82nd Inter-Parliamentary Meeting

TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATORS’ DIALOGUE

Sofia, Bulgaria - 30 June 2018

JOINT STATEMENT

We, the members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the European Parliament, held our 82nd Inter-Parliamentary Meeting of the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 29 and 30 June 2018.

Building upon the strong foundation of our common values and shared principles, we discussed ways to strengthen our relationship and to respond effectively to the important external challenges we face together as legislators, and to also address the current internal disagreements within the transatlantic alliance, and by making every effort to avert a detrimental trade war.

We were hosted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, which joined us in affirming the values of our transatlantic relationship.

Following-up on previous discussions, we exchanged views on issues organised under four headings:

1. Recent political developments in the EU and the US; 2. Foreign policy cooperation, with a focus on Western Balkans; 3. Cybersecurity, with a focus on safeguarding the integrity of democratic systems from outside interference; 4. Economic cooperation, including trade issues.
Recent political developments in the EU and the US

The strong, strategic and unique partnership between the EU and the US is indispensable for the security and prosperity of both sides of the Atlantic, and is an important pillar of global stability.

The EU and the US have a shared and continued interest in safeguarding the rules-based international order and in developing further our community of values.

In our discussions, we took stock of the current political dynamics between the EU and the US Administration and noted with concern the recent divergences, particularly in the fields of trade policy and with regard to the Iran Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

As representatives of the peoples of America and Europe, we have an important role and historical obligation to address these difficulties thoroughly and strive to overcome them. Our partnership has underpinned more than 70 years of peace and advancement in the transatlantic area. We are at our greatest when this partnership, and those with others around the world, are strong. Most of the threats we face, such as terrorism, hybrid threats, cyber security, economic volatility, energy insecurity, and climate related issues, are global challenges that require a multilateral approach to be tackled effectively.

We took note that other major world powers, such as Russia and China, have robust political and economic strategies, many of which are based on competing models and may go against our interests, and it is therefore essential to foster the EU-US partnership, to continue to promote our common values and the rules and values based international order.
Foreign Policy cooperation, with a focus on Western Balkans

Peace, democracy and prosperity in the Western Balkans are of strategic interest to both the EU and the US, and we have been successful in jointly strengthening stability and promoting reforms in all six partners concerned, for the benefit of their own citizens.

The Western Balkans summit in Sofia in May 2018 and the Council Conclusions of 26 June 2018 reaffirmed the EU’s unequivocal support for the region’s European perspective, of which continued EU-US cooperation is an essential component. The prospect of Euro-Atlantic integration is the main driver for reform and building up resilience. The recent diplomatic breakthrough on the name of Republic of North Macedonia is an illustration of leadership from all sides in a long process, which was fully supported by both the EU and the US, and is proof of the success that our cooperation can bring. Nonetheless, we must remain vigilant to prevent the resurgence of nationalism and violence in the region. We discussed how the people in the Western Balkans notice growing economic, political, religious, and cultural influence from third countries such as Russia, China, Turkey and the Persian Gulf States. Terrorism and radicalisation continue to be common challenges for the EU and the US also in the Western Balkans region.

Parliament and Congress are therefore resolved to reinforce our cooperation, particularly with respect to strengthening the rule of law, supporting democracy and institution building, including common programmes to promote the fight against corruption, media freedom, free and fair elections and the upholding of human rights and gender equality. These initiatives will build resilience, avoid democratic back-sliding and reduce the negative influence of external powers. Both our legislative bodies can be influential through, amongst other mechanisms, support for democracy and human rights programmes, through our committee activities such as hearings or reports, and by sending parliamentary delegations.
The Parliament and Congress also note that the long-standing, strong security relationship between Europe and North America and the stability brought by the NATO alliance. This critical treaty remains central to our collective security and our economic success. To that end, we fully endorse NATO and call on all signatories to remain fully committed to the ideals expressed in the NATO Charter, including Article 5.

As the EU continues to strengthen its efforts in the area of security and defence and its strategic autonomy, we look forward to continuing the partnership with the US through cooperative endeavours leading to a dedicated dialogue on security and defence, and EU NATO cooperation such as the crucial coordination on military mobility.

We share the objective of promoting non-proliferation and disarmament in Asia, notably as regards the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula through diplomatic means. In this regard, we noted the diplomatic steps taken during the Singapore summit of 12 June 2018 with North Korea (DPRK), and support efforts towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. We are determined to maintain maximum pressure on DPRK until it gives up its nuclear ambitions.

Despite different approaches to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, we reaffirm our belief that strong transatlantic dialogue and cooperation is necessary. The EU and US share the strong desire to continue efforts to address concerns about Iran’s ballistic missile programme, its dismal human rights record, including the detention of EU and US citizens, and its destabilising regional activities in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and elsewhere.

Both delegations expressed their respective views of the JCPOA. While the EU believes in the importance of the JCPOA and is committed to its implementation, the US stressed that rhetoric absent action is a void in which Iran has and continues to exploit its destabilising and threatening activities without consequences. We agreed to the need that all these issues be considered urgent
and addressed firmly and effectively, while maintaining consistent pressure to ensure Iran does not continue with a pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. We believe that these issues should also be addressed in their regional context.

**Cybersecurity, with a focus on safeguarding the integrity of democratic systems from outside interference**

In an age of digitally connected economies and democracies, close cooperation across the Atlantic is key to ensuring an open, interoperable, reliable, unfettered, and secure cyberspace for our citizens and influence international norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. Cooperation in the field of cybersecurity should focus on deterring malicious cyber-enabled activities by state and non-state actors and provide mutual support to respond to such cyber activities. This should include intelligence sharing, buttressing of attribution claims, public statements of support for responsive actions following incidents, and imposing consequences against malign actors, while upholding fundamental liberties.

Congress has demonstrated its commitment to cyber cooperation with Europe through House passage and Senate consideration of the Cyber Diplomacy Act, which highlights U.S. support for efforts to “enable threat detection, prevention, and response to malicious cyber activity... [with] the United States’ European allies.” We welcomed the growing cooperation between Europol and US counterparts including the FBI and the DHS, as witnessed by their recent successful joint operations.

We recalled the clear and present danger to our democracies posed by malicious cyber-enabled activities and disinformation. These aggressive practices, such as undermining critical infrastructure, including electoral systems, and inundating social media platforms with automated messages from tens of thousands of bogus user accounts, seek to disrupt our societies and undermine our electoral processes. These activities require a joint response. We called on our
respective administrations to invest resources to counter these threats effectively, including through resilience measures, better protection of electoral processes, education, and government-media dialogue. Technology companies have a clear responsibility to protect and foster democracy and human rights, and we call upon them to act accordingly.

The recent Cambridge Analytica scandal, and the Facebook hearings, that were held in both Congress and the European Parliament, further underlines the need for a common approach to increasing the accountability of digital platforms. We agreed to include this issue in the agenda of our forthcoming meeting.

**Economic cooperation, including trade and energy issues**

We confirmed that our trade and investment flows are the largest in the world and a key driver for global economic growth and prosperity. We also confirmed our belief in a rules-based, open, and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system that plays a crucial role in promoting global economic growth and sustainable development. We believe in working together to improve trade relations to continue to secure economic prosperity for our citizens. We observed that parts of the population on both sides of the Atlantic feel excluded from the benefits of the globalised economy and we are committed to work together to address their concerns through democratic and responsible public policy.

We underlined that unwarranted unilateral and protectionist measures, such as tariffs, create market uncertainty and undermine the competitiveness of both US and EU companies and harm the global value chains within which they operate. In this regard, the European delegation deeply regrets the imposition of tariffs on aluminium and steel, particularly with the justification of national security, the use of which is at variance with existing multilateral rules, which actually help both the EU and the US fight unfair trade policies and practices. We called upon our respective administrations to avoid an escalating trade conflict that will certainly not serve the best interests of our workers, job
creators and consumers, in which regard the continued references to the imposition of tariffs on imports from the EU are unhelpful.

We should instead pool resources to fight unfair trade policies and promote our core transatlantic values, namely free, fair and rules-and values-based trade, on a global basis. We called upon the US administration and the EU executive to work together to find a constructive response to the current institutional and systemic challenges to the WTO's role, which is central to the multilateral system. Such a response should, in particular, ensure the WTO's efficiency, the proper functioning of its Dispute Settlement System and find ways of reforming it in order to overcome the current impasse on filling the vacancies in the Appellate Body. To be able to lead credibly by example, the EU and US should adhere to the rules of the multilateral trading system.

We confirmed that we share many economic interests as regards China, including the commitment to address imbalances in global trade and investment caused by Chinese overcapacity, the promotion of market-oriented economic reform and opposition to the misappropriation of intellectual property of American and European companies operating in that country. Eroding the functioning of the WTO and the integrity of the rules-based trading order will also erode our capacity to address these major challenges posed by China. We further noted our concern with certain Chinese investment patterns in critical sectors, such as technology, that might pose a risk to transatlantic security. Though the US and EU have generally benefitted from an open investment climate, we urged our respective administrations to ensure appropriate safeguards to protect against investments that might pose security risks.

We share concerns about global steel overcapacity in particular and stress the need to strengthen efforts to fight it within the framework of the G20 Global Forum. We welcomed the signature of the joint statement on elimination of unfair market distorting and protectionist practices by the US, the EU and Japan.
In the absence of an agreement on EU-US trade and investment relations, which can only be renegotiated in the right conditions, we believe that a permanent regulatory and consultation cooperation mechanism could be very useful.

Further, the US reiterates its longstanding support for European energy security and diversification, noting that Russia provides nearly 40 percent of Europe’s gas. The US views the proposed Nord Stream II pipeline from Russia to Germany as a step backwards for European energy security and Western interests. Both delegations encourage their respective administrations to address the regulatory and infrastructure challenges to exporting US energy to Europe.

Conclusion

Our discussions have convinced us of the need to further enhance our legislative dialogue as a means to maintain and deepen the transatlantic relationship. We look forward to achieving progress on the above topics by the time of our next meeting in Washington, DC, scheduled for 4 and 5 December 2018.

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