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Yom HaShoah is a day to reaffirm our responsibilities to ourselves and future generations. It is incumbent upon us to make real those timeless words: "Never forget. Never again." Yet, even as we recognize that mankind is capable of unspeakable acts of evil, we also draw strength from the survivors, the liberators, and the "righteous among nations" who represented humanity at its best.

With their example to guide us, together we must firmly and forcefully condemn the anti-Semitism that is still far too common today. Together, we must stand against bigotry and hatred in all their forms. And together, we can leave our children a world that is more just, more free, and more secure for all humankind.

Statement on Senate Action on Trade Promotion Authority Legislation
April 16, 2015

I am pleased that Chairman Hatch, Senator Wyden, and Chairman Ryan have introduced bipartisan legislation to help us negotiate trade agreements that are good for our economy, our businesses, and most importantly, for our workers.

My top priority in any trade negotiation is expanding opportunity for hard-working Americans. It's no secret that past trade deals haven't always lived up to their promise, and that's why I will only sign my name to an agreement that helps ordinary Americans get ahead. At the same time, at a moment when 95 percent of our potential customers live outside our borders, we must make sure that we—and not countries like China—are writing the rules for the global economy.

The bill put forward today would help us write those rules in a way that avoids the mistakes from our past, seizes opportunities for our future, and stays true to our values. It would level the playing field, give our workers a fair shot, and for the first time, include strong fully enforceable protections for workers' rights, the environment, and a free and open Internet.

Our exports support more than 11 million good American jobs, and we know that companies that export pay higher wages than those that don't. Today, we have the opportunity to open even more new markets to goods and services backed by three proud words: Made in America. I look forward to working with Democrats and Republicans in Congress to pass this bill, seize this opportunity, and support more good American jobs with the wages and benefits hard-working families deserve.

I also welcome the introduction of Trade Adjustment Assistance legislation that will strengthen the current program to protect American workers.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy
April 17, 2015

President Obama. Please have a seat. It is a great pleasure to welcome my partner and friend, Prime Minister Renzi, to the White House. *Benvenuto.* I actually should say welcome back. Not many people know this, but Matteo came to the White House several years ago. He—back then, he was the young, dynamic mayor of Florence. Today he's the young, dynamic Prime Minister of Italy. But even then, I think people recognized that he brought an energy and a sense of vision to where he wanted to see his country go. And today is an opportunity for me to return the incredible hospitality that Matteo and the Italian people showed me last year in Rome, one of the great cities of the world.

Italy, of course, is one of our closest and strongest allies. And any time Italians and

Americans get together, it's also a chance to celebrate the deep bonds of history and friendship and family. As I've said before, I'm not lucky enough to have any Italian ancestry that I know of—[*laughter*]—but I consider myself an honorary Italian because I love all things Italian. And the United States would not be what we are or who we are without the contributions of generations of Italian Americans.

In Rome last year, Matteo spoke eloquently of his visits to the American military cemetery in Florence, and that's a reminder of how Italians and Americans have made extraordinary sacrifices for the freedom that we cherish. And I'm also grateful for my partnership personally with Prime Minister Renzi. We've worked together on several occasions, from Rome to our NATO, G–7, and G–20 summits. I know he is deeply committed to our alliance.

Moreover, I have been very impressed with the energy and the vision and the reforms that he is pursuing to unleash the potential of the Italian people and the Italian economy. His willingness to challenge the status quo and to look to the future has made him a leading voice in Europe. And we're already seeing progress being made with respect to Italy.

So, Matteo, I want to thank you again for the seriousness and sense of purpose that you bring to our work together here today.

This morning we focused on our shared security, starting in Europe. We agreed that the international community needs to continue supporting Ukraine with robust assistance as it pursues economic and political reforms. Along with our international partners, we strongly support the Minsk agreements, and we agree that both Russia and the Ukraine must fulfill all the obligations under these agreements.

I thanked the Prime Minister of Italy's strong support for the international coalition against ISIL. Italy, by the way, is one of the largest contributors of advisers and trainers to help build up Iraqi security forces, and Italy is leading the effort to ensure the areas liberated from ISIL's control are stabilized with an effective civilian police force.

We also spent a considerable amount of time discussing our deep, shared concern for the situation in Libya, where we continue to support U.N. efforts to form a unity Government. Given Italy's leadership role across the Mediterranean, the Prime Minister and I agreed to work together even more intensively to encourage cooperation on threats coming from Libya, including the growing ISIL presence there, as well as additional coordination with other partners in how we can stabilize what has become a very deadly and difficult situation.

More broadly, Italian forces continue to play a vital role from Kosovo to Lebanon to Afghanistan. Coalition forces continue to train and assist Afghan forces, and we want to make sure we transition responsibly as we complete our consolidation by the end of next year.

I updated President—Prime Minister Renzi on the framework that we reached with Iran, our progress towards a comprehensive deal that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and we agreed that until any final deal is reached, sanctions on Iran must continue to be fully and strictly enforced.

So that's what we talked about in the morning. After this press conference, we'll have lunch, and that will give us a chance to focus on what is clearly the top priority of both our peoples, and that is creating a strong, inclusive economy that is creating jobs and opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic.

Like me, Prime Minister Renzi is a strong supporter of T–TIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which would boost both jobs and exports in Europe and the United States and would include strong protections for workers and public health and safety and the environment. Now that Congress is considering important bipartisan legislation for trade promotion authority, T–TIP negotiations need to make major progress this year.

I'm looking forward to hearing the Prime Minister's assessment of the ambitious economic reforms that he's pursuing to make Italy more competitive and to reinvigorate the Italian economy as a source of growth in Europe. We'll be discussing Europe's effort to find

paths that builds on recent reforms to return Greece to growth within the euro zone.

And we'll be discussing the importance of all our major economies taking ambition—ambitious action on climate change. During its Presidency of the EU, Italy showed real leadership as Europe committed to new targets for reducing emissions. My work with Prime Minister Renzi today is part of our continuing effort to forge a strong climate agreement in Paris this year.

And finally, I want to congratulate Italy and the people of Milan as they prepare for—to host the 2015 World Expo. The focus is on food, something that Italy knows something about, along with wine. But the Expo and our U.S. pavilion is focused not only on outstanding cuisine like Italy's, but also how we feed a growing planet, how we combat hunger and malnutrition, how we put healthy food on our tables, and that's a cause, obviously, that's very close to Michelle's heart.

So we commend Italy's leadership, and I suspect many Americans will be visiting Milan and sampling the food and sampling the wine.

Matteo, *grazie* for your leadership in Italy and Europe and for your partnership on many pressing global issues. I assure you that it is a friendship and partnership that all Americans treasure. And we are grateful that we have such strong bonds between our peoples.

Prime Minister.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Thank you so much, Mr. President. Thank you so much and it is really an honor as a member of the Italian Government to be here in the White House in the heart of freedom around the world.

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

I will speak in Italian very quickly in order to thank the President of the United States of America for the extraordinary leadership that he has displayed both in terms of his foreign policy as well as in the economic and development model.

The last time we met was in Brisbane during the G–20. I can only say that, as a partner and as an ally, I have to express my appreciation for the work that has been carried out by the United States of America on the very complex Cuba issue. This has been a very complex issue. It's been difficult for the American people, as well as for the Cuban people.

As well, I would like to congratulate the President for the Iranian issues, because at least there is a framework, there's an agreement which we hope will reach a conclusion by June 30.

I would also like to add that when I came to the White House, I brought on my behalf and all of the Italians these feelings of pride for what the President mentioned earlier: for the role of so many Italians in the history of the United States of America, from Christopher Columbus onward, as well as the appreciation and the gratefulness for the sacrifice of young men and women of the United States whom, in these next few days, we will remember for having liberated Italy.

We're very, very proud of what our fighters, our partisans, did because they fought against fascism. They went out in the mountains, out in the *macchie*, and they struggled, they fought. But this would not have been possible without the sacrifice and the commitment of the American Army, young men and women who didn't even know Italy, who died for my grandfather, for my father, for my family, and my children.

This is why, during these days of celebration in Italy, I will be sure—this is the 70th year after the liberation. I will go to a place that I love particularly, which is the American Cemetery at San Casciano, in order to honor all of the American people. And I would like to thank you, dear President, on behalf of all Italians.

We spoke quite a bit and spoke about a number of topics. And I'm quite anxious to talk with President Obama about everything that has to do with the economy. Now, if you look at these last 7 years, from 2008 to 2015, the American economy has had a reduction of the

unemployed and there has been a growth in the GDP. The European economy had an increase in its employment—in unemployed, and its GDP went down. Something just did not work at home. This is why I believe that the experience of the United States Government is a model for the European economy and that we have to be very careful about budgets, about the limitations, about our commitments.

But at the same time, we have to go through a new season of growth and investments. In 2014, we started with the first provisions. There's still much to be done. The American leadership for me is a point of reference.

We also spoke about Libya, as the President said. I just had a meeting—during this meeting, I am convinced that the United States and I—the President and I are fully on the same page. In the next few weeks, we will see that we will reach the fruits of all this commitment. Everything that happens in the Mediterranean Sea is not merely something that has to do with security. And of course, it is, but at the same time, it has to do with justice and the dignity of mankind. This is why the very authoritative cooperation that the United States and—the United States can offer is for Italy and extremely important fact.

We also spoke about the Ukraine, and we spoke about Russia, as the President mentioned. We also mentioned all the issues that have to do with Iran and the very complex framework in the Middle East. I believe that it's very important for us to underscore how, as part of this great alliance, guided by the United States, which is a reference point not just for our choices, but for the ideals, the cultural battle that all of us have to fight.

This is why, dear President, dear Barack, I decided to leave Georgetown University—I went to visit Georgetown, and now, when I leave the White House, I will go the National Gallery, because I know that there is an exhibition on the Florentine Italian Renaissance, and this, of course, is a clear message that tells us how culture is important for a young boy, a young girl. This is the engine, this is the basis of our civilization and our future.

This is a great occasion, the Expo, of course. And I brought a few bottles of wine to Barack because I know that he's a great expert.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows.*]

I remember in an interview with an Italian journalist when he was a candidate about Tuscan wine. I remember very well a very important interview about it.

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

But I also believe that it's very important for us—quite aside from any jokes—we must make sure that the Expo becomes a great occasion for the quality of life, the lifestyle, and at the same time, to declare war against poverty. It's just not possible for us to have a word—world in which 1 billion people die because they're obese or because they don't have enough to eat. This is what the Expo is going to be, and the presence of the United States will be an element of great importance. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

And if I may finish, I'd like to say that even if it doesn't have anything to do between the relationship between governments, I said to President Obama that I wanted to thank him for his speech at Selma. This is a personal observation, but it's also a political issue. There are moments in which history can be quite extraordinary, and one of these moments is what this country has lived through over the last 50 years. I think that for those of us who love politics, that speech was a moment of great inspiration and very strong reflection. For this, thank you kindly Mr. President. And thank you for your warm welcome to the White House.

President Obama. Let me just make clear that, with respect to the wine—[*laughter*]—I felt it would be insulting for me not to sample it—[*laughter*]—and to establish the strong commercial bind—bonds between the United States of American when it comes to Tuscan wine. [*Laughter*] So I will give you, Matteo, a

report on whether it's up to the quality that we expect. [*Laughter*]

With that, let me call on Roberta Rampton of Reuters. There we go.

Trade

Q. Thanks. President Obama, some congressional leaders yesterday came to a deal on fast track for trade, but it's clear that many in your party are opposed, including Senator Schumer. And are you worried that your support for this is going to divide your party going into 2016? And will it hurt your party's ability to win? Do you need Hillary Clinton's support on this?

And, Prime Minister, how confident are you that Greece will reach an agreement with its creditors by the end of this month? And how concerned are each of you about the effects that this could have on the global economy if a deal is not reached?

President Obama. On trade, first of all, I want to congratulate Senators Wyden and Hatch for coming up with a bipartisan framework for trade promotion authority. And without getting into the weeds on it, I think it's important to recognize that the trade promotion authority is not the same as a trade agreement. It just gives us a structure whereby, when a trade agreement is presented, it can move forward in a quicker fashion and not get completely bogged down in the usual procedures. And I would be receiving the same trade promotion authority that every President in the postwar era, with the exception of Richard Nixon, has received. So it's not exceptional in that sense.

What is exceptional is that in this framework, for the first time, there are requirements for enforceable labor, environmental provisions. There is a clear attention to issues like human rights. And in many ways, this is the most far-reaching and progressive trade promotion authority that we've seen going through Congress.

And that's important, because, as I've said before, it is entirely understandable that there is some skepticism around trade from working families who live in a town that saw manufacturing collapse and jobs being outsourced. People recognize that there had been circumstances in the past in which trade may have contributed to aggregate growth of the global economy or even the U.S. economy, but hurt workers. And we've learned lessons from that. And this trade promotion authority, thanks to the work of Senators Wyden and Hatch, reflects some of those lessons.

Now, in terms of actually getting a deal done, the first trade agreement that we potentially would present under this trade promotion authority would be the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. I've spoken to this before, but I will just repeat that 95 percent of the world's markets are outside our borders. The fastest growing markets, the most populous markets are going to be in Asia. And if we do not help to shape the rules so that our businesses and our workers can compete in those markets, then China will set up rules that advantage Chinese workers and Chinese businesses.

And that will set the stage over the next 20, 30 years for us being locked out, us being unable to protect our businesses from discrimination, our agricultural products being excluded from these areas, high tariffs that prevent us from being able to compete fairly. When it comes to services or it comes to the Internet, for example, our ability to maintain intellectual property protection or freedom in the Internet or other requirements that tilt the playing field against U.S. workers, that's what's going to happen.

So what we are doing is negotiating the highest level, highest standard trade agreement in our history, with strong enforceable labor provisions, strong enforceable environmental provisions. And I will be able to show when the final agreement is presented that this is absolutely good for not just American businesses, but for Americans workers. And it's good for the economy, and it's the right thing to do.

Now, last point I'll make on this. The politics around trade have—has always been tough, particularly in the Democratic Party, because people have memories of outsourcing and job loss. The point I've made to my labor friends and my progressive friends is that com-

panies that are looking for just low-cost labor, they've already left. We're already at a disadvantage right now. And the trade agreement I'm proposing would actually strengthen our ability to force other markets to open and strengthen our position compared to where we are right now.

And being opposed to this new trade agreement is essentially a ratification of the status quo, where a lot of folks are selling here, but we're not selling there. Japan is one of the negotiators in this deal. Now, last time I checked, if you drive around Washington, there are a whole bunch of Japanese cars. You go to Tokyo and count how many Chryslers and GM and Ford cars there are. So the current situation is not working for us. And I don't know why it is that folks would be opposed to us opening up the Japanese market more for U.S. autos or U.S. beef. It doesn't make any sense.

So I'm going to be able to make a strong case. But I think it's important when you talk about dividing the party—look, I—we got a Korean trade—free trade agreement passed, we got a Colombia free trade agreement passed, and a Panama free trade agreement passed over the last several years, during my Presidency. It didn't divide the Democratic Party. There's going to be a set of Democratic Senators and House Members who traditionally have just, on principle, opposed trade because the unions, on principle, regardless of what the provisions are, are opposed to trade.

And then, there are others who, like me, believe that we cannot stop the—a global economy at our shores. We've got to be in there and compete. And we've got to make sure we're writing the rules so that we've got a level playing field, because when we do, products made in America and services provided by American firms are the best in the world. And I will continue to make that argument.

And for those who argue that somehow this is contrary to the interests of working families, what I tell them is my whole Presidency has been about helping working families and lifting up wages, and giving workers more opportunity. And if I didn't think this deal was doing it, I wouldn't do it. I didn't get elected because of the sponsorship of the Business Roundtable or the Chamber of Commerce. Those aren't the ones who brung me to the dance.

The reason I'm doing it is because I know this is an important thing to do, and I also know that it sends a signal throughout Asia that we are out there competing and that we are going to help maintain international rules that are fair for everybody and not so tilted in favor of one country that it ends up being bad for not only our commercial prospects, but for other countries over the long term.

That was a very long answer, but it's a big question, and I hadn't had a chance to talk about it.

Sorry, Matteo.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Very, very briefly, I think I'm confident, but at the same time, I'm worried, because obviously, the situation in Greece is not—the situation in Europe is not the 2011, is not around the world of 2008, so it's different time. But we must absolutely strongly work to achieve an agreement.

To achieve this agreement, it's important Greece Government respects not all the agreements of the past, because in the European Council, we accept a very normal principle. If there is a moment of election and there is a new leader, it's correct to respect the vote of citizens, in this case, the vote of citizens in Greece. But there are a framework of agreements in the European institutions which are very important Greece—Greek Government must respect.

At the same time, we must, for the future, write a new page in the European economics. I'm absolutely confident about it. It's finished the time of only austerity in Europe. But to achieve this goal, the local government, the national Government must do reforms.

This is important, first of all, for Italy. We are absolutely committed to realize every full promise to our citizens, not European institution, to our citizens. And then we can finally open a discussion about the relation between austerity and growth in European economy.

But now is the time to respect the new framework of agreement. And we will work in this direction.

European Economy/U.S. Economy/Greece

[*The reporter asked a question in Italian, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Mario Calvo-Platero, Sole 24 Ore. Mr. President, some of your promises has—have already brought investors from the U.S. to Italy. Now these investors would like to know when all these reforms are going to take place. Could you give us a better idea? You spoke about austerity and growth. The markets are very preoccupied. We have public finances that are in a difficult situation. How can you reconciliate a—this austerity when our public finances are in such bad shape?

And I would like to know what you think about the T–TIP——

[*The reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. ——time and again, about Germany holding Europe hostage to its inflationary obsessions. Now, you have just heard from Mr. Renzi that things are changing in Europe, that there are progrowth policies, especially with the ECB taking action with QE action. Is that enough? Have Europe and Italy done enough? Is your complaint over Germany over? And on Libya, did you agree or did you discuss the sale of drones to Italy? Thank you.

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

Prime Minister Renzi. Three questions in one, you've just asked. Three questions in one.

[*Prime Minister Renzi continued in English as follows.*]

A special offer—[*inaudible*].

President Obama. We're specialists in that. [*Laughter*]

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

Prime Minister Renzi. First of all, the timeline for reforms. I think that I can safely say that the American investors who wish to invest in Italy, but Italian investors as well, finally have a labor market which is more flexible. This has been achieved. Let's say that we have done this with no—then, they have an institutional system, the taxation system, public instruction. In the next 6 months, everything, all this reform will be done.

So what needs to be made absolutely clear is that even if in Italy everybody wants to start—or many people would like to start from scratch again, reforms have begun. They're on their way. And there's no way anyone is going to block them. People who wish to invest at this time find a labor market which is simplified. They also find the quality of the engineers, the people who work, people in Italy in general, a very high quality of people.

But I think that what will be necessary in the next few months is education, education, education—investment in this field. Because in the global world, in order to be a leader in Italy, isn't the number of inhabitants. We're not that many. And perhaps it's not just simply the position, even though we are in a strategic position. What will really count is whether Italians can offer human capital—ideas, development—in future.

Now, in terms of the austerity policies, I think that it's important to bear in mind something that's quite simple. I mean, if—I know that we have to be very clear in our accounts, but we have to bet on growth. The United States are our model.

In the last meeting of the European Board of Directors, President Juncker and Draghi showed us some slides with the results of the United States and in Europe in the last 7 years. Obviously, this attests to the respect for the United States, but it also proves that just based on austerity in Europe, this is not going anywhere. We spoke about this in Brisbane, and we have discussed this with President Obama.

We cannot just look at our budget as, of course, an important limit. Italy is fulfilling all its obligations and it is the country in Europe that is fulfilling all its obligations and all the rules.

Now, in terms of T–TIP, it's a very important objective. We believe that 2015 has to be the turning point, the year of the turning point. As the Italian Government, we are pushing with great determination because we know that with the T–TIP, Italy has everything to gain from the trade and economic stance, but also because we believe that when the United States—and justly so—establish trade agreements with China, with Asia, with other areas in the world, I think that it would be fundamental as a key principle having the same relationship in the logic of our historic friendship between Europe and the United States.

Now, going back to our own party, we represent the party in Italy, which I would like to call the "Democratic Party" one day at a European level. Our party is convinced, and it also maintains the position—even though there are many resistances from the German Social Democrats, I am fully determined to find the agreements. And we will talk about this during our lunch hour as well.

President Obama. First of all, let me make sure that I correct the impression that I have consistently criticized Germany. Chancellor Merkel is a great friend and a great ally. From the time I came into office, when we were in the midst of the great recession, there have been competing economic theories in terms of what's the best way to pull us out of a financially induced crisis of this scale, and it was our strong belief that it was important for us to make the investments, to boost demand, to put money in the pockets of consumers, to strengthen and fortify the banking system so that we wouldn't see a repeat of the kinds of bailout practices and irresponsible practices on Wall Street; and that the best way to bring down the deficit was not just to cut spending, but to grow the economy, as well as initiate the kinds of structural reforms around health care and education and research and development that were going to be important for long-term growth.

And I think we've largely succeeded in stabilizing the economy and then putting it on a growth trajectory. We've now seen 5 straight years of job growth. We've gone from a 10-percent unemployment rate down to 5.5, and we've done this while reducing the deficit by two-thirds, primarily because the economy grew much faster.

And it's been my view with respect to Europe that it's not an either-or situation, but it's a both-and situation. Sometimes, it gets framed as, what's the right answer for Europe? Is it austerity or is it structural reform? And my attitude has been, yes, you need structural reforms of the sort that Matteo is initiating. If the labor markets are too stuck, then it's very hard to hire, particularly for young people. If there's too much bureaucracy to start a new business, then businesses will go elsewhere, or talented entrepreneurs will start businesses someplace else.

So I think Prime Minister Renzi's government is on the right track in initiating the kinds of structural reforms that Angela Merkel and other economists have called on for a long time. But what I've also said is, is that at a time of such low demand and hints of deflation that we were seeing in Europe over the course of the last several years, boosting demand is also important, having some flexibility in meeting fiscal targets is also important, that the sustainability of structural reforms depends on people feeling some sense of hope and some sense of progress. And if all it is, is just getting squeezed, but there's no growth, then over time, the political consensus breaks down, and not only do you not get structural reforms, but you also end up reverting to some of the old patterns that didn't work.

And so I think that the approach that Matteo is describing is the right one: Move forward on the structural reforms, but have flexibility and a strategy for increasing demand, increasing investments.

If you—and by the way, here in the United States, we're not done. I'd like to see us rebuild our infrastructure across this country. That's a

smart investment to make right now. It would put people back to work. It would boost additional demand. More workers would be employed. They would then spend money. You'd get a virtuous cycle. But it's also something that we need to do to stay competitive. So it's a smart combination.

So this is not just a criticism of Europe. I think, globally, all of us have to recognize, global aggregate demand is still very weak. And China is making some necessary transitions towards a more consumer-based, rather than export-based economy. But that means that they're not going to be growing as fast. And that, in turn, has meant that suppliers of raw materials to China are seeing their economies soften.

And what I've said to the Europeans is, don't expect that the United States is simply going to be the engine for everybody, don't want to—expect that you can just keep on selling to the United States, but we can't sell anything to you because your economy is so weak. That won't benefit anybody. And those are concerns that I've expressed across the board.

And this—finally, the last point I would make, this applies to Greece as well. I think Matteo is right. Greece needs to initiate reforms. They have to collect taxes. They have to reduce their bureaucracy. They have to have more flexible labor practices. And when the new Prime Minister came in, I called him, and I said, we recognize you need to show your people that there's hope and that you can grow, and we will be supportive of some flexibilities in how you move forward so that you can make investments, and it's not just squeezing blood from a stone. But you have to show those who are extending credit, those who are supporting your financial system, that you're trying to help yourself. And that requires making the kinds of tough decisions that I think Matteo is beginning to make.

I did—we did not discuss drones.

Q. You did not?

President Obama. We did not.

Last question from this side is Margaret Talev [Bloomberg News].

Legislation Regarding Iran's Nuclear Program/International Efforts To Prevent Iran's Development of a Nuclear Weapon/Russia's Sale of Missiles to Iran/Attorney General–designate Loretta E. Lynch

Q. Thank you, Mr. President; Prime Minister Renzi.

Mr. President, I would like to ask you about Iran. But before I forget, I'm hoping at the end of your answer you might also bring us up to speed a little bit on Loretta Lynch's prospects for confirmation as your AG.

President Obama. I won't forget.

Q. Have you done enough? What do you make of Republicans' most recent moves? Where is this thing going?

On Iran, so much has happened, and so this is going to be one of my three-part questions——

President Obama. Just a general——

Q. No. [*Laughter*] The Cardin-Corker compromise this week really was a pretty significant concession from you. And what I'm wondering is, do you believe that you've now weathered any more congressional sort of bids to derail this? Or are you concerned that because Israel and Iran have now become deeply polarized issues, there's going to be more to fend off?

And you have suggested, but you have not said explicitly, that there must be a phase-out rather than the immediate lifting of sanctions in order for you to agree to a final deal. Can you be definitive on that? In exchange, might you be willing to release part or all of that $100 billion or so in frozen oil assets that Iran has in offshore accounts?

And you seem to be floating the idea that you might want to say something about Russia lifting its ban on the sale of missiles to Iran, so I will throw that your way. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Renzi, I wanted to ask you about drones, but since that, shockingly, didn't come up, there's been some deeply troubling news about some of the migrants trying to come from Libya to Italy, violence—reports of violence by Muslims and—pushing the Christians off the boats. And what I wanted to ask you is, how are you managing this? Are you

confident that Italy is able to control the risk of extremists coming in to Europe through Italy? Thank you.

President Obama. All right. I wrote them down. [*Laughter*]

On Iran, I thought Bob Corker and Ben Cardin came to a reasonable compromise. I had two concerns from the start with respect to any steps taken by Congress. The first was to make sure that their actions did not derail or prevent us being able to get the best deal possible and John Kerry, when he is in those negotiations, is not being hobbled or his life being made more complicated by congressional actions until we actually have a deal done. My basic argument was, let us show you if there's a deal or not. If there is, you'll have ample opportunity to review it and opine on it. But right now we're still negotiating, so have some patience.

And I think the final product that emerged out of the Corker-Cardin negotiations, we believe, will not derail the negotiations. So that checked off one box.

The second concern I had was just an issue of Presidential prerogatives. There were a number of people who were supporting Corker's legislation suggesting that, as a routine matter, a President needs to get sign-off from Congress to negotiate political agreements. That is not the case. That has never been the case. This is not a formal treaty that is being envisioned. And the President of the United States, whether Democrat or Republican, traditionally has been able to enter into political agreements that are binding with other countries without congressional approval.

And I still have some concerns about the suggestion that that tradition was in some ways changing. But there was language in the legislation that spoke to this being directly related to congressional sanctions. And that, I think, at least allows me to interpret the legislation in such a way that it not sending a signal to future Presidents that each and every time they're negotiating a political agreement that they have to get a congressional authorization.

So the final thing I'll say about the Corker legislation is that both Senator Corker and Senator Cardin, at least in my understanding, agreed that there is not going to be a whole bunch of poison pills or additional provisions or amendments added to it and that they will be protective of this being a straightforward, fair process for Congress to be able to evaluate any deal that we may come up with and then register its views, but that it's not going to be tilted in the direction of trying to kill the deal. I take them at their word on that. We'll continue to monitor that.

But assuming that what lands on my desk is what Senators Corker and Cardin agreed to, I will sign it. And that will then give Congress an opportunity to see, do we have a deal that reflects the political agreement that I talked about earlier? I expect that it will.

With respect to the issue of sanctions coming down, I don't want to get out of—ahead of John Kerry and my negotiators in terms of how to craft this. I would just make a general observation, and that is that how sanctions are lessened, how we snap back sanctions if there's a violation, there are a lot of different mechanisms and ways to do that. Part of John's job and part of the Iranian negotiators' job and part of the P5-plus-1's job is to sometimes find formulas that get to our main concerns while allowing the other side to make a presentation to their body politic that is more acceptable.

Our main concern here is making sure that if Iran doesn't abide by its agreement that we don't have to jump through a whole bunch of hoops in order to reinstate sanctions. That's our main concern. And I think that goal of having in reserve the possibility of putting back and applying forceful sanctions in the event of a violation, that goal can be met. And it will require some creative negotiations by John Kerry and others, and I'm confident it will be successful. And I very much appreciate, by the way, the support that has been provided by Prime Minister Renzi, as well as his former Foreign Minister, who now is the EU representative in many of these discussions.

And with respect to the Russian sales, I will tell you this is actually a sale that was slated to happen in 2009. When I first met with then-Prime Minister Putin, they actually stopped

the sale, paused or suspended the sale at our request. And I'm, frankly, surprised that it held this long, given that they were not prohibited by sanctions from selling these defensive weapons. When I say I'm not surprised: given some of the deterioration in the relationship between Russia and the United States and the fact that their economy is under strain and this was a substantial sale.

I do think that it sends a message about how important it is for us to look like we are credible in negotiations if, in fact, a deal fails and we are needing to maintain sanctions. Because I've heard some in Congress who are opposed to this deal say either let's just slap on even more sanctions or we'll do sanctions unilaterally regardless of what other countries are willing to do.

The reason that the sanctions regime has worked is because, painstakingly, we built an international coalition that has held this long. And if it is perceived that we walked away from a fair deal that gives us assurances Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon, then those international sanctions will fray. And it won't just be Russia or China; it will be some of our close allies who will start questioning what the—our capacity or the wisdom of maintaining these.

We don't want to put ourselves in that position. We want to make sure that if there's no deal around the Iran nuclear program, it's because the Iranians were not willing to accept what the international community considered to be an appropriate and fair approach to this problem.

Okay? Phew. [*Laughter*] All right.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. Oh, see, I'm still not finished. [*Laughter*] Let me just say this about Loretta Lynch. We've actually seen some outbreaks of bipartisanship and common sense in Congress over the last couple of weeks. Yesterday I signed the SGR fix that initiates not only some real reforms around how our health care system works, but expands insurance for children. We just talked about what I think was at least a constructive process to resolve the question of congressional involvement in Iran.

And yet what we still have is this crazy situation where a woman who everybody agrees is qualified, who has gone after terrorists, who has worked with police officers to get gangs off the streets, who is trusted by the civil rights community and by police unions as being somebody who is fair and effective and a good manager—nobody suggests otherwise—who has been confirmed twice before by the United States Senate for one of the biggest law enforcement jobs in the country, has been now sitting there longer than the previous seven Attorney General nominees combined. And there's no reason for it. Nobody can describe a reason for it beyond political gamesmanship in the Senate on an issue completely unrelated to her.

This is the top law enforcement job in the country. It's my Attorney General who has to interact with his Italian counterparts, or her Italian counterparts, in dealing with counterterrorism issues, in dealing with Interpol, in dealing with our national security, in coordinating with our FBI. What are we doing here?

And I have to say that there are times where the dysfunction in the Senate just goes too far. This is an example of it. It's gone too far. Enough. Enough. Call Loretta Lynch for a vote. Get her confirmed. Put her in place. Let her do her job. This is embarrassing, a process like this.

Thank you. [*Laughter*]

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows*.]

Prime Minister Renzi. About the situation of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, I think the Mediterranean is a sea and not a cemetery. The problem in this moment is the situation on the ground in Libya we discussed about, Mr. President—or with the President. If you think about, 91 percent of the people who come from Africa to Italy come from Libya. So exactly as 3 years ago, when the people come from Tunisia because the problem was the lack of stability in Tunisia, today, the only way is come back to the peace and stability the Libyan institutions. Obviously, it's not easy. We work every day to find a solution with the United Nations

and then with other partners and the friends and allies in the region. But I think the only way is come back to stability in Libya.

In this period, in this period of transition, Italy is ready to bring responsibility to make the leadership in every diplomatic and counterterrorism efforts. But the key point is stop human trafficking in Mediterranean Sea is a priority for everybody in Europe and for me is absolutely crucial. The words of the President Obama is a priority also for the United States. Stop human trafficking is the only way to give a perspective of justice and also of security, obviously, of course, for the risks of this area.

I think there are not problem of clash of religions in Italy. Maybe yesterday, maybe there were one case about it, but the problem is not a problem of clash of religions, it's a problem of human dignity. We are absolutely committed to solve this problem, and I am confident if this becomes a priority, we achieve a great result.

Libya/Italy-U.S. Counterterrorism Cooperation/International Sanctions Against Russia/Ukraine

[*The reporter asked a question in Italian, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. You just said that Italy is ready to take on its responsibilities in terms of diplomacy and antiterrorist activities. I would like to ask you, who are the protagonists in this region, the people that should be the interlocutors, in order to reach a stability in Libya? And what does antiterrorist activities mean? Are you ready to send the 5,000 men that you spoke about? How do you intend to do so? And also perhaps, you—will you have the support from President Obama, maybe using drones?

[*The reporter continued in English as follows.*]

Q. [*Inaudible*]—first of all, can we expect any time soon specific counterterrorism action of the United States in Libya? And then, concerning Russia, President Renzi has been the last G–7 leader in Moscow. Do you think it was useful? And did you ask and get any specific commitments for the renewal of the sanctions against Russia? Thank you.

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

Prime Minister Renzi. Well, let me talk to you about the question on Libya. I will repeat what I said. Obviously, all the countries in this region are countries that are interested in looking and finding—looking for and finding a solution, barring none. We appreciate the work that certain countries are finally doing in the Mediterranean area, Northern Africa, starting by Egypt. So all the countries are part of this huge undertaking. But please allow me to be very clear: Peace in Libya, either the tribes do this or no one is going to do this, no one is going to achieve this. The only way to reach peace is that the tribes finally accept that they're going to go toward stabilization and peace.

And our work is that of looking for this to favor all this at all levels so that this effort does indeed lead to peace. The diplomatic initiatives you are aware of; they're the ones that we are doing with Benardino León, and they're the ones that the Foreign Ministers are also trying to support and to study.

Obviously, this is not a job that starts in Libya. I would like my Italian journalist friends to understand that Libya—which we consider because they're across from us—they're the main problem, but they're part of a more complex, greater problem that has to do with the risk of terrorist infiltrations in Africa. We are feeling the pain for what happened at the University of Garissa in Kenya. But this regards Africa as a whole, as a continent.

A few days ago, we remembered that a year has gone by from when some 100 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram and remember the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. This is a moral imperative for all of us. Therefore, the issue of Libya is something that we have to place in a wider context. The technical solutions, our teams are looking at them every single day, and there are obviously technical solutions in which

there is a full awareness—for which there is a full awareness. The United States is next to—the United States—Europe is next to the United States in a huge challenge that will bring the troops in our country to spend more months, more time in Afghanistan, much more so than we had thought. Because if the coalition with the United States considers that the process has to continue, well, Italy will do its part.

Obviously, in terms of the technical solutions that I mentioned, this is not something that has to do with political debates, that has to do with our technical teams, with their expertise. I have to be sure that I have priority and assurance from the United States that this is not something in which Italy is working on its own.

I can tell you that as far we are concerned, the cooperation and the work together with you both in the natural diplomatic way and in the constant work which is done everything single day, which is a job which is done silently, quietly in everyday life, which takes us to heroism. I thought—I'm thinking about the Coast Guards, the men and women that saved those people at sea, that allowed a young woman to give birth on the boat. She was dying, and they saved two lives. This is what we want to do. But at the same time, we also have to be fully aware of the fact that the work that we do together is a job that not only regards Libya, but all of Africa, I might say the whole world.

And allow me to say this without taking the floor too long. This is a job that we are doing everywhere, from Russia to Latin America, Afghanistan to the Middle East. The cooperation and work which is done between the United States and Italy is something out of discussion—that cannot be discussed.

President Obama. We are consistently looking where terrorist threats might emanate, and Libya obviously is an area of great concern. ISIL has been very explicit about wanting to use the chaos inside of Libya as a potential justification for putting their—some of their personnel there. And so the coordination with Italy and with other of our key partners is going to be very important.

We will not be able to solve the problem just with a few drone strikes or a few military operations. You have a country that has been broken into a number of tribal factions. There are some sectarian elements to it, and you don't have a central government that is functioning effectively. So we still have to guard against the use of the territories in Libya as a safe haven for terrorist operations, much in the way we've done with respect to Somalia for many years.

But the answer ultimately is to have a government that can control its own borders and work with us. That's going to take some time. But we will combine counterterrorism efforts in cooperation with Italy and other likeminded nations with a political effort. And we're going to have to encourage some of the countries inside of the Gulf who have, I think, influence over the various factions inside of Libya to be more cooperative themselves. In some cases, you've seen them fan the flames of military conflict rather than try to reduce them.

With respect to Russia, Matteo and I agree that we need implementation of Minsk. And I expressed my strong belief that the European Council needs to continue the current sanctions that are in place until we've seen full implementation of the Minsk agreement. There will be a vote coming up this summer in the European Council. And my expectation is not only Italy, but all countries in Europe will recognize that it would be a wrong message to send to reduce sanctions pressure on Russia when their key implementation steps don't happen until the end of the year. At minimum, we have to maintain the existing sanction levels until we've seen that they've carried out the steps that they're required to under the agreement.

And one of the things that Matteo and I share—and I think the Italian people and the American people share—is a sense of values and principles that sometimes override political expediency. That's part of our DNA, and that's part of our memories because of the history of both our countries.

And I think we have to be realistic and practical in how we look at a problem like Ukraine, but we have to also recall that the reason there

is a unified and prosperous Europe is because enormous sacrifices were made on behalf of ideals and on behalf of principles. And if those principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty start getting ignored, then that carries a cost for Europe and for the world.

Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece; and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini of Italy, in her capacity as European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and H.R. 2, the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015. Prime Minister Renzi referred to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker; Mario Draghi, President, European Central Bank; and U.N. Special Representative in Libya Benardino León. A reporter referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Remarks on the Observance of National Poetry Month
April 17, 2015

Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, first of all, let me thank Madeleine for the wonderful introduction. [*Laughter*] And Madeleine is going to be going to Princeton next year, so her and Michelle were exchanging how special they were, backstage. [*Laughter*] And you know, "President" is a cool title, but "former teen poet"—[*laughter*]—that is a pretty good title as well. And I'm proud to be both. I have to say my poems are not as good as yours, Madeleine. But I was going to recite some poetry, but Michelle said no. [*Laughter*] She said, don't do that. [*Laughter*] No.

Anyway, April is National Poetry Month. So Michelle and I figured what better way to celebrate than with some of America's brilliant young poets. And we've invited poetry fans of all ages to join us as well. And we have one of America's most gifted and accomplished poets, my dear friend, Elizabeth Alexander, who's going to share some of work with us. So I'm not going to speak long.

Poetry matters. Poetry—like all art—gives shape and texture and depth of meaning to our lives. It helps us know the world. It helps us understand ourselves. It helps us understand others: their struggles, their joys, the ways that they see the world. It helps us connect. In the beginning, there was the word. And I think it's fair to say that if we didn't have poetry, that this would be a pretty barren world. In fact, it's not clear that we would survive without poetry. As Elizabeth once wrote, "We encounter each other in words, words spiny or smooth, whispered or declaimed, words to consider, reconsider." That's the power of poetry.

Sometimes, it's only after reading a poem or writing a poem that we understand something that we already went through, that we felt, that we experienced. And that's why we often reach for poetry in the big moments: when we fall in love or lose somebody close to us or leave behind one stage of life and enter into another. A good poem can make hard times a little easier to survive and make good times a lot sweeter.

But poetry does not just matter to us as individuals, it matters to us as a people. The greatness of a country is not just the size of its military or the size of its economy or how much territory it controls. It's also measured by the richness of its culture. And America is America in part because of our poets and our artists and our musicians, all those who have shared their ideas and their stories and helped make us the vibrant and passionate and beautiful country that we are today.

It's not every nation that produces poets like Elizabeth or like Madeleine. There are parts of the world where poets are censored or they are silenced. But that's not how we do it here. That's one of the many reasons why we're such