

Trump meets Obama in presidential transition talks

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Donald Trump called President Barack Obama "a very good man" and said he would seek his counsel as he prepares to become president, at a White House meeting yesterday that marked the first time the two men had ever met.

After spending around 90-minutes together in the Oval Office, Obama described himself as "encouraged" by Trump's interest in working with his outgoing administration to ensure a smooth transfer of power.

They talked about "a lot of different situations, some wonderful and some difficult," Trump said of their policy discussions.

"I very much look forward to dealing with the president in the future, including counsel," Trump told reporters after the meeting, before shaking hands with Obama.

The discussion brought together two men who have spent much of the past several months spewing vitriol about each other.

Obama had called Trump "unfit" for the White House as he campaigned for Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, while Trump only reluctantly backed down from his false claims that Obama was not born in the United States.

As the meeting closed, Obama placed a hand on Trump's arm and joked with him about the reporters shouting questions their direction.

"Here's a good rule: don't answer any questions when they start yelling," he said.

White House spokesperson Josh Earnest said Obama still has the deep concerns he raised on the campaign trail, but that the voters came to a different conclusion. Obama and Trump did not "relitigate" those differences during their meeting, Earnest said.

"The president didn't get to choose his successor, the American people did," Earnest said, repeatedly emphasising that Obama's focus was on a "smooth transition."

Obama said they discussed organisational issues related to the presidential transition as well as foreign and domestic policy.

"My number one priority in the coming two months is to try to facilitate a transition that ensures our president-elect is successful," Obama said, noting if Trump succeeds the country will succeed.

On foreign policy, the men discussed issues Obama will raise with allies on a trip to Greece,

Germany and Peru next week, Earnest said.

While their husbands talked, first lady Michelle Obama showed her successor Melania Trump the residence where the first family lives and talked with her about raising children in the White House.

After meeting with Obama, Trump made the short drive to Congress to hold talks with speaker of the House Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Ryan showed Trump and his wife the view from his balcony overlooking Washington's Mall and the west front of the Capitol, where Trump will be inaugurated Jan 20. The hotel Trump recently opened on Pennsylvania Avenue was also in sight.

"I look forward to starting," Trump said after meeting with Ryan, pointing to discussions on immigration, lowering taxes and reforming the US health care system.

Vice-president-elect Mike Pence was also meeting with Vice-President Joe Biden.

- *dpa*