

And this issue of ancestral lands and helping them preserve their way of life is something that we have worked very hard on. Now, some of these issues are caught up with laws and treaties, and so I can't give you details on this particular case. I'd have to go back to my staff and find out, how are we doing on this one?

But what I can tell you is, is that we have actually restored more rights among Native Americans to their ancestral lands, sacred sites, waters, hunting grounds. We have done a lot more work on that over the last 8 years than we had in the previous 20, 30 years. And this is something that I hope will continue as we go forward. But it was an excellent question.

Let me just say this in closing. This has been a great group. I want to thank, again, the university for hosting us and the people of Laos for being such wonderful partners in this process.

For all the young people here, I want to end by telling you the same thing that I tell young people back in the United States. Sometimes, because we have so much information from all around the world on our televisions, on our computers, on our phones, it seems as if the world is falling apart. All right? Because we're always getting information about, there's a war here, and there's a terrible environmental disaster there, and there's conflict here, and this horrible issue is happening, and everybody is shouting and everybody hates each other. And you get kind of depressed. You think, goodness, what's happening?

But the truth is, is that when you look at all the measures of well-being in the world, if you

had a choice of when to be born and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be—what nationality, whether you were male or female, what religion—but you just said, when in human history would be the best time to be born? The time would be now. The world has never been healthier, it's never been wealthier, it's never been better educated. It's never been less violent, more tolerant than it is today.

Now, we don't always see that, because there are terrible things that are happening around the world, and there are real tragedies and injustice that are happening. And it's your job to fix it. But you should never be discouraged because you have more opportunity today to make a difference in the world than any generation before. And my hope is that you will seize that opportunity and you'll know that you will have a strong friend and partner in the United States of America when you do. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:49 p.m. in the Lanon Bacam auditorium at Souphanouvong University. In his remarks, he referred to Phonesapith "Om" Sotitham, a Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Fellow; White House Receptionist Leah Katz-Hernandez; YSEALI Institute on Global Environmental Issues alumna Chindavone Sanlath; and Mark E. Zuckerberg, founder and chief executive officer, Facebook, Inc. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, brother-in-law Konrad Ng, and Mr. Ng's parents Howard and Joan Ng.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Association of Southeast Asian Nations Leaders in Vientiane, Laos *September 8, 2016*

I want to begin by thanking the Government and the people of Laos for hosting this summit. I've now met with the leaders of ASEAN eight times, visited Southeast Asia more than any other U.S. President, and it reflects the growing importance of ASEAN and this region.

ASEAN is key to the U.S. rebalance to Asia, and more importantly, it's key to a peaceful and prosperous future for the world. And we have forged a strategic partnership. The U.S. is committed to building on this solid foundation.

We have laid out a common vision for the region, articulated in the Sunnylands Declara-

tion: An open, dynamic, economically competitive Asia-Pacific that respects human rights and upholds a rule-based order. Today we can discuss further how we can advance that vision together.

Through the U.S.-ASEAN Connect initiative, we're deepening our economic cooperation. As ASEAN integration generates new opportunities, the United States will work to promote innovation and entrepreneurship between our countries and throughout the region, and we will continue to push for completion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

With respect to maritime issues, we'll continue to work to ensure that disputes are resolved peacefully, including in the South China Sea. The landmark arbitration ruling in July, which is binding, helped to clarify maritime rights in the region. I recognize this raises tensions, but I also look forward to discussing how we can constructively move forward together to lower tensions and promote diplomacy and regional stability.

ASEAN played an important role in achieving the historic Paris climate agreement, an agreement that we must all work to bring into force as soon as possible. With ASEAN nations particularly vulnerable to climate change, we

have to work together to transition to cleaner economies so as to make sure that it is not impinging on development, but rather a spur to development and opportunity for your people. And we have to strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change.

And together, we're expanding our cooperation to address transnational threats. We will stay vigilant in combating terrorism, including in Southeast Asia, where we have very strong partnerships with many of you. We'll continue to partner to strengthen global health security and fight epidemics. We will continue to make progress on people-to-people ties, scientific exchanges, and making sure that we are increasing continually the opportunities for our businesses, our students, our scientists, our people to work together.

So, again, I want to thank very much, Mr. Prime Minister, you and the Government and the people of Laos, for your excellent hospitality. And I very much look forward to our work here together.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in Room 3 of the National Convention Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith of Laos.

## The President's News Conference in Vientiane *September 8, 2016*

*The President.* Good afternoon, everybody. Well, once again, I want to thank the Government and the people of Laos for their wonderful hospitality and for their leadership as hosts of the ASEAN and East Asia Summits. And I especially want to express my gratitude for the warmth and the kindness that they've shown to me as the first U.S. President to visit this nation. It has been a memorable and, at times, a very moving visit.

Now, we're here because, as a region with more than 600 million people, several fast-growing economies, some vibrant democracies, but also countries transitioning to democracies, and given their strategic location along vital trade routes, the 10 nations of ASEAN are critical to peace and prosperity not only in the

Asia-Pacific, but to the world. Indeed, the United States and ASEAN are among each other's top trading partners. We're the largest investors in this region, and ASEAN is one of our largest markets for U.S. exports, supporting hundreds of thousands of American jobs. So our trade and investment fuels jobs and prosperity across our countries.

And that's why, as part of my rebalance of American foreign policy to the Asia-Pacific, I've deepened our engagement with the nations of Southeast Asia and with ASEAN as an institution. As the first U.S. President to meet with the leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries, I've sustained our cooperation throughout my Presidency. Earlier this year, I was proud to host the first U.S.-ASEAN summit in the