

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA
AND PRIME MINISTER RUTTE OF THE NETHERLANDS
FOLLOWING BILATERAL MEETING

Gallery of Honor

The Rijksmuseum

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

10:49 A.M. CET

PRIME MINISTER RUTTE: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Netherlands. Welcome to Amsterdam. And, Barack, welcome to this very special location.

We are standing here on historic grounds, surrounded by the finest paintings that Holland has produced and only a stone's throw away from the house of John Adams, the first American ambassador to the Netherlands and second President of the United States. It's a location that symbolizes the enduring partnership between the U.S. and the Netherlands. Our shared history and heritage go back a long way.

As an historian, it was a special moment for me when earlier this morning I was able to show President Obama two original documents from our National Archives that played an important role in the age-old friendship between our two countries. The first was our own Declaration of Independence, the Plakkaat van Verlatinghe of 1581, which inspired Thomas Jefferson and his peers. The second was the American-Dutch Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1782, another remarkable document from an age when peace between countries was usually a heartfelt affair. And today, friendship is still at the heart of the relationship between the United States and the Netherlands, along with trade, shared values, and joint responsibilities.

Since that first treaty we have worked together in the growing awareness that economic prosperity, a safe and stable world and international cooperation go hand in hand. With this in mind, the President and I talked about a wide range of subjects, starting with a joint climate initiative and the new steps we will take today in that regard. The Netherlands is joining with the United States and a group of other countries in a bid to stop international public funding of new coal-fired power plants, for example, by multilateral development banks. We want to achieve an international level playing field to ensure that private and public parties invest in green growth wherever possible.

We also discussed the important topic of the Transatlantic Investment Partnership between the EU and U.S. Once concluded, this agreement will create more economic growth and jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. Importantly, it will set new standards that will benefit global trade and third countries as well. This partnership will bolster our excellent bilateral economic ties even further.

During our conversation I stressed how much we value this partnership. The Netherlands is the world's third largest investor in the United States and we are home to some 1,800 American businesses.

And of course, we also spoke about the major international security issues in Syria, Iran and Ukraine. Concerning the last, we both regard Russia's attempts to annex the Crimea as a flagrant breach of international law and we condemn its actions in the strongest possible terms. The presence of so many world leaders in the Netherlands this week presents an important opportunity for the international community to discuss this subject, as well as other pressing issues that affect our common interests.

Finally, we looked ahead at the Nuclear Security Summit today and tomorrow. President Obama deserves all the credit for getting this topic high on the agenda. In 2010, Washington hosted the first summit on this seat. In 2012, it was Seoul's turn. And now the Netherlands is proud to host the summit today and tomorrow in The Hague that will bring us closer to the goal of securing potentially dangerous nuclear material.

Barack, your presence underlines the importance of the summit, and this event, too, demonstrates the strength of the bilateral ties between our countries and of our joint commitment to peace, security and democracy. I'm delighted to be able to hear from you publicly here at this splendid location.

Again, thank you for coming.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Mark, thank you. And it is a splendid location. I'm so grateful for your kind words. We were very pleased to welcome you back in 2011 to the White House, and I appreciate your warm welcome today. This is my first visit to Amsterdam and to The Hague and to the Netherlands, and I'm so pleased that I've had a chance already to meet some wonderful students. I want to thank the Mayor and the curator for their hospitality as well. I'm proud to be with some of the Dutch masters who I studied in school, and to see just the extraordinary traditions of this great country.

I'd be remiss if I did not mention that I'm proud of both of our teams at the Olympics. So in addition to painting, you really know how to speed skate. (Laughter.)

As the Prime Minister said, we just had an excellent opportunity to experience the museum and to see those documents, including the Treaty of Friendship that John Adams negotiated more than 200 years ago, as a reminder of the historic ties between our countries. And this is -- of all the press conferences I've done, this is easily the most impressive backdrop that I've had to a press conference.

Of course, we're here for our third Nuclear Security Summit. And I want to thank His Majesty, King Willem-Alexander, as well as Mark, the people of the Netherlands, for all the preparations that go into bringing together so many heads of state. This is just one more example of Dutch leadership -- not just on nuclear security, but on many global challenges.

As you know, the Netherlands is one of our closest allies, and our cooperation underscores a larger point -- our NATO allies are our closest partners on the world stage. Europe is the cornerstone of America's engagement with the world. And today we focused on several priorities -- in Europe and beyond.

First, we obviously spent a considerable amount of time on the situation in Ukraine. Europe and America are united in our support of the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian people. We're united in imposing a cost on Russia for its actions so far. Prime Minister Rutte rightly pointed out yesterday the growing sanctions would bring significant consequences to the Russian economy. And I'll be meeting with my fellow G7 leaders later today, and we'll continue to coordinate closely with the Netherlands and our European partners as we go forward.

Second, I thanked the Prime Minister for the Netherlands' strong commitment and contributions to NATO. Dutch forces have served with distinction in Afghanistan and joined us in confronting piracy off the Horn of Africa. Through NATO, the Netherlands contributed to the deployment of Patriot air batteries in Turkey and are making important investments in NATO defense capabilities. Dutch forces are also making critical contributions to the international stabilization mission in Mali. So, across the board, the Dutch are making their presence felt in a very positive way, and we're very grateful for that.

Third, we discussed how we can keep expanding the trade that creates jobs for our people. We're already among each other's largest trade and investment partners, but we can always do more. And so I appreciated the Netherlands' strong support for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T-TIP, which can fuel growth both in the United States and in Europe, especially for our small and medium-sized companies.

Fourth, we discussed a range of global challenges. And as the United States and the P5-plus-1 partners continue negotiations with Iran, we have the basis for a practical solution that resolves concerns over Iran's nuclear program. But at the same time, I think it's important that everyone remember during these negotiations we'll continue to enforce the overall sanctions architecture that helped bring Iran to the table in the first place.

I also wanted to commend the Netherlands for its leadership in the international effort to destroy Syria's chemical weapons, and that includes your role as the host of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. And more broadly, our two countries are going to keep working together to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

And, finally, we reaffirmed our shared determination to confront climate change and its effects, including rising sea levels, which obviously is something that the Netherlands is concerned about, given your experience with seas and tides. We're pleased that the Netherlands has joined our initiative that will virtually end all public financing for coal-fired plants abroad. It's concrete action like this that can keep making progress on reducing emissions while we develop new global agreements on climate change.

So, a final note. When John Adams was negotiating the treaty that we saw earlier, he wrote that the Dutch have -- and I'm quoting here -- have always "distinguished themselves by an inviolable attachment to freedom and the rights of nations." That was true then; it remains true today.

So, Mark, I want to thank you and the Dutch for your hospitality, for your organization, for your partnership and for your leadership on the world stage. And I want to thank you for sharing these extraordinary paintings with me this morning.

Dank u wel. Thank you. (Applause.)

END 11:00 A.M. CET