

And I believe that what is true for America is true for virtually all mature democracies. And that is no accident. We can be proud of our nations without defining ourselves in opposition to some other group. We can be patriotic without demonizing someone else. We can cherish our own identities—our religion, our ethnicity, our traditions—without putting others down. Our systems are premised on the notion that absolute power will corrupt, but that people—ordinary people—are fundamentally good; that they value family and friendship, faith and the dignity of hard work; and that with appropriate checks and balances, governments can reflect this goodness.

I believe that's the future we must seek together. To believe in the dignity of every individual, to believe we can bridge our differences and choose cooperation over conflict—that is not weakness, that is strength. It is a practical necessity in this interconnected world.

And our people understand this. Think of the Liberian doctor who went door to door to search for Ebola cases and to tell families what to do if they show symptoms. Think of the Iranian shopkeeper who said, after the nuclear deal, "God willing, now we'll be able to offer many more goods at better prices." Think of the Americans who lowered the flag over our Embassy in Havana in 1961—the year I was born—and returned this summer to raise that flag back up. One of these men said of the Cuban people: "We could do things for them, and they could do things for us. We loved them." For 50 years, we ignored that fact.

Think of the families leaving everything they've known behind, risking barren deserts

and stormy waters just to find shelter, just to save their children. One Syrian refugee who was greeted in Hamburg with warm greetings and shelter said, "We feel there are still some people who love other people."

The people of our United Nations are not as different as they are told. They can be made to fear, they can be taught to hate, but they can also respond to hope. History is littered with the failure of false prophets and fallen empires who believed that might always makes right, and that will continue to be the case. You can count on that. But we are called upon to offer a different type of leadership, leadership strong enough to recognize that nations share common interests and people share a common humanity and, yes, there are certain ideas and principles that are universal.

That's what those who shaped the United Nations 70 years ago understood. Let us carry forward that faith into the future, for it is the only way we can assure that future will be brighter for my children and for yours.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:18 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President, 69th Session of the U.N. General Assembly; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and Francis "Mike" East, Larry C. Morris, and Jim Tracy, former U.S. marines who raised the flag for the U.S. Embassy reopening in Havana, Cuba, on August 14. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

## Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations in New York City *September 28, 2015*

Good afternoon. As always, this lunch comes right after I have spoken. And I think the Secretary-General designs it that way to keep me brief.

You've heard enough from me already today. I do want to take this opportunity to welcome

all of you once again to the United States and New York City, as we mark the 70th anniversary of this institution. And I want to thank all of you for the work that we have done together.

In particular, I want to thank our Secretary-General for his outstanding work. Mr.

Secretary-General, you have helped to mobilize the world around a host of urgent challenges: humanitarian disasters, our new sustainable development goals, and climate change. I value your friendship. I value your counsel. I'm glad you think that we're all lucky to have this many challenges. [*Laughter*] I don't know if you personally always feel that way. But because of your tireless work, the world is a better place. We very much appreciate you.

One of the Secretary-General's predecessors, Dag Hammarskjöld, once said, "The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and can never be abandoned." Over the past seven decades, we've witnessed this institution's enormous power to resolve conflicts and protect the world's vulnerable people, to strengthen international cooperation, including between former adversaries. But we are facing extraordinary challenges today, ones that test our capacity to work together: humanitarian crises, challenges to the international order, threats to human rights. And so our ability to come together as the United Nations is being tested once again.

When I think about the true measure of our success going forward, the opportunities that we create for our people, the security that we provide them, our ability to address terrorism or the ravages of climate change, I feel optimistic that we can tackle these problems if we all work together. And this institution will be critical in order for us to achieve those goals.

There is no problem that man has caused that man cannot solve if we are bold enough, deploy our imagination, have the political will, and recognize our common humanity. That's what the United Nations is about. That's what our Secretary-General has been about.

And I want to propose a toast: To all of our nations, to the United Nations, to the people that we represent and to whom we have responsibilities towards. Amid the inevitable trials and setbacks, may we never relax in our pursuit of progress, and may we never abandon the pursuit of peace.

Cheers.

[*At this point, the President offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the North Delegates' Lounge at United Nations Headquarters.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India in New York City *September 28, 2015*

*President Obama.* Well, it is a great pleasure to meet once again with my good friend, Prime Minister Modi. Our meeting builds on the progress that was made during the wonderful visit that I was able to make to India, to the Prime Minister's invitation, and the historic participation that I had with Republic Day. We've elevated our ties. We've committed ourselves to a new partnership between our two countries. And there's been excellent follow-through on a whole range of issues.

Much of our discussion today focused on the upcoming climate conference in Paris. We

agreed that this is a critical issue for the world; that all of us have responsibilities. We are encouraged by the aggressive nature of President [Prime Minister] Modi's commitment to clean energy. And what I indicated to the Prime Minister is that I really think that India's leadership in this upcoming conference will set the tone not just for today, but for decades to come. And I have great confidence in our ability to partner with other large countries like China and the European Union's efforts in order for us to really solve this problem in a significant way that will help not just our people,

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\* White House correction.