

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Vice President
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REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH BIDEN AT A PUBLIC EVENT
WITH MONGOLIAN PRIME MINISTER SUKHBAATAR BATBOLD

Spirit Banner Room
Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia

2:31 P.M. (Local)

PRIME MINISTER BATBOLD: (As translated.) First of all, I'm grateful to the United States Vice President Biden for accepting my invitation to pay an official visit to Mongolia. And I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency and your delegation to Mongolia.

This visit is significant as it coincides with a series of important anniversaries in the history of Mongolia. Next year, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of bilateral relations.

Your visit is the expression of the fact that U.S. recognizes Mongolia's irreversible choice to develop democracy and the will of the Mongolian people and to uphold legal forces to uphold democracy. We are grateful to the United States for the continued support and the economic assistance.

It gives me great pleasure to note that we had a very productive meeting with Vice President Biden. We have discussed the issues related to furthering our bilateral cooperation in the spirit of the comprehensive partnership, based on our common values and shared interests. We have noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in our relations and affirmed our commitment to advance these relations.

Mongolia has started chair the Community of Democracies from this July. I discussed this issue before, when I was a foreign minister with State Secretary Clinton,

and today, I had the opportunity to discuss this issue with Vice President Biden, as well. I would like to highlight that Mongolia is ready to share its experiences in promoting democratic values and culture.

The successful implementation of Millennium Challenge Corporation projects will significantly reduce poverty, increase transportation -- the Mongolian side has expressed its interest in launching talks in the MCC second compact agreement.

We have discussed the possibilities to develop and enrich trade and economic relations with the United States and attract more United States investments to Mongolia. We are grateful that Vice President Biden reaffirmed the continued support of the part of the United States for implementation of democratic reforms and strengthening market economy in Mongolia. During the meeting, we have discussed possibilities to conclude a transparency agreement in near future.

The signing of the memorandum of understanding between MIAT Mongolian Airlines and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency aimed at developing civil aviation sector and improving MIAT training and capacity basis would make an important contribution to the development of the bilateral economic cooperation.

Moreover, we have exchanged our views on other fields of our bilateral cooperation, particularly cooperation in the field of education. The Mongolian side has requested the United States side to explore the possibilities to increase the number of scholarships for Mongolian students. This year alone 16 Mongolian students were selected to study in the United States through Fulbright Scholarship Program.

I expressed our special gratitude on behalf of the people of Mongolia for the U.S. decision to provide \$695,000 grant from the Fund for Cultural Preservation.

We have touched on many issues, particularly in the fruitful views of our bilateral consultation mechanisms. We have also discussed our cooperation in peacekeeping operations. The U.S. side has expressed its appreciation for Mongolia's contribution to the peacekeeping activities.

Mr. Vice President, there is a proverb saying that an old friend is the best friend. Therefore, the visit of the U.S. Vice President to Mongolia after 67 years is certainly an old friend's visit for us. I welcome you again and wish you a pleasant stay in Mongolia.

Thank you for your attention.

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: Well, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for the invitation. And it's an honor to be here. I've been looking forward to this. I also want to thank your President, as well as the Mongolian people for their generous hospitality. I only have one regret that I'm not able to stay longer and see more of your country. I hope you'll invite me back.

I am particularly pleased to make this visit, following your President's meeting this June with President Obama at the White House.

Our nation does have a shared history that goes back at least 100 years. In 1923, a fellow named Roy Chapman Andrews, a naturalist and an explorer, and the Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington traveled to Mongolia to excavate a site in the Gobi Desert he called the Flaming Cliffs.

That expedition captured the world's imagination by discovering a treasure trove of fossils, including the largest mammal to ever walk the Earth and the first dinosaur eggs ever found intact. But in the last 20 years, Mongolia has captured the imagination of the world by its remarkable transition to democracy: five presidential elections, five democratically conducted parliamentary elections. And it's truly remarkable, the progress you've made since 1991.

So although we go back 100 years, quite frankly, we've grown much closer since the Mongolian people began to embrace democracy 22 years ago.

That journey started with a small demonstration of -- on Human Rights Day in 1989, then it blossomed into a movement that inspired thousands of Mongolians. And it led to the country's first free elections, and eventually ended -- that eventually ended decades of one-party rule.

I guess the translator opposes one-party rule.
(Laughter.) I'm only kidding. I shouldn't joke. I shouldn't joke.

Today Mongolia is not just a shining example for other nations in transition but it's an emerging leader in the worldwide democratic movement, a responsible actor on the world stage, and a close friend and partner of the United States. And none of that is an exaggeration. It is literal.

In July, as you referenced, Mongolia assumed the chairmanship of the Community of Democracies -- a coalition of democratic countries dedicated to promoting democracy around the world. And Mongolia's term as chairman will culminate with a Democratic Summit held in 2013 right here in your capital.

I also want you and your colleagues to know that Americans admire and appreciate Mongolia's contributions to international peace and security. In the past decade alone, Mongolia's army -- whose proud martial tradition dates to Ghengis Khan -- has been deployed as US [sic] peacekeepers and observers in Sierra Leone, Chad, Darfur, Kosovo, Western Sahara and many other countries.

And Mongolian soldiers have also served with the International Coalition Forces in Iraq and are now serving in Afghanistan -- in Afghanistan, where the Mongolian troop contributions will soon increase to nearly 400 military personnel.

During his June visit -- during his June visit to Washington, your President laid a wreath in the Arlington National Cemetery, and he met with wounded American soldiers at Army Reed Medical Center [sic]. And Americans noticed that gesture. For not every visiting world leader takes the time to do that. President Obama and I genuinely and greatly appreciate it.

Now the United States and Mongolia are also developing closer economic relations. As we discussed in our bilateral meeting, to enhance these economic ties, we are mutually working toward a transparency agreement that would make Mongolia an even more attractive destination for America and foreign investment.

I would just like to flatly state the United States remains strongly committed to helping the Mongolian people build a better future. That is why over the last 20 years USAID has provided more than \$200 million in grant assistance to Mongolia, with programs that seek to bolster democracy and economic growth.

And as you pointed out, that's why we have committed another \$285 million through the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact. That assistance is focused on a critical set of issues including combating corruption through training programs at all levels of government, improving rule of law by developing checks and balances at all levels of government, vocational training to prepare Mongolians for better jobs and improving infrastructure to make the country's critical north-south corridor more accessible.

I hope that you and the people of Mongolia will take my visit here today -- and President Obama's meeting with your President earlier this summer -- as signs of how impressed we are by the progress you've already made.

These reciprocal visits are also signs of how important this relationship is to the United States. As I told you earlier, we are very proud to be considered a "third neighbor." And, like any good neighbor should, we'll continue to do our part to support Mongolia's political and economic development. And, Mr. Prime Minister, we look forward to even closer ties in the years to come.

And I want to thank you again for the hospitality.

END

2:53 P.M.

(Local)