

'We are now rooting for his success,' says 'heartened' Barack Obama after Trump's victory

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Washington: Moments after Hillary Clinton formally conceded to Donald Trump, President Barack Obama on Wednesday said he was heartened by Donald Trump's call for unity after his stunning victory and "we are now all rooting for his success in uniting and leading the country."

Obama spoke to reporters in the Rose Garden of the White House in a post-election ritual meant to signal the peaceful transition of power from one president to the next. He vowed to do all he could to ensure a smooth transition and tried to buck up Democrats still reeling with disappointment and shock.

"We all want what's best for this country," Obama said, noting he was encouraged by Trump's election night remarks urging reconciliation after an especially bitter and long contest.

He spoke just moments after Hillary Clinton formally conceded to Trump with a similar, though more emotional, appeal to give Trump a chance to succeed as president.

The remarks were striking after a campaign in which the Democrats declared Trump was unfit to serve and told voters the future of democracy was riding on their choice.

An extraordinarily large number of Obama aides and advisers — more than a hundred in all — gathered to hear his statement, including stenographers, low-level aides and White House Counsel Neil Eggleston.

Conceding defeat, an emotional Hillary Clinton today offered to work with Donald Trump but with a veiled warning to President elect against acting on what were seen as his aggressive stances towards some people like Muslims and immigrants.

She also added a note of caution saying that her supporters should be ready to defend American values.

As she began her speech to her supporters here on Wednesday, she appeared to wipe a tear from her eyes and fight back tears while her lips quivered during pauses. "I hope he will be a successful president for all Americans," she said. "We owe him an open mind and a chance to lead."

The White House said Obama and Trump are due to meet Thursday to discuss the handover of power and ongoing planning for the transition. Obama called the Republican in the early hours of the morning Wednesday to congratulate him on his stunning victory, which marked a forceful rebuke by voters to Obama's eight years in office.

For Obama, handing over the White House to Trump is a devastating blow to his legacy and to his hopes for leaving a lasting imprint on the nation's policies. Trump has vowed to rip up much of what Obama accomplished, including his signature health care law, the Iran nuclear deal and a painstakingly negotiated trade deal with Asia.

With Republican control of both chambers of Congress, he will be well positioned to make good on that promises.

Obama also called Clinton after it became clear she'd lost the race. The White House said Obama had "expressed admiration for the strong campaign she waged throughout the country."

It was unclear how substantive Obama's call was with Trump, or how long it lasted, although the White House noted

that Obama placed the call from his residence in the White House, rather than from the West Wing.

Trump's campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, described it as a "warm conversation" and a "gracious exchange." She said Trump had missed the president's original call as Trump was speaking to supporters in New York, then called him back after leaving the stage.

Like Clinton and other Democrats, Obama didn't appear to see Trump's victory coming. As he campaigned vigorously for Clinton in the race's final days, Obama said he was confident that if Americans showed up to vote, they'd choose against electing the billionaire former reality TV star with no formal government experience.

He had also warned supporters in apocalyptic terms that "the fate of the republic" rested on Clinton defeating Trump on Election Day.

- (With AP's inputs)