

We have signed the global conventions to end violence and discrimination against women; we will implement them vigorously, but work is still needed to convince our people that the protection of women's rights is part and parcel of their own quest for social justice.

I personally, as the leader of Afghanistan, am committed to working with the ulema, activists, and thought leaders of our country to bring about this mental change. Both the CEO, Dr. Abdullah, and I will insist that the officials of our government set the national standard for workplace fairness.

Thanks to your help and support, the opportunities for women are indeed changing. I am sure that many of you have seen those stunning Skateistan videos of fathers proudly taking their shiny-eyed daughters to show off their newfound skills in the ancient art of skateboarding. They are but the tip of the changes that are underway and which must be protected and advanced.

I am meeting, frequently, women who are entertaining the idea—seriously—the idea of becoming the first woman President of Afghanistan, and we will support them.

I am pleased to state that we have fulfilled our promise to name four women to the Afghan Cabinet, raising the women's share to 20 percent—still too low, but at least fulfillment of our promise.

We are determined to name qualified women as ambassadors and to increase their number as deputy ministers, and we are working hard to attract and train a whole new cadre of women technocrats into our government. I promise you that, 5 years from now, our ministries will have a whole new look to them, with women in leading positions.

We are a country of young people. The absolute majority of people are under 30 years of age. Youth are invested in the future, not in repeating the past. Jobs and engagement with the world are their first priority.

Despite all of the assistance that Afghanistan has received over the years, 30 percent of the population still lives below the poverty line, lacking even basic services such as clean water or household electricity. This cannot continue.

We have articulated a citizen's charter that will guide the investments that are needed to reduce poverty across the nation and prepare the next generation for capitalizing on the new opportunities that a thriving economy can provide.

Ladies and gentlemen, so far, I have talked about how we will achieve self-reliance by ending corruption, balancing the budget, mobilizing the energies of our women and youth, and growing the economy. Let me now turn to the elephant that is lurking in the back of the room.

We must secure peace.

Afghans have shown that we know how to fight. Unfortunately, we have inherited that skill for 3 million years.

Since as far back as the invasion of Alexander and the more modern expulsion of the Soviet Union, Afghans have shown that we will protect our country against foreign attack, no matter how steep the price or how well armed the intruder.

I have no doubt that, provided that they continue to receive equipment and training, our Armed Forces will stand firm against any efforts by outside extremists to build a base inside our territory; but we must now show that we can also bring peace.

Our strategy is built around three initiatives. The first is to use our diplomacy to build a community of nations that is committed to stability in Asia. Dr. Abdullah and I have met with the leaders of Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and China, among others. Their commitment for building mutual security across nations includes ending the financing and sanctuary for extremist groups.

The second initiative is to build up the ability of our Armed Forces to project the elected government across our entire national territory. Our partnership with the United States and ISAF, now transformed into the resolute support mission, has given Afghanistan a well-trained army that is bringing the fight to the enemy. We are no longer on the defensive, but have taken the offensive.

On December 31, 2014, all combat operations were handed over to Afghan National Security Forces. General John Campbell, the U.S. commander of the Resolute Support mission, has publicly testified in this very Chamber that the Afghan Army's professionalism and morale meet all of a military man's expectations.

Thanks to our army, we will negotiate with the Taliban from a position of strength, not weakness, so that the hard-fought gains in education, health, governance, media freedom, and women's rights are not lost.

The third initiative will be our push for national reconciliation. The Taliban need to choose not to be al Qaeda and be our friend; and, if they choose to be our friend, they will be welcome to be part of the fabric of our society.

Many believe themselves to be patriots rebelling against the corruption and criminality that they saw in their towns and villages. We can deal with legitimate grievances. Provided that combatants agree to respect the constitution and the rule of law as the outcomes of negotiations, we are confident that we can find a path for their return to society.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not here to tell you a story about an overnight transformation of my country. You are too wise for such stories. Twelve years of partnership provide evidence enough that the road ahead will be difficult.

We live in a rough neighborhood. We are a very poor country. Self-reliance

is our goal. We bear the scars of the fight against the Soviet Union and the forces of fundamentalism, scars that are as much in our minds as on the bodies of the Afghan farmers and American soldiers who have fought for freedom.

Although we may be poor, we are very proud. Our goal of self-reliance is no pipedream told to pacify partners who are tired of hearing the promises that we later fail to keep. We want your know-how, the business skills of your corporations, the innovation of your startups, and the commitment of your NGOs, but we don't want your charity.

We have no more interest in perpetuating a childish dependence than you have in being saddled with a poor family member who lacks the energy and drive to get out and find a job. We are not going to be the lazy Uncle Joe.

Afghanistan can and will be an enduring success. Your support, your understanding, and your commitment to our country will not have been in vain. Afghanistan will be the graveyard of al Qaeda and their foreign terrorist associates.

Never again will our country be a host to terrorists. Never again will we give extremists the sanctuary to plan their destructive plots. We are determined to become the Asian development roundabout and the platform for the peaceful cooperation of civilizations.

Together, our two countries will finish the job that began on that clear, terrible September morning almost 14 years ago. We have the will and we have the commitment that will anchor our country in the world community of peaceful, democratic nations.

Knowing our conditions, you—the American Congress—and the American people will decide how to ensure that our common goals and interests are written into the books that will be telling the history of our shared future.

Thank you again, and may God bless the partnership between America and Afghanistan.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

At 12 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m., His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet;

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The purpose of the joint meeting having been completed, the Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 7 minutes p.m.), the joint meeting of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

The SPEAKER. The House will continue in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1229

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SCHWEIKERT) at 12 o'clock and 29 minutes p.m.

PRINTING OF PROCEEDINGS HAD DURING RECESS

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the proceedings had during the recess be printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 25, 2015.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, U.S. Capitol,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on March 25, 2015 at 10:26 a.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 301.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 163 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 27.

Will the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) kindly take the chair.

□ 1230

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 27) establishing the budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2016 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2017 through 2025, with Mr. COLLINS of Georgia (Acting Chair) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The Acting CHAIR. When the Committee of the Whole rose on Tuesday, March 24, 2015, general debate on the congressional budget had expired.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY) each will control 30 minutes on the subject of economic goals and policies.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, under the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978, the Joint Economic Committee provides analysis and recommendations about the goals and policies set forth in the economic report of the President, and this is to assist the House in its consideration of the budget resolution.

During the next hour, the members of the Joint Economic Committee will answer two questions: Why has this economic recovery been so weak when compared with past recoveries? And secondly, how would a gradual reduction of Federal spending, relative to the size of America's economy, as envisioned in the House Republican budget resolution, how would this help hard-working Americans by accelerating economic growth, job creation, and real wage increases?

Regrettably, our economy remains stuck in second gear. Last year, real GDP—in other words, apples-to-apples economy—grew by a mere 2.37 percent. That is an imperceptible increase over the average annual growth rate of 2.33 percent during the entire recovery.

Although conditions have improved, the Obama recovery remains the weakest, or near the bottom, in terms of every major measurement of economic performance, compared with other recoveries over the past half century.

The Joint Economic Committee describes the difference in economic performance in this recovery and with the average of other recoveries since 1960 as the "growth gap"—and this growth gap is real.

Since the recession ended, the economy has grown by 13.5 percent, compared with the average growth of 24.1 percent during other recoveries. This growth gap means our economy is currently missing \$1.5 trillion, a hole comparable in size to the economy of Australia or Mexico or Spain.

Since the recession ended, private sector payrolls—that is, Main Street jobs—increased by 10 percent, but over the average of other recoveries, it was more than 15 percent. Thus, from the end of the recession, the growth gap in Main Street jobs is a staggering 5.5 million jobs. America is missing 5.5 million jobs, enough to hire everyone looking for work in 45 States.

Not surprisingly, hard-working American families have felt the adverse effects of slow growth and lagging job creation in their pocketbook. Since the recession ended, real after-tax income per person has increased by

a total of merely 7 percent—7.1 percent, to be exact. In other recoveries, it was over 15 percent. Thus, the growth gap in real after-tax income equates to nearly \$3,000 per person. It is \$2,915. So what that means for a family of four in America is that they are missing \$11,000 a year from their family budget.

Ironically, for a President that obsesses about income inequality and promotes "middle class economics," the White House has presided over a disappointing recovery that has bestowed most of its benefits to the wealthy and the well-connected. While families and businesses on Main Street continue to suffer from a very disappointing recovery, the S&P Total Return Index, adjusted for inflation—meaning Wall Street—has increased by 125.4 percent since the end of the recession. So Wall Street is roaring; Main Street and hard-working taxpayers are suffering.

Closing the growth gap in the economy and jobs and paychecks will be very hard for this President to achieve with his current slow-growth policies.

While the economy has improved month after month, in truth, it has gone so slow. It is like bragging that your car has run for 63 straight months, but it only is running at 5 miles an hour. Well, that is what our economy is doing. And to catch up from these slow-growth policies, we need to break even with the average performance of other recoveries. By the time President Obama leaves the White House:

Our economy will have to grow at an annual rate of 7.4 percent in each of the next eight quarters. This is triple the growth rate in the Obama recovery.

Private sector jobs—Main Street jobs, in effect—would have to generate 403,000 jobs every month for the next 22 months. So this is well above the average of the disappointing Obama recovery of 285,000 jobs, especially in the last 6 months.

Real after-tax income for every person in America—that is, what their real disposable income is—would have to grow at an annual rate of 6.3 percent through the rest of President Obama's term. This is more than four times faster than what it has been doing during the Obama recovery.

So why has our economy been so weak? Why has the Obama recovery been nearly dead last in all of these areas?

First, Federal spending is out of control.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again yet expecting different results. Is this not the perfect description of President Obama's budget? His budget reflects his dogmatic commitment to failed Keynesian economic policies—notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence that we are mired in the worst economic recovery of the last 50 years, creating this large and persistent growth gap. From the failed stimulus through ObamaCare to demands for