

Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue
64th Meeting of Delegations
From the European Parliament and the United States
Ljubljana, 24-26 May 2008

Joint Statement

We, Members of the European Parliament and the United States House of Representatives, held our 64th Interparliamentary meeting (Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 24-26 May 2008.

Building on the joint statement issued following our last meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, on 5-8 October 2007, we stressed the importance of regular dialogue on a range of political, social and economic issues that affect all of our citizens. We agreed to report back to our parent bodies on the content and outcome of our discussions, particularly in the areas where joint efforts are likely to result in positive outcomes. We agreed that legislators on both sides of the Atlantic should increase dialogue and consultation amongst themselves in order to prevent possible conflicts of legislation. Direct and timely contacts between specialist committees from Congress and the European Parliament - such as those that have occurred within the TLD framework - have been valuable means of reinforcing cooperation; this exchange of information should be continued and enhanced.

We examined a wide array of foreign policy issues, agreeing that joint action by the European Union and the United States is the most effective way to approach problems that affect both sides of the Atlantic. We took stock of recent developments with regard to the Middle East Peace Process, the nuclear threat posed by Iran and the situation in Iraq. On Afghanistan, we recognized the need for a joint long-term strategy aimed at stabilizing the internal situation and reducing risks for regional security. We noted a proposal to develop a joint fund for humanitarian services and infrastructure development in Afghanistan. We discussed the future political and economic development of Kosovo, and recognized that joint efforts were essential in order to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for the Western Balkans, including an EU perspective. We analyzed developments in Russia's domestic and foreign policies, including the US Administration's proposed missile defense plans as well as European efforts to diversify their energy supply and ensure their energy security. We also assessed our economic and political relationship with China, expressing concern over recent events in Tibet.

The dialogue focused on the ongoing discussions between the US and the EU in order to extend access to the US Visa Waiver programme in the future to all EU Member States, as well as to the importance of ensuring safe trade and port security.

We also discussed the current global financial crisis. We agreed on the need for continued discussion and joint actions to address the effects of climate change.

With regard to the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC), we noted with satisfaction the engagement of the TLD on 13 May 2008 with TEC Co-Chairs Günther Verheugen and Dan Price in the framework of the « Advisory group ». The European Parliament Resolution on the TEC and the letter by the US TLD leadership to the TEC formed the basis for this dialogue. We took note of the EU-US High Level Regulatory Forum, the joint reports on strengthening cooperation regarding the safety of imported products, and the impact assessment guidelines. We advocated stronger involvement of legislators in contributing to and overseeing these initiatives. We supported the identification of compatible biofuels standards in order to achieve international harmonization at the level of international standards organizations. We also welcomed the joint statement on open investment, as well as the start of the second phase of negotiations for the air services agreement.

We welcome the fact that the TEC has become a permanent feature of EU/US relations. We also welcome the decision taken on 13 May 2008 to develop a short term agenda and long term roadmap for TEC activities, and consider that this represents an important step towards ensuring the continuity of the process. As we have done throughout the establishment and initial meetings of the TEC, we continue to assert that the TEC initiative should be characterized by transparency and consultation of stakeholders and we call on the EU and US Administrations to reinforce the flow of information to the TLD in advance of TEC meetings. Awareness of the transatlantic impact of proposed legislation and regulations should be developed in the relevant legislative and regulatory bodies, as well as information about the benefits of rapid advancements towards a barrier-free regulatory environment.

Several items have been identified within the TEC agenda that require further legislative consideration:

- While achieving reciprocity and mutual recognition of security standards remains critically important, we call on the US Congress to review their legislation requiring 100 percent cargo scanning in recognition of European concerns regarding this legislation
- We call on the European Parliament to facilitate an early solution to the ongoing discussions on the ban on imports into the EU of US poultry which has undergone pathogen reduction treatment
- In regards to the EU's regulation on the registration of chemicals (REACH), we call on the European Commission to bring forward legislation ensuring that European and US producers of cosmetics are treated equitably in their requirement to register substances used in their products with the EU's chemical agency.

Finally, we welcome progress on items contained in the 'lighthouse projects' and related initiatives included in the 2007 Summit declaration. In particular, we call for:

- Steps towards allowing the use in the United States of suppliers' declarations of conformity for electrical, electronic and ICT products;

- Further progress towards the mutual recognition of US GAAP and EU IFRS accounting standards;
- Discussion of US and EU regulatory issues in the insurance sector, in order to enhance market access for brokers-dealers, exchanges and other trading systems; and
- Progress in other areas of regulatory cooperation, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and animal testing.

In conclusion, both sides renewed their commitment to make the TLD's work more relevant to the European Parliament and to the United States House of Representatives. We agreed to identify ways by which to reinforce the involvement of the TLD and our legislatures in the preparation of the EU/US Summit. We also agreed to further improve the effectiveness of our dialogue in order to realize the full potential of our interparliamentary relationship.

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