

## Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy

October 13, 2008

*Buongiorno.* [Laughter] Fellow citizens, distinguished guests, thank you all for being here as we receive a wonderful visitor, the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, Silvio Berlusconi. He is a man of accomplishment, a statesman from a great nation, and a warm friend of the United States. Mr. Prime Minister, you honor us with your visit, and Laura and I are so pleased to have you come to the White House on Columbus Day.

On this national holiday, America remembers the explorer from Genoa, who led a fleet of three tiny ships on a great journey of discovery. Christopher Columbus earned his place in history by introducing the Old World to the New. And in the story of his life, Americans see qualities that are so much a part of our nation: the vision to take a risk and to explore the unknown; the courage to persevere through difficulty; and the optimism to greet every new day with confidence and joy.

Italy is rightly proud of Christopher Columbus. And America is proud that so many other Italians have journeyed across the Atlantic and made this land their home. Generations of Italian immigrants have strengthened America with their own traditions of faith in God, pride in family, devotion to country, and love of life. In more ways than can be counted, the United States is a better place for the influence of the sons and daughters of Italy.

With the visit today of Prime Minister Berlusconi, we reaffirm the close and trusting friendship between our two countries. For more than six decades, America and Italy have been partners in the work of freedom and progress. We look to the future with confidence.

Together we have worked to build a strong transatlantic alliance that helps guard the lives and liberty of our peoples. We know that further growth of NATO will serve the interest of all who cherish freedom, security, and peace.

Together we're standing firm against the forces of brutality and instability in our

world. Our countries and other peaceful nations have been targeted by terrorists. We will fight those enemies until they are defeated. Our security is threatened by the proliferation of deadly technologies, and we're acting to remove that danger. Civilization is challenged by extremist ideologies with a will to power, and we are determined to overcome hatred and intolerance with the values of decency and justice and democracy.

Together we are giving support to rising democracies and defending the innocent against the violent. Italy has shown that commitment by deploying forces to the NATO mission in Afghanistan and by leading NATO training operations in Iraq. Italian forces are also serving the cause of peace and stability in Lebanon and Kosovo and Bosnia. And, Mr. Prime Minister, America is proud to be your ally in missions that will bring forth a better and a safer world.

As allies and friends, the United States and Italy have formed strong bonds of commerce and understanding. By our commitment to free markets and the spirit of enterprise, we've helped ourselves and others to succeed and prosper. And in these times of economic turmoil, we're working with other governments to resolve the troubles of the financial markets. Just this weekend, I met with the Finance Minister of Italy and his counterparts from the G-7 and G-20 nations. All of us will continue taking responsible, decisive action to restore credit and stability and return to vigorous growth.

Despite many challenges, the United States and Italy know that we are very fortunate countries. We count our blessings, and we share a belief that material wealth brings responsibilities. So we've joined with other industrial powers to fight hunger and disease in Africa and to promote the development that can lift nations out of poverty and despair. We have been generous, and we've given new hope to millions who suffer. We will not grow tired in the cause of progress and human rights and human dignity.

At this crucial time in history, with so much yet to do, relations between the United States and Italy are superb. There's a genuine respect between our peoples, and Prime Minister Berlusconi and I have shared that respect in all our dealings. In these years,

I have deeply appreciated his friendship and his wisdom. The Prime Minister is a man of sincerity and principle, who speaks his mind and keeps his word. And because of his high spirits and boundless optimism, it is always good to see him and to spend time with him.

So on this beautiful Columbus Day, Laura and I are proud to greet him on behalf of our whole Nation. Mr. Prime Minister, *mio caro amico, benvenuto*—my dear friend, welcome to the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where Prime Minister Berlusconi was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Economy and Finance Giulio Tremonti of Italy. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Berlusconi.

### Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy

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**President Bush.** Good morning. Prime Minister Berlusconi and I just had a very good discussion. That's exactly the kind of meeting that you would expect when good friends get together.

Mr. Prime Minister, I appreciate your leadership. I want to thank you for your gracious words earlier today.

**Prime Minister Berlusconi.** Thank you.

**President Bush.** I want to thank you for giving the American people the honor of celebrating Columbus Day with the leader of Italy.

For more than 60 years, the United States and Italy have worked together to strengthen transatlantic alliances and to help freedom expand across Europe. Today, we're addressing global challenges with determination and vision and with confidence. America and Italy are working to stabilize global financial markets. People all over the world are understandably concerned about the global financial crisis and about how it will affect their families and their businesses.

I appreciate Italy's participation in the meeting of the G-7 and G-20 finance ministers over the weekend. Both the G-7 and

G-20 issued important statements committing to work together to help resolve the crisis. I welcome the bold and specific follow-up actions by European nations to pursue the G-7 action plan. And the United States is also acting, and we will continue to implement measures consistent with the G-7 action plan to help banks gain access to capital, to strengthen the financial system, and to unfreeze credit markets and restore confidence in our financial system.

These are tough times for our economies, yet we can be confident that we can work our way through these challenges. And America will continue to work closely with the other nations to coordinate our response to this global financial crisis.

America and Italy are working with other nations to fight terror and maintain stability and secure their democratic future. More than 8,300 Italian troops are deployed in regions of conflict around the world. They're helping to fight extremism and to defend liberty and give more people the hope of a better future. About 2,100 Italian troops are supporting the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Italy leads Regional Command West as well as a Provincial Reconstruction Team.

I appreciate the Prime Minister's willingness to modify restrictions on where Italian forces can operate in Afghanistan. Italy has deployed Carabinieri to support the NATO training mission in Iraq. They're doing a fine job. These are highly professional, highly skilled folks that are helping the Iraqi people.

In Lebanon, Italy is the single largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping mission. We discussed the need for Syria to respect Lebanon's sovereignty, to cease its support for terror, and to open full diplomatic relations with Lebanon's elected Government.

Italy has deployed more than 2,300 troops to maintain stability in the Balkans. Our two nations support an independent and democratic Kosovo, and we're working to ensure that the new European Union mission deploys throughout that country. We agree that all Balkan nations should be invited to join the EU and other transatlantic institutions as they qualify for membership.

We discussed Iran, and we agreed that Iran must not be allowed to have a nuclear