

Remarks by Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin at the Appeal of Conscience Foundation 2018 Annual Awards Dinner

September 26, 2018

As prepared for delivery

New York, NY – Thank you for the kind introduction. It is good to be with all of you this evening. The last time I was at this event was 2009. I was dinner chairman that year, and Dr. Kissinger spoke—it is great to see you again, and I am pleased to return as this year’s speaker to address this distinguished audience.

I would like to begin by recognizing Rabbi Arthur Schneier, whom I have known for over 40 years. I greatly admire your work at the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, and your focus on religious freedom.

I would also like to congratulate the honorees this evening, Christine Lagarde and Johann Peter Rupert. As Treasury Secretary, I have the pleasure of working closely with Christine. I have seen firsthand her leadership at the IMF, and her efforts to promote global economic growth and stability. Christine, thank you for your work. I would also like to congratulate Johann Rupert. I have known Johann for over 15 years. His success in business has led to the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs, making a difference in the lives of countless families. I commend you for your philanthropic endeavors as well—including your work over the years with President Nelson Mandela and others to use sports for positive social change—especially for the benefit of underprivileged children.

The Appeal of Conscience Foundation promotes religious liberty and peace. Its message is especially important at a time when rogue nations, terrorists, and other threats continue to pose challenges to the United States and around the world. I commend the Foundation for bringing together heads of state, members of the diplomatic corps, clergy, business and civic leaders to discuss ways to ensure a more peaceful and secure world.

This week I have been with President Trump at the UN General Assembly and participated with him in his meetings with other world leaders where he discussed important economic and security issues.

At Treasury, some of our most important core responsibilities involve using economic tools, sanctions, to combat terrorist financing, corruption, persecution, and other malign and destabilizing activities.

Next month, I will be taking my third trip to the Middle East to highlight our efforts, using economic tools, to enhance security and foster stability in the region.

My first stop will be to visit the State of Israel. I look forward to reaffirming the strong relationship between our two countries and the work we do together on our fight against terrorism. Earlier this year, I had the honor of being part of the delegation that opened the US Embassy in Jerusalem. President Trump was the first one to fulfill the bipartisan Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995.

I will also visit Saudi Arabia where the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC), which we co-chair with them, is located. We have partnered with six countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE—to form the center in order to share intelligence and coordinate actions to disrupt the financing of terror. Since we created the TFTC last year, it has implemented two rounds of important multilateral designations.

Our financial tools are making an impact in the fight to eradicate ISIS and other terrorist groups that are fomenting violence. In addition to the two tranches of TFTC multilateral designations, Treasury prioritizes targeting Hizballah and its supporters, including leadership, operatives, facilitators, financiers, investors, and key global procurement networks. Treasury has designated more than 130 Hizballah-related persons pursuant to our counterterrorism authorities. In 2018 alone, Treasury has conducted 26 Hizballah-related designations, more than any other year, and we have more actions planned. Treasury is also focused on stopping ISIS's global fundraising activities and achieving enduring defeat of the group through a variety of tools, including recent designations.

On my trip to the Middle East, I will also visit Jordan, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait. While visiting with my counterparts, I will reiterate the message, on behalf of President Trump, that the United States will not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons—not now, not in ten years, not ever. We will also continue to target those who support the Iranian regime's efforts to acquire ballistic missiles, silence opposing voices, and threaten Israel and other allies.

Our policy is clear—those who choose to conduct business with violent organizations—including the leading state sponsor of terrorism, Iran—will not be permitted access to the world's financial system.

While our efforts to stem violence in the Middle East remain central to our mission of fostering security and stability, we are also focused on combating corruption—one of the underlying causes of violence—in key locations around the world.

Along with the EU and others, we are putting unprecedented pressure on the Maduro regime in Venezuela, implementing sanctions against senior government officials. Venezuelan officials have looted their country's resources—everything from natural resources such as oil, to consumer products intended to eliminate poverty, such as dry milk.

The result is that the Venezuelan people are suffering through a humanitarian crisis while their leaders amass ill-gotten gains. We will continue to target members of this kleptocratic regime until the people of Venezuela once again have a say in their government and access to their country's resources.

Additionally, we continue to go after those affiliated with the Assad regime, which continues to target innocent civilians. Just this month, Treasury designated nine individuals and entities for facilitating petroleum trade between Assad's government and ISIS.

In addition to high profile sanctions programs directed at rogue regimes, Treasury and the State Department also implement the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. This law is named for Sergei Magnitsky, an accountant who sought to expose corruption in the Russian government. He was arrested, tortured, and killed in custody. Last year, President Trump signed an executive order building on that law to give Treasury the authority to use its financial tools and authorities to combat corruption and human rights abusers around the globe.

Under this program, Treasury has sanctioned dozens of individuals and entities. We designated a corrupt international businessman and billionaire who amassed hundreds of millions of dollars through opaque and corrupt mining and oil deals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He used his close friendship with President Kabila to act as a middleman for mining asset sales in the DRC, requiring some multinational companies to go through him to do business with the Congolese state. His scheme resulted in over \$1 billion in lost revenue to the Congolese people with untold millions going to himself and corrupt Congolese officials.

In protecting human rights, the United States rightly uses these same authorities to target those who threaten religious freedom. Treasury has designated Burmese military commanders and units for their involvement in brutal acts of violence against ethnic and religious minorities, including the Rohingya Muslim population. We also targeted Turkey's Ministers of Justice and

Interior, who were responsible for the arrest and detention of Pastor Andrew Brunson, one of many victims of unjust treatment by the Turkish government.

These efforts are in addition to the numerous human rights and corruption related designations Treasury has issued under various other authorities. In total, since January 2017, Treasury has taken action against more than 460 individuals and entities engaged in activities related to or directly involving human rights abuse or corruption, including actions in connection with Syria, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burma, Venezuela, North Korea, Russia, Iran, and other sanctions programs.

I have described a wide variety of actions this evening. I did so for an important reason: to clearly illustrate the policy of this Administration. We will continue to aggressively implement sanctions against malign actors all around the world.

Corruption and human rights abuses take a toll on victims directly affected by such actions. The United States has taken the bold step of declaring that such abuses also threaten the stability of our international economy and political systems. This Administration will continue to impose serious consequences on those who target innocent people, and who diminish the ability of Americans and our allies to live in peace and prosperity.

It is an honor to be with you this evening. Congratulations again to Christine Lagarde and Johann Rupert, and I commend Rabbi Schneier and the Appeal of Conscience Foundation for promoting the values of freedom and peace. Thank you very much.