasing tendency in the world economy for those who benefit from globalization and technology to do better than ever before, those at the top; those at the bottom or in the middle having more and more problems, in part because perhaps their jobs have been rendered obsolete, in part because it's very difficult to see wages increase. Companies feel as if they can always move if labor makes too great a demand on wage increases or salary increases.

And so all of us are seeing some structural problems in this new economy. And that means we've got to redouble our efforts to educate our young people; to make sure that we have the capacity to provide skills to our workers; if they lose their jobs they can transition quickly; that we have a strong baseline of social support for people if they end up transitioning out of jobs; that we're paying more attention to opening up opportunity for people who've been locked out, particularly young people.

Because as I mentioned to the Prime Minister, one of the tragedies of high youth unemployment is that when young people don't have a strong attachment to the labor market early, that can continue for the rest of their careers, and they never fully recoup what's lost in terms of their potential earnings and their ability to advance in the labor market.

And so we can't afford to have years and years of young people who are drifting, working part time, not able to develop the kinds of careers and skills that will allow them to succeed in the future. That has to be a priority.

And I know Prime Minister Renzi is focused on it.

Jim Acosta, CNN.

President Obama's Meeting With Pope Francis/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Ukraine

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. *Grazie*, Mr. Prime Minister.

Mr. President, in your meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis, did he register any objections with you about the contraception coverage mandate in the Affordable Care Act or your efforts to advance the rights of gays and lesbians in the United States that worry so many Catholics? And what were his concerns?

And on Russia, with reports of troops building on the Ukrainian border, by taking the military option off the table are you sending a signal to Vladimir Putin that other parts of Ukraine are his for the taking? And why not send multinational peacekeepers to the Ukrainian border as a deterrent?

And to you, Mr. Prime Minister, the President said yesterday that the U.S. would defend any NATO ally. Are you making that same commitment when it comes to Russia?

President Obama. That's a lot of questions there, Jim. [*Laughter*] Do the Italian journalists, by the way, do this—these sort of five-part questions? [*Laughter*] Same thing?

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. I can't say about Italian journalism. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. The—all right, let me try to remember this. In terms of the meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis, we had a wide-ranging discussion. I would say that the largest bulk of the time was discussing two central concerns of his. One is the issues of the poor, the marginalized, those without opportunity, and growing inequality.

And those of us as politicians have the task of trying to come up with policies to address issues, but His Holiness has the capacity to open people's eyes and make sure they're seeing that this is an issue. And he's discussed in the past, I

think, the dangers of indifference or cynicism when it comes to our ability to reach out to those less fortunate or those locked out of opportunity.

And then we spent a lot of time talking about the challenges of conflict and how elusive peace is around the world. There was some specific focus on the Middle East, where His Holiness has a deep interest in the Israeli-Palestinian issue, but also what's happening in Syria, what's happening in Lebanon, and the potential persecution of Christians. And I reaffirmed that it is central to U.S. foreign policy that we protect the interests of religious minorities around the world.

But we also touched on regions like Latin America, where there's been tremendous progress in many countries, but there's been less progress in others.

I think what—the theme that stitched our conversation together was a belief that in politics and in life, the quality of empathy, the ability to stand in somebody else's shoes and to care for someone even if they don't look like you or talk like you or share your philosophy, that that's critical. It's the lack of empathy that makes it very easy for us to plunge into wars. It's the lack of empathy that allows us to ignore the homeless on the streets. And obviously, central to my Christian faith is a belief in treating others as they—I'd have them treat me. And what's, I think, created so much love and excitement for His Holiness has been that he seems to live this and shows that joy continuously.

In terms of domestic issues, the two issues that we touched on—other than the fact that I invited and urged him to come visit the United States, telling him that people would be overjoyed to see him—was immigration reform. And as someone who came from Latin America, I think he was very mindful of the plight of so many immigrants who are wonderful people, working hard, making contributions, many of their children are U.S. citizens, and yet they still live in the shadows, in many cases have been deported, and are separated from families. I described to him how I felt that there

was still an opportunity for us to make this right and get a law passed.

And he actually did not touch, in detail, on the Affordable Care Act. In my Cardinal—in my meeting with his Secretary of State, Cardinal Parolin, we discussed briefly the issue of making sure that conscience and religious freedom was observed in the context of applying the law. And I explained to him that most religious organizations are entirely exempt. Religiously affiliated hospitals or universities or NGOs simply have to attest that they have a religious objection, in which case they are not required to provide contraception, although employees of theirs who choose are able to obtain it through the insurance company.

And I pledged to continue to dialogue with the U.S. Conference of Bishops to make sure that we can strike the right balance, making sure that not only everybody has health care, but families, and women in particular, are able to enjoy the kind of health care coverage that the ACA offers, but that religious freedom is still observed.

Q. And on Russia—

President Obama. There was a third question? What was that, the third—okay, that's right, Russia. Okay, I remember.

I think that I've been very clear in saying that we are going to do everything we can to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. But I think that it's also important for us not to promise and then not be able to deliver. There are ways for us to, hopefully, influence Russian decisionmaking, and one of the most important things that we can do on that front is ensure that the Ukrainian Government is stable, that its finances are stable, and that elections go forward as currently scheduled so that we have a legitimate, strong, representative, inclusive government with an economic program that it is implementing and carrying out.

And all those things are in place, but we're going to have to put a lot of resources and a lot of effort, not just the United States, but Europe as well.

And I've been very impressed with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk and his current efforts. The decision to go forward with an IMF pro-

gram with a lot of resources is going to require a lot of courage. But keep in mind that part of what prompted the original protests that led to the previous President leaving was an objection about the same corrupt practices, an economy that was completely inefficient, that had led to a situation in which Poland's GDP had skyrocketed and the Ukraine's had plummeted, when they started off at the same place just several years ago.

I think the Prime Minister understands that. I think the Ukrainian people understand that. It will require some tough decisions, but Prime Minister Renzi is also making tough decisions; we've had to make some tough decisions. That's the nature of political leadership. And I think that's what the Ukrainian people are seeking, is a better future, even if it requires some short-term changes to business as usual.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. The question for me is more clear, and the answer is easy: yes. Yes, because I think that the crisis in Ukraine is very bad situation, but the reaction of European Union and the United States is a reaction with one voice. Not different voice, one voice. And for this reason, I think the statement of G-7 in Brussels and the decisions for the future are decision very important for Italy, and we are absolutely committed in this direction.

ANSA.

U.S. Defense Spending/European Defense Spending/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Let me confess that I'll probably have more than one question myself. I'll be quick. President Obama, you said you're concerned with regard to defense cuts in NATO countries, but you said that freedom doesn't come without a cost. But Europe is coming out of a very hard crisis, difficult crisis, and we know that we need austerity in many sectors, including in defense. And in fact, there's a debate ongoing right now in Italy on a possible reduction in the commissioning F-35. So how can we reconcile the need to have fiscal discipline and to keep military spending under control? Now,

you spoke about structural reforms. Do you think that's the best way to reinvigorate the country?

Now, to the Prime Minister, did you talk about the Italian Marine riflemen during your talks?

President Obama. When it comes to defense spending, all of us have to make sure that our defense forces are efficient, effective; that for every dollar or lira that we're spending, that we're getting the most defense for our money.

And so in the United States, we've reduced our defense spending as we've brought two wars to a close. There's a natural transition. The kinds of spending increases that we had seen were unsustainable. And I recognize that in Europe—and I discussed this with both Prime Minister Renzi as well as President Napolitano—there are opportunities for greater efficiencies, not only within a country's own defenses, but also by collaborating between European countries so that you don't have too much duplication and excess capacity. And in fact, Secretary General Rasmussen has repeatedly put forward plans for building NATO defense capacity in ways that reduce duplication and ensure that we are getting the most for our money.

But having said that, there is a certain irreducible commitment that countries have to make if they're serious about NATO and the defense alliance. And I've been very realistic, I think, with my European partners: We, the United States, obviously have the largest military in the world, and we recognize we have some extraordinary responsibilities. We don't expect every country to duplicate exactly what we do. We have responsibilities in the Middle East. We have responsibilities in Asia, Latin America. We welcome those responsibilities, and we understand that that is a particular role that we play. But we're also a partnership in NATO, and it—we can't have a situation in which the United States is consistently spending over 3 percent of our GDP on defense, much of that focused on Europe, potentially more if we end up having ongoing crises within Europe, and Europe is spending, let's say, 1 percent. The gap becomes too large.

Obviously, small countries will still be having a lot less capacity than us, but proportionally to their GDP, we need to make sure that everybody is doing their fair share. That's not just for our benefit, it's also because Europe is going to have its own unique defense needs.

Prime Minister Renzi spoke about the Mediterranean. Conceivably, Italy is going to develop more and more specialized capacity in addressing particular challenges in North Africa or in other parts of the Mediterranean. Well, that's going to require some resources in order to do that. So this is not something that's going to have to happen overnight, but there has to be a trajectory that recognizes the need for everybody pitching in, because we—as I said yesterday, we cannot take our freedom for granted.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Yes, we did speak about the two riflemen who are being illegally detained in India. And I thanked the U.S. and the U.S. Government for the support that they've given us in this phase of the international discussion, and I've asked President Obama to be able to count on further support. We want the issue to be dealt with at an ever more international level.

But I need to be honest with you, and therefore, I need to say something about the questions that you addressed to President Obama, but also to the Italian Government. In other words, I agree; I know what President Obama means when he says that freedom cannot come free of charge. And we cannot complain that there is pain and suffering in the world unless we wish to deal with these problems through an alliance based on freedom and democracy, and common and shared values. We have to shoulder our responsibilities.

And I think that Italy always has done its share over the years. We know where our strengths are, what the numbers are, but I think we've always been highly devoted and deeply committed. And I thank President Obama for having yet—recognized yet again the strong partnership between our countries. I mean,

when Italians have been asked to shoulder responsibilities, they've always tried to do it with the utmost commitment and honor.

And I think that over the coming years, we're going to have to insist on the concept that was just illustrated by the President; i.e., we have to become specialized, especially in certain areas. We cannot keep saying that the EU has a role to play and then pull back and say, well, the U.S. is there, and they're always going to come to support us in the end. That's not right. It's not fair. We are partners, and we have to work together. I agree with President Obama.

Now, the issues—and the President said quite rightly—pertaining to efficiencies and making our system more efficient, our public administration, we have to reduce costs there and in the defense sector. I mean, it's there for everyone to see. We wish to continue cooperating and collaborating with our partners. And we will, therefore, keep checking our budgets to make sure that we have the resources to intervene all over the world. And at the same time, we have to avoid any waste, and we know that in some sectors there has been waste.

President Obama. Julianna Goldman [Bloomberg News]. You get the last word.

President Obama's Meeting With Pope Francis/International Economic Sanctions Against Russia

Q. Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister. Mr. President, I just want to follow up on Jim's question on your meeting with the Pope today. Do you think some of the schisms that he referenced on social issues would stand in the way of you and Pope Francis collaborating or forming a strategic alliance to tackle income inequality?

And then, on Russia, you've said that there are costs of further sanctions on the global—that would affect the global economy. How do U.S.—would U.S. companies with interests in Russia and Americans as a whole feel those costs?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. President—President Obama on this trip has said that Europeans need to step up when it comes to con-

fronting Russia and also supporting Ukraine. But given the fragile recovery here in Italy, can Italy really step up, or does it need to step back? And are you concerned that Congress's failure to approve additional IMF reforms would prevent the U.S. from stepping up enough? Thank you.

President Obama. First of all, I just want to make clear—maybe it wasn't clear from my answer to Jim—that we actually didn't talk a whole lot about social schisms in my conversations with His Holiness. In fact, that really was not a topic of conversation.

I think His Holiness and the Vatican have been clear about their position on a range of issues. Some of them I differ with; most I heartily agree with. And I don't think that His Holiness envisions entering into a partnership or a coalition with any political figure on any issue. His job is a little more elevated. We're down on the ground dealing with the often profane, and he is dealing with higher powers.

I do think that there is a potential convergence between what policymakers need to be thinking about and what he's talking about. I think he is shining a spotlight on an area that's going to be of increasing concern, and that is reduced opportunities for more and more people, particularly young people, who, by the way, have more and more access to seeing what's out there and what's possible because they have access to the Internet or they have access to other media, and they see the inequality, and they see themselves being locked out in ways that weren't true before. And that's true internationally, not just within countries.

And so for him to say that we need to think about this, we need to focus on this, we need to come up with policies that provide a good education for every child and good nutrition for every child and decent shelter and opportunity and jobs, he is not going to get into details of it, but he reminds us of what our moral and ethical obligations are. It happens also to be good economics and good national security policy: Countries are more stable, they're going to grow faster, when everybody has a chance, not just when a few have a chance.

So he's, hopefully, creating an environment in which those of us who care about this are able to talk about it more effectively. And we are in many ways following not just his lead, but the teachings of Jesus Christ and other religions that care deeply about the "least of these."

With respect to Russia, what was your question? You guys ask me too many questions. I can't remember them all.

Q. On U.S. companies—[inaudible].

President Obama. Oh, U.S. companies. Well, this probably converges with the question you asked Prime Minister Renzi. We have not yet taken steps that would target entire sectors of the Russian economy like finance or military sales or energy. But what we are doing in consultation with our allies is to work through each of those sectors and look at what kinds of sanctions potentially could have a powerful impact.

None of them, to have a powerful impact on Russia, are going to have zero impact on us, because Russia is part of the world economy. This is part of the reason why I said yesterday we're not looking at a possible return to the cold war. The economies have changed, the politics have changed. Russia is not leading an ideological bloc that's opposed to the world economy. Gazprom is listed on world markets, and everybody owns a piece of everything.

So there will be some impact. Hopefully, we can design sanctions that minimize the impact on U.S. companies or Italian companies and maximize the impact on the narrow set of interests in Russia that help drive the decisions that they're making. But those are highly technical. That's the work that's being done right now. Even better, hopefully, we don't have to use them because Russia decides that they should take the wiser course and accept the offer of the international community and the Ukrainian Government to try to resolve this in a peaceful and lawful way.

[Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English.]

Prime Minister Renzi. We reaffirm our commitment very clear, and we stay strong and very determined with our partners. And so

there is—there are values in our country. The first value is not money. The first value is the ideal of democracy and freedom.

[Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

But let me say something in Italian. This is a concept that I want Italians to understand.

[Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English.]

[Inaudible]—I'm sorry because I have a little concept—this is the last, I think.

[Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

The Italian economy is not in any condition to be in a crisis and to therefore not be able to deal with the crisis in Ukraine. And this is an important concept, and I want it to be crystal clear for our Italian journalist friends. We can be there. We can face up to a possible energy crisis. We have the resources with which to do that.

And we've always got to remember that we may have high public debt, but we always have private savings, which is four times—right—public debt, and we have a primary surplus. We've had this over the years at a constant level. And our economic growth statistics don't make us the Cinderella of Europe and international institutions. So we have to supersede this thinking. And it isn't only a question of making these economic and financial calculations.

When, during the Second World War, our American friends came to fight in this country, they didn't do it for economic reasons. And when I was the mayor of Florence, I went every year to the cemetery—which is one of the most impressive places because of the silence—the U.S. cemetery there. There were so many families who have lost their young American soldiers, and they lost their lives to defend the values and freedom in our country, a country that perhaps they had never even vis-

ited. Now, I don't think that that's a question of economic calculation or cost, you see.

And therefore, I would ask our friends in the Italian press to realize that the data that we are working with in the Ukraine crisis and in the crisis with Russia aren't only based on economic considerations. And this is why the relations and our friendship with the United States of America have trade implications. And I think that during the European semester of Presidency, we have to come to an agreement. Hopefully, we'll manage to do this, and maybe it will come in 2015 if we don't manage to do it during the Italian Presidency. So I was saying, we come to an agreement on the trade agreement with the United States.

But what I'm trying to say—and this is why I wish to thank President Obama—is that there are shared values. In just a moment, President Obama will be making a private visit in some of the most beautiful places in Rome, extraordinary places. Those beautiful and extraordinary places in Rome are—well, if they had been created today, there would have been some bureaucrats saying, no, we're spending too much money, we're not creating the right thing. Those are places of beauty, you see, that have a huge impact of huge importance. And those are the places that don't make our country an economic superpower, but a cultural superpower.

So with the same kind of commitment with which we defend our past, we wish to build our future together with our allies. So I think we have to be a bit bolder, a bit more enthusiastic. And if you don't mind my saying this, we need to be a bit more ambitious, because I think that today Italy begins to—needs to start dreaming bigger than it has up to now.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:18 p.m. at the Villa Madama. In his remarks, the President referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini of Italy; President José Manuel Durão Barroso of the European Commission; President Herman Van Rompuy of the European Council; and former President Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine, who left the country after being removed from office in February by a vote in Parliament. Prime Minister Renzi referred to his mother Laura Bovoli; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President François Hollande of France; Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; and Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone, Italian Marine riflemen accused of killing two Indian fisherman during a security convoy mission to protect an oil tanker off the coast of Kerala, India, on February 15, 2012. Some reporters spoke in Italian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the National Security Agency's Section 215 Bulk Telephony Metadata Program *March 27, 2014*

Earlier this year in a speech at the Department of Justice, I announced a transition that would end the section 215 bulk telephony metadata program as it previously existed and that we would establish a mechanism to preserve the capabilities we need without the Government holding this bulk metadata. I did so to give the public greater confidence that their privacy is appropriately protected, while maintaining the tools our intelligence and law enforcement agencies need to keep us safe.

In that January 17 speech, I ordered that a transition away from the prior program would proceed in two steps. In addition to directing immediate changes to the program, I also directed the intelligence community and the Attorney General to use this transition period to develop options for a new approach to match the capabilities and fill gaps that the section 215 program was designed to address without the Government holding this metadata. I instructed them to report back to me with options for alternative approaches before the