

make life not only easier, but better and freer for all.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh.

Joint Statement of the United States-Nordic Leaders Summit May 13, 2016

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States reaffirm our deep partnership based on shared fundamental values.

Democracy, the rule of law, gender equality, respect for human rights, and the protection and equal treatment of all people without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity unite the Nordic countries and the United States and serve as a natural basis for our cooperation. Transparency, accountability and good governance, strong market economies, free trade, shared prosperity, open space for civil society, and sustainable development are keys to political stability and social well-being. We reaffirm our commitment to pursue these values and objectives and to work together to encourage other countries to do the same.

Building on the U.S.-Nordic meeting in 2013 in Stockholm, today we have pledged to deepen our cooperation on key international issues related to security and defense; migration and refugees; climate, energy and the Arctic; and economic growth and global development.

Security and Defense

The Nordic countries and the United States stress the importance of upholding the European security order and the fundamental principles of international law. Our countries are committed to strengthening investments in defense and military capabilities, as well as in diplomacy and regional cooperation, commensurate with a more challenging security environment. The Nordic countries greatly value the United States' commitment to Europe and its security. NATO remains key to transatlantic

and European security, and the contributions of Sweden and Finland, including those they make as NATO enhanced opportunity partners, are highly valuable. The United States, Denmark, Iceland, and Norway are committed to building on NATO's enhanced opportunity partners' framework in order to promote a close political dialogue and military cooperation between Finland and Sweden and NATO Allies (28+2). Through their overlapping memberships in NATO and the EU, the Nordic states, and the United States take measures to increase regional security that are mutually reinforcing and contribute substantially to stability in Europe. The Nordic countries and the United States strongly support closer cooperation between NATO and the EU, and consider new areas of practical cooperation between the two to be a priority for the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July.

We share with the Baltic States an interest in strengthening the security and stability of the Baltic Sea region. The United States welcomes Nordic Defense Cooperation and intends to support its initiatives, including participation in training, exercises, and creative frameworks that deepen regional ties and promote security. We commit to improving our individual and collective capacity to withstand hybrid threats and to leverage appropriate political, economic, and military tools to strengthen national and regional resilience. In anticipation of the NATO Summit in Warsaw, Denmark and Norway are prepared to join the United States in contributing to enhanced allied forward presence. Concrete contributions will be developed in consultations with NATO allies in preparation for the NATO Summit.

The United States and the Nordic countries share a firm conviction that there can be no

compromises over the international security order and its fundamental principles. Russia's illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, which we do not accept, its aggression in Donbas, and its attempts to destabilize Ukraine are inconsistent with international law and violate the established European security order. The United States and the Nordic countries reaffirm our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Europe and the United States have reacted firmly to Russia's violations of international law in Ukraine. Sanctions against Russia for its actions in eastern Ukraine cannot be lifted until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. Our Crimea-related sanctions are also to remain in force until Russia returns this territory to Ukrainian control.

We expect the Ukrainian government to redouble efforts to adopt and implement effective reforms. The United States and the Nordic countries will continue to assist Ukraine actively in this effort. We strongly support the EU's Eastern Partnership.

The United States and the Nordic countries are concerned by Russia's growing military presence in the Baltic Sea region, its nuclear posturing, its undeclared exercises, and the provocative actions taken by Russian aircraft and naval vessels. We call on Russia to ensure that its military maneuvers and exercises are in full compliance with its international obligations and commitments to security and stability. Our countries recognize the need for an appropriate dialogue with Russia to be maintained to enhance transparency and reduce risk, and to address issues of common concern, including the counter-ISIL campaign and ongoing efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict in Syria.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to partnering together to strengthen international security and address global issues beyond Europe. Global stability requires determined steps to address the problems faced by fragile states and to address the root causes of conflict and instability. We together recognize Sweden's leadership on the

International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and acknowledge that the world's poorest and most vulnerable are increasingly concentrated in fragile states. We reaffirm our shared commitment to work together to promote resilient, democratic societies and to address the drivers of state fragility. We share a long-term commitment to stabilization and development in Afghanistan and are working to bolster the Afghan government and its security forces, maintain international support for Afghanistan, and encourage the Taliban to join a meaningful and inclusive peace process with the Afghan government. Denmark will further strengthen its contribution to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan to around 100 military personnel and has also decided to sustain its financial support to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces with \$15 million annually until 2020, setting a strong example for the international community heading into the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Achieving a negotiated settlement to the war in Syria is an immediate and pressing issue. The United States and the Nordic countries have a common aim in stabilizing the situation in Mali and the Sahel region as well as in Somalia and the Horn of Africa. The long-term stability of the Middle East requires that key players assume their responsibilities to make progress on Middle East peace. The situation on the ground shows the urgent need for a negotiated two-state solution, which remains the only way to achieve a sustainable, long-term peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Norway, as chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, will continue its efforts to support a sustainable Palestinian economy as a critical component of a political solution.

Terrorism and violent extremism are major challenges for the international community. The United States and the Nordic countries intend to work together to counter these threats as well as to address their root causes. As members of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, our collective aim is to degrade the capabilities of and to defeat Da'esh. We confirm our continued engagement in all lines of effort in the Coalition's fight against Da'esh in Iraq and Syr-

ia and in advancing stabilization, civilian support, and humanitarian aid in the region.

Denmark will redeploy F16 fighter jets, a C130J transport aircraft, and make additional troop contributions, including special operation forces, for operations in Iraq and Syria. Denmark will also support stabilization efforts in Iraq and Syria with at least \$40 million over the next three years, and has pledged \$47 million in 2016 for humanitarian relief in Syria. Finland is enhancing its contribution to Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq by providing up to 100 training staff in the fall of 2016. Finland is committing \$29 million for humanitarian relief in Syria in 2016. From the beginning of the crisis, Finnish humanitarian assistance has amounted to more than \$120 million. Norway has stepped up its military contribution to the coalition against ISIL, and will continue to train Iraqi soldiers and will deploy a contingent of around 60 soldiers that will provide training, advice and operational support to Syrian local forces fighting ISIL. Norway has recently pledged \$1.2 billion over 4 years in humanitarian aid to Syria and has pledged \$24 million to stabilization efforts, including \$3.1 million in 2016 for demining in Iraq. Sweden is contributing military trainers in Iraq, has provided over \$400 million in humanitarian aid to Iraq and Syria since 2011, and has committed \$200 million in development assistance to address the Syrian crisis over 5 years. The US is leading the global coalition to counter ISIL and is the largest contributor of stabilization and humanitarian assistance to Iraq and Syria, most recently announcing an additional \$155 million in humanitarian relief for Iraq and contributing over \$600 million for Syria, as announced at the recent London Conference.

The United States and the Nordic countries will continue to work together, exchange information, and share experiences on preventing and countering violent extremism. Nordic and U.S. local officials and civil society leaders plan to exchange best practices for local CVE programming. We encourage Nordic and U.S. cities to join the Strong Cities Network in order to share their experiences and reach out to other cities around the world. We also encourage

youth to join the Youth Civil Activism Network to find innovative ways to counter violent extremism.

Civilian support and stabilization in post-conflict countries must address the humanitarian hazards posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Building on the U.S.-Norwegian Demining Initiative for Colombia, The United States and Nordic countries commit to establishing a new U.S.-Nordic partnership to support the removal of such weapons, making post-conflict communities safer and setting the stage for recovery and development. The United States and Nordic countries encourage other countries as well as private sector participants to join this new partnership. Nordic countries commit to provide more than \$13 million toward UXO removal in Syria and Iraq, with a focus on efforts in Ramadi and other areas liberated from ISIL.

Cyberspace issues, including cybersecurity, the application of international law and norms in cyberspace, and Internet governance pose pressing and continuously evolving challenges. We acknowledge that cyber threats undermine our collective ability to use the Internet to bolster economic growth and development around the world. In cyberspace, just as elsewhere, states have a special responsibility to promote security, stability, and economic ties with other nations. In support of that objective, we affirm that no state should conduct or knowingly support cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets or other confidential business information, with the intent of providing competitive advantages to companies or commercial sectors. We also endorse the 2015 report of the UN Group of Governmental Experts in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, affirm that existing international law, in particular the UN Charter, applies to state conduct in cyberspace, and commit ourselves to the view that all states should abide by voluntary and non-binding norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace during peacetime.

Major progress has been made in promoting crisis management—both military and civilian—as

highlighted by the Leaders' Summit on UN peacekeeping in September 2015. The United States and the Nordic countries intend to continue to engage in making UN peace operations more effective, efficient and responsive, based on the recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. Preventive action and peacebuilding are essential.

Women's full and meaningful participation in all aspects of social and political life is key to sustainable peace, security and development. The Nordic countries and the United States believe that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are important goals in their own right, as well as powerful instruments for building human capacity and promoting social and political stability. The United States and the Nordic countries will continue empowering women and highlighting the importance of women's active participation in conflict prevention and resolution, peace processes, mediation, peacemaking, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction as set forth in UNSCR 1325 and its progeny. Both the Nordic Women Mediators' Network and the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations are valuable contributions. We reaffirm the importance of making all efforts to prevent gender-based and sexual violence, to support victims, and to hold perpetrators to account in order to redress the culture of impunity that often surrounds such acts of violence. The United States and the Nordic countries encourage partners to join the initiative Call to Action on Protection from gender-based Violence in Emergencies, for which Sweden recently took over the chairmanship from the United States. We are committed to strengthening the UN Peace and Security Agenda.

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation are major areas for cooperation for the United States and Nordic countries. Our countries are committed to working together in promoting nuclear security, disarmament and non-proliferation. Building on the achievements of the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit, the United States and the Nordic countries intend to work

together within the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, INTERPOL, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Global Partnership to promote improvements in nuclear security and to counter nuclear smuggling. We are committed to full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors. The United States and Nordic countries intend to continue to show leadership toward minimizing the use of highly enriched uranium in civilian applications. The destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapons was an important achievement in which cooperation between the United States, Denmark, Finland, and Norway played a prominent role, and we continue to press Syria with respect to omissions and discrepancies in its declaration. We share a common view on the importance of implementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. Norway contributed to the removal of Iran's low-enriched uranium in December 2015.

The Nordic countries and the United States support the objectives set out in the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSa) and commit to assist a number of developing countries to meet their obligations under international health regulations, including by developing and assisting with implementation of a national plan to achieve the targets of the GHSa. In this regard, the United States will assist at least 31 countries, and Nordic Countries will collectively assist 10 countries. The United States and Nordic Countries will also support Joint External Evaluations, developed under the leadership of the United States and Finland, including by providing technical and/or financial assistance.

The United States and the Nordic countries reaffirm our support for the UN and for mediation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as for the development of peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. The U.S.-Nordic Security Dialogue continues to be an important forum for deliberations on these issues.

Migration and Refugees

Today the number of irregular migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people is on a scale unprecedented since World War II. This is a global challenge requiring a comprehensive and systematic response. The United States and the Nordic countries commit to work together to meet urgent humanitarian needs and promote solutions that deal with the root causes of irregular migration, address associated challenges such as human smuggling and trafficking, and seek global solutions that promote respect for the right to seek and attain asylum, taking into account regional responsibility-sharing arrangements.

Legal pathways to immigration and orderly refugee resettlement are a superior alternative to irregular migratory movements, and also reduce risks of discrimination and abuse to members of more vulnerable groups such as older persons, persons with disabilities, women, and children.

Nordic countries and the United States are world leaders in humanitarian response and have historically taken in a large share of refugees. We intend to maintain our humanitarian record and to advance measures to make the international humanitarian response more effective, efficient and fully able to respond to today's challenges. Further, the United States is committed to working alongside Europe in dealing with the global refugee and migration crisis and by addressing its root causes. Support to the regions hardest affected by the refugee crisis is one of the most effective components of a sustainable solution.

There is a clear link between forced displacements and the lack of good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights. We emphasize the responsibility of states to protect their populations from genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes.

There is a fundamental need to strengthen humanitarian response, to fashion a long-term approach to managing migration and recurring and protracted crises and to identify global solutions based on responsibility sharing and re-

spect for international human rights. The World Humanitarian Summit in May, the UN High-Level Meeting on Addressing Large Scale Movements of Refugees and Migrants, and the U.S.-led Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September are excellent opportunities for addressing humanitarian challenges and irregular migration, and advancing concrete and comprehensive solutions for vulnerable refugee populations.

Climate Change, Energy and the Arctic

The leaders recognize that climate change is one of the foremost challenges the world is facing. No effort should be spared in making concrete progress domestically and abroad over the coming decades by shifting to low carbon economies and creating more resilient communities. The United States and the Nordic countries acknowledge the foundational role energy plays in our economies and that energy security is key for overall security.

Building on a history of collaboration, the United States and the Nordic countries commit to strengthening European energy security and to join and implement the Paris Agreement, accelerate the transition to a clean energy future, strengthen adaptation efforts, especially in developing countries, protect and restore forests, and continue to take science-based steps to protect the Arctic and its peoples.

Energy Security

The United States and the Nordic countries agree that a well-functioning, integrated and efficient European energy market is important to producing economic prosperity and energy security. Diversified supply sources and routes are a prerequisite for an efficient energy market and the security of Europe's energy supply. We support the EU goal of increased diversification of supply sources and routes, increased indigenous and sustainable production, greater levels of interconnection, and enhanced energy efficiency. We also support the efforts of EU countries to further improve the functioning of the market, including by establishing more

infrastructure to enhance the efficiency of the market and by developing a more effective regulatory framework to promote energy security and support diversification of fuel types, sources, and routes for energy imports. These steps are preconditions for energy security, affordable energy and an effective climate policy in Europe.

Implementing the Paris Agreement

The leaders commit to join the Paris Agreement as soon as possible. Norway, Iceland, and the United States have committed to join the Paris Agreement this year, building on more than 30 countries that have already joined or have committed to taking necessary domestic steps with a view to joining this year. As countries implement their respective Nationally Determined Contributions, they should strive to formulate and communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies pursuant to the Paris Agreement.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to working with developing country partners to assist in strengthening their adaptation and mitigation efforts. We intend to make every effort to enhance the effectiveness of adaptation assistance by coordinating support for adaptation planning and action in appropriate fora, including the National Adaptation Plans Global Network. The United States and the Nordic countries recognize the potential for the effects of climate change to exacerbate conflict and fragility in vulnerable countries and share the view that foreign policy instruments must contribute to addressing this challenge effectively. We commit to prioritizing the prevention of compound risks stemming from climate fragility and to better integrating consideration of those risks into foreign, defense, and development policies, planning, and assistance programs.

The United States and the Nordic countries commit to provide leadership on climate finance. Following the Paris Agreement, it is critical to scale up support to developing countries to implement their respective Nationally Determined Contributions, including by using

public resources to mobilize robust increases in private capital.

The United States and the Nordic countries will also work together to inform robust accounting for the use of international carbon markets, including a new offset program under the UNFCCC, to ensure the environmental integrity and to avoid the double counting of market-based mitigation actions.

Cooperation on Clean Energy

The world is facing a dual challenge: we need to meet the increased energy demand following a growing population and economic growth and at the same time, we need to reduce the emissions. A comprehensive change in the global energy system is required in order to reduce emissions. The United States and the Nordic countries will be at the forefront of efforts to develop cleaner energy systems, renewable energy, including renewable fuels, increased energy efficiency and technologies for cleaner energy production.

The leaders also intend to cooperate and use their influence in multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to decrease their carbon footprint by promoting an increase in their investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency. We will also advocate for public-private partnerships and the mobilization of private capital to finance climate investments and the transition to clean energy, including clean energy systems and other instruments mentioned in the Nordic declaration on innovative climate finance.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to promoting the aims of the Clean Energy Ministerial and Mission Innovation and to implement ambitious energy transitions to accelerate the deployment of clean energy sources. In particular, we intend to provide resources, and political support to establish a multilateral secretariat, including a financial contribution of \$1.3 million from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, and \$1 million from the United States, along with continued, extensive support for Clean Energy Ministerial initiatives and campaigns.

Given the growing importance of offshore wind to their clean energy future, the United States and several Nordic countries commit to collaborate to increase the deployment of offshore wind in the United States and Europe. To formalize their collaboration, the Government of Denmark and the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management are announcing a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) to strengthen cooperation on offshore wind energy. The MOU highlights important priorities for cooperation and information sharing between the countries related to best practices for managing offshore wind, effective regulatory approaches, protection of the environment, and strategies to encourage expansion of offshore wind energy development. The MOU builds on ongoing U.S. engagement with Denmark on offshore wind.

Enhancing Climate Action through International Fora

The United States and the Nordic countries intend to support enhanced climate action by working together to achieve ambitious outcomes within international fora such as the Montreal Protocol and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). In particular, the United States and Nordic countries affirm their commitment to adopt a Montreal Protocol HFC phasedown amendment in 2016, and intend to provide additional support through the Protocol's Multilateral Fund following adoption of an amendment for its implementation. The United States and Nordic countries plan to continue to support a range of activities that promote alternatives to hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) with high global warming potential and to promote greener technologies in all countries.

The leaders also express their strong commitment to work together and through the ICAO to reduce international aviation's climate impact by fostering technological and operational advancements, development and deployment of sustainable alternative jet fuels, and adopting a strong global market-based

measure (GMBM) to enable carbon neutral growth from 2020. They encourage world leaders to join them in supporting adoption at ICAO's fall 2016 Assembly of a GMBM that reflects environmental integrity and avoids market distortion.

The United States and Iceland reaffirm their support for the Global Geothermal Alliance launched during COP21 in Paris—a concerted effort by governments, international agencies and the private sector to promote wider penetration of geothermal in the global energy mix.

Combatting Methane Emissions

The leaders reconfirm our commitment to combat methane emissions as part of our commitment to implement the Paris Agreement, and in line with other international commitments and national priorities, by ensuring each country has developed a national methane reduction plan or otherwise identified and implemented enhanced actions to significantly reduce our overall methane emissions, and by expanding technical cooperation, where appropriate. We are determined to continue to drive down our oil and gas methane emissions, where applicable, through sound regulation, climate targets, and voluntary initiatives. In particular, we strongly encourage companies working within our countries to develop company-wide methane reduction goals, and to join the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) Oil & Gas Methane Partnership. The Nordic countries welcome the announcement of new U.S.-Canadian methane reduction goals from the oil and gas sector, and pledge to keep their respective methane emissions from this sector at or below current levels. The Nordic countries will also encourage other countries to join in this effort and would support the development of a global methane emission goal for this sector. We encourage other countries to do the same, and intend to communicate on our progress through international fora, such as the CCAC, Global Methane Initiative and the Arctic Council.

Collaboration on the Important Role of Forests

The Paris Agreement reflected the importance of forests and other lands in addressing global climate change. The United States and the Nordic countries are determined to cooperate to support and incentivize developing country forest partners to conserve, restore and sustainably manage forests, as well as strengthen their respective efforts to combat illegal logging and associated trade, thereby contributing to the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions by both reducing forest emissions and enhancing sequestration. The United States and the Nordic countries will also collaborate to facilitate private sector efforts to eliminate deforestation from the production of commodities such as palm oil, pulp and paper, cattle and soy. Today, the US and Norway are announcing that they will sign a joint statement to reinforce their intention to enhance cooperation on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) and sustainable landscapes. As a signal of their commitment, this week the United States announced the first results and a detailed action plan to reduce emissions and increase carbon storage in soils and forests through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry. Through this initiative, USDA committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon stored in forests and soils by over 120 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year by 2025.

Promoting Energy for All

The Nordic countries and the United States commit to further strengthen efforts to achieve global access to sustainable, reliable, affordable and secure modern energy for all, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This work will be pursued through a range of initiatives, including development support to mechanisms which seek to unlock investments in sustainable energy, such as through Power Africa as well as the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA). We also commit to work to further strengthen the Sus-

tainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative through support to the ongoing process of developing a new strategy for SE4All and its implementation. In addition, the United States and the Nordic countries intend to promote access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by encouraging the reduction of fossil fuel subsidies, promoting renewable energies and fuels, and enhancing energy efficiency.

In sub-Saharan Africa alone, more than two-thirds of the population is without access to power. To support a doubling of electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa the United States and Nordic countries have expressed our support for the Power Africa initiative and commit to work together to provide technical assistance, financing, and other support to enable additional investment in energy projects throughout the region. Since the launch of the Power Africa initiative in 2013, the Government of Sweden has committed to catalyze investments of one billion dollars to Power Africa. The commitment represents grants for distribution and transmission projects, and guarantees and loans for renewable Power Africa projects. In December 2015, Power Africa announced a new partnership with Norway, which aligns the collective investments of the United States and Norwegian governments in renewable energy and expands off-grid and mini-grid efforts. Through this partnership, Norway is committing to bringing 1,500 MW online over a five-year period, contributing to Power Africa's overall 30,000 MW electricity generation goal.

The Arctic

The United States, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden affirm our commitment to safeguarding the Arctic environment while providing enhanced opportunities for sustainable development for all inhabitants of the Arctic, including indigenous peoples.

The Arctic is rapidly changing and attracting global attention. It is a globally unique region that provides livelihoods for its inhabitants, but is also one of the most vulnerable regions to

climate change. Rich with opportunities for transport, tourism, energy, and innovation, the Arctic is characterized by close cooperation on a broad range of issues between the United States and the Nordic Countries, together with our Arctic partners Canada and Russia. Continuing to keep the Arctic region a zone of peace and stability is at the heart of our efforts. We reaffirm the importance of maintaining the Arctic region based on universally recognized principles of international law including those reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Arctic Council celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, reaffirming its commitment to cooperation and coordination on matters of common interest among the Arctic States and indigenous peoples of the region. As the pre-eminent high-level forum among the Arctic States, the Arctic Council has proven instrumental in addressing new challenges and opportunities, while retaining a core focus on environmental protection and sustainable development.

The United States and Nordic countries will continue to work actively in the Arctic Council to ensure progress on shared priorities. The work of the current U.S. chairmanship and subsequent Finnish and Icelandic chairmanships will be closely coordinated to ensure effective progress on these priorities.

We will strengthen our work, both within the Arctic and globally, to address the environmental challenges facing the region. We remain committed to managing the region with an ecosystem-based approach, which balances conservation and sustainable use of the environment. We are committed to the pursuit of international and national climate change goals. We will work towards the highest global standards, best international practice, and a precautionary approach, when considering new and existing commercial activities in the Arctic, including oil and gas operations.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to recognizing the rights of the indigenous and local peoples and we reaffirm our commitment to the unique role played by

Arctic indigenous and local communities and their traditional and local knowledge.

We will advance scientifically based protection and conservation of areas of ecologically important marine, terrestrial and freshwater habitats, taking into account ecological resilience in a changing climate and national and global climate and environmental goals. We are dedicated to promote the active involvement of the people of the Arctic in the management and sustainable use of protected areas.

We are committed to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the Arctic, both inside and outside the region, to strengthen Arctic research and transdisciplinary science, and to encourage cooperation between higher education institutions and society as well as synergies between science and traditional and local knowledge. The Nordic countries welcome the White House Arctic Science Ministerial.

Jobs, Growth and Trade

Economic freedom, open markets, and free trade are fundamental to maintaining prosperity and promoting welfare for our citizens. The Transatlantic economy is strong, and will remain at the core of the global economy. Together, the United States and the Nordic countries will continue to be a strong voice for open and sustainable trade and investments, and in particular commerce that embraces women's economic empowerment, innovation, and new technology. The Nordic region is among the largest foreign investors in the United States.

Digitization and sustainable production have the potential to contribute to more competitive economies and to strengthen our industrial sectors. The United States and the Nordic countries will continue to show leadership in R&D, innovation, digitization, the provision of platforms for new technology, and the launch of start-ups, all of which create jobs, enhance competitiveness and pave the way for improving our businesses and societies. Innovation is also central to targeting key challenges, including climate change, health, gender inequality, and urbanization. Ultimately, innovation is about finding ways to achieve

sustainable growth and sustainable societies. The United States and the Nordic countries will together promote innovation, including through the Nordic Innovation House in Silicon Valley.

We share the view that the multilateral trade system is crucial for the global economy and our intent is to work to bring the benefits of free trade and open economies to all. The United States and the European Union are working to complete negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) in 2016. We also look forward to exploring ways to bolster trade and investment among the United States, Norway, and Iceland. Deepening transatlantic ties through trade and investment is in our economic as well as our strategic interests. The conclusion of an ambitious and comprehensive agreement would lower barriers, create opportunities for small businesses, and boost economic growth and job creation through exports in the United States and Europe. It would also benefit the global economy and further increase economic integration.

The United States and the Nordic countries have committed to promote productive employment and decent work as key elements to spreading the benefits of globalization and reducing poverty. We are resolved, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to reduce inequality within and among countries. Rising inequalities have a negative impact on current and potential growth. We also recognize that promoting gender equality and increasing women's labor market participation rates are important elements of sustainable growth.

The Nordic countries and the United States have always enjoyed intensive people-to-people contacts and exchanges. We share a joint desire to boost these contacts further and to enhance collaboration in innovation, higher education and research.

Global Development and Humanitarian Assistance

2015 marked a pivotal year for global development. World leaders from more than 190 countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sus-

tainable Development, which sets out a global development vision and priorities for the next 15 years, and adopted the Paris Agreement, the most ambitious climate change agreement in history. Sustainable global development is fundamental for peace and prosperity, and is inseparable from democracy, human rights and good governance.

We are fully committed to support the global effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). The United States and the Nordic Countries reaffirm the universality of the 2030 Agenda, and commit to implementing it, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, both domestically and internationally. The United States and the Nordic Countries also commit to continue to work together, and individually, to support the efforts of developing countries to reach the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including by enhancing developing countries' ability to mobilize and effectively use their domestic resources and to attract private sector investment for sustainable development.

To protect development gains and respond to urgent humanitarian needs, the Nordic countries and the United States intend to maintain a high-level of humanitarian assistance, including in response to drought, floods and other climatic shocks exacerbated or induced by the El Niño and the La Niña phenomena, with special emphasis on the needs of women and girls and vulnerable groups within any affected population.

Gender equality is a central human right and a development issue. The United States and the Nordic Countries have a longstanding commitment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly adolescent girls around the world who are held back from reaching their full potential. We will support efforts to ensure that adolescent girls are provided opportunities to continue their education. We will continue to promote the empowerment of women and girls by enhancing representation and opportunity especially through global education and health, as well as advancing and protecting their health

and their sexual and reproductive rights. Additionally, reducing the barriers to education—such as lack of access, early pregnancy, the contraction of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, as well as harmful practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting—is critical to advancing the shared foreign policy, security and development priorities of the United States and Nordic countries.

Universal human rights belong to all individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The United States and the Nordic countries will work together in multilateral fora and at the national level to promote the protection of LGBTI people, ensuring that they can enjoy the same rights as everyone else.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to high levels of development cooperation, and intend to work to catalyze further private investments for sustainable development.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to leading by example to fight corruption and promote transparency and accountability. We will support countries in efforts to combat illicit financial flows and help

build capacity for civil society to aid in the fight against corruption. Tax evasion and corruption undermine development and drain public resources, and are fundamental development issues. As an important part of financing for development, the United States and Nordic countries will work together to support the Addis Tax Initiative and we will support developing countries in their efforts to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through enhanced taxation and new efforts to combat tax evasion.

The relationship between the United States and the Nordic countries runs deep. Our nations share a history of extensive societal ties that firmly bind us together. Through these strong personal and institutional bonds we will continue to promote our common commitment to freedom, democracy, universal human rights, and peace.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President Sauli Niinistö of Finland, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen of Denmark, and Prime Minister Sigurdur Ingi Jóhannsson of Iceland May 13, 2016

President Obama. Good evening, everyone. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. And welcome to this very special dinner as we celebrate the great ties and longstanding friendship between the United States and our five Nordic partners.

Please join me in welcoming President Niinistö and Mrs. Haukio of Finland, Prime Minister Solberg and Mr. Finnes of Norway, Prime Minister and Mrs. Löfven of Sweden, Prime Minister and Mrs. Rasmussen of Denmark, and Prime Minister Jóhannsson and Mrs. Ingjaldsdóttir of Iceland.

Now, we all know that our Nordic friends share a pride in their common Viking heritage. But I think we can all admit that the Vikings could be a little rough. *[Laughter]* They didn't always have the best manners at the dining table. *[Laughter]* Their outfits were not always appropriate. *[Laughter]* But times have changed, and tonight our Nordic friends are much better behaved. *[Laughter]* We are honored to have you here. And as you can see from our decor, winter is coming. *[Laughter]*

This evening we have three toasts. So I'm going to be brief. And I don't want things to get out of hand. One of the great Old Norse