
83rd Inter-Parliamentary Meeting

TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATORS' DIALOGUE

Washington, DC - 27 February 2019

JOINT STATEMENT

We, the members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the European Parliament, held our 83rd Inter-Parliamentary Meeting of the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue in Washington, DC on 27 February 2019.

The bond between the United States and the European Union is our most fundamental economic, security and strategic partnership. Based on the strong foundation of our common history and values, including the principles of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and free and open societies and markets, we, as elected representatives of the United States and the European Union, used the latest meeting to discuss ways to strengthen our cooperation.

We currently face a competitive, challenging and changing global strategic environment, such as the conventional and hybrid challenges posed by competing powers such as China and Russia, who are aggressively trying to impose their own distorted worldview, contrary to our common principles, by creating an alternative to Western democracy. The erosion of and threats to the multilateral and rules-based international order, which has greatly served the common interest since World War II, are a threat to our joint prosperity and to global stability. These challenges make transatlantic cooperation more, not less, essential, and we commit to strengthening our efforts to address them effectively.

We exchanged views on issues organised under four themes:

1. Recent political developments in the US and the EU

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2. Election interference
 3. Trade and economic cooperation
 4. Cooperation in Foreign Affairs and Security policy - with a focus on Russia, the INF treaty, Venezuela and Afghanistan.

Recent Political developments in the US and the EU

We updated each other and exchanged views on the main political developments on either side of the Atlantic, notably on the results of the US midterm elections and the impact for the 116th Congress, as well as the prospects for the European elections in May 2019. We also discussed the latest developments regarding the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU and the future EU-UK relationship.

We are concerned that there are serious instances of anti-semitism and democratic decline worldwide. Radical nationalist parties and intolerance are rising.

Furthermore, we stressed the need for continued transatlantic leadership to address the challenges posed by climate change and energy transition, in order to ensure sustainability and eliminate resulting risks such as regional instability, conflicts over scarce resources and migration.

Election Interference

We stressed that a free and fair electoral process is the bedrock to our functioning democracies, and we reiterated that in recent years our electoral systems have been the target of malign cyber-enabled interference, carried out by both state and non-state actors - most notably Russia. These aggressive practices - such as undermining critical election infrastructure, spreading disinformation on social media platforms, hacking and leaking confidential information and misusing citizens' personal data



for political purposes - disrupt and erode confidence in our democratic processes, sow division and chaos in our societies, and ultimately seek to influence decision-making.

We take the view that addressing attempts to destabilise Western societies requires a coordinated, comprehensive and assertive transatlantic response, involving service providers, regulators and political actors and parties, and the involvement of NATO where appropriate. We welcomed recent initiatives by both the US and EU to enhance the resilience of our electoral systems, which include efforts to protect critical election infrastructure against cyber-security attacks and responding to disinformation campaigns.

Technology companies have a clear responsibility to protect and foster democracy and human rights, and we call upon them to act accordingly. We are convinced of the need for a common approach to increasing the accountability of digital platforms to ensure they are not misused by hostile actors to interfere in democratic elections. We reiterated the need to work together to promote an open, interoperable and secure internet, governed by a multi-stakeholder model which promotes human rights, democracy, the rule of law and freedom of expression and which fosters economic prosperity and innovation, while respecting privacy and guarding against deception, fraud and theft.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

We emphasised our belief in a rules-based, open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, which helps both the EU and the US fight unfair trade policies and practices and ensures a genuine level playing field. We welcomed the increased efforts to modernise and reform the WTO and its Dispute Settlement System and called on both our executives to reach speedy decisions, and to provide credible leadership by adhering to the rules of the multilateral trading system. We stressed the need for China to trade fairly, to respect intellectual property rights and to meet its obligations, and to engage constructively in e-commerce as a member of the WTO. We shared our deep concerns about security vulnerabilities and behaviour posed by China, specifically in the cyber and telecom

infrastructure space as well as with regard to constant violations of intellectual property rights. Both sides agreed to step up their efforts to work together to counter these threats.

We recalled the summit between Presidents Trump and Juncker in Washington, DC on 25 July 2018, and took note of the trade talks to bring concrete results for our citizens. We also took note of USTR's specific negotiating objectives and the European Commission's proposals for launching negotiations.

As a guiding principle, we remain fully committed to free, fair and rules-based trade between the US and the EU in order to bolster economic growth and provide jobs for our citizens. Failing to resolve our trade disagreements only harm consumers, workers and businesses. De-escalating transatlantic trade tensions is therefore essential to strengthening further our trade and investment relationship, which is the largest in the world and a key driver for global economic growth and creation of jobs. We therefore recommitted to greater transatlantic investment and economic and research cooperation.

Cooperation in Foreign Affairs and Security Policy - with a focus on Russia (including the INF treaty), Venezuela and Afghanistan

We strongly oppose **Russia's** ongoing attempts at destabilisation across Europe. We reiterated our condemnation of its illegal occupation of Crimea and military intervention in Eastern Ukraine and called for sanctions to be extended until Russia complies fully with the Minsk agreements. We also condemned Russia's recent use of force against Ukrainian vessels entering the Sea of Azov, its contempt for international norms and blatant disregard for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and demand that Russia take immediate steps to de-escalate the situation, which undermines the stability of the broader region and poses a threat to European security. We also condemned the continued militarisation and deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the Georgian occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and called on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the EU-mediated 2008 Ceasefire Agreement. We continue to condemn Russia's enabling of chemical weapons use in Syria and Russia's use of chemical agents in attacks on

European soil. Further, the US reiterates its longstanding support for European energy security and diversification, including through cooperation with the US. We discussed in this context the Nord Stream II pipeline and the progress on the EU Gas Directive. We agreed to continue to take important steps to increase and diversify EU energy security.

We noted the suspension of obligations under the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)** by both the US and Russia, and we regret that Russia has not addressed in a substantial and verifiable way the serious concerns raised by the US, NATO and the EU over its compliance with the INF provisions. Russia must address these urgent and legitimate concerns, and the US should coordinate closely with European partners on this matter. All diplomatic efforts within the framework of the treaty should be fully explored. The INF has been a pillar of the post-Cold War security architecture and a bedrock for European security for the last 30 years, and Russia's continued disregard for effective arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation is something we must work together to counter in order to avoid an arms race. We reaffirmed our full commitment to the preservation of effective international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

We reiterated our strong conviction that **NATO** is the cornerstone of collective defence and deterrence for its Members in the Euro-Atlantic area, and that the European Union is a unique and essential partner for NATO and the US. We recognize the importance and complementary efforts of a stronger and more capable European defence – including through the EU Common Security and Defence Policy. The development of coherent, complementary and interoperable defence capabilities, avoiding unnecessary duplication, is key in our joint efforts to make the Euro-Atlantic area safer. Such efforts will help enhance our common security, contribute to transatlantic burden sharing, help deliver needed capabilities, and support an overall increase in defence spending in line with NATO guidelines. As we continue to face various conventional and unconventional challenges, it is vital that we work together to maintain our collective viability to counter these threats from wherever they may come.

In light of the illegitimate usurpation of presidential power by Nicolas Maduro before the Supreme Court of Justice on 10 January 2019, which was in breach of the constitutional order, we supported the Venezuelan's National Assembly's decision to recognise Juan Guaidó as the legitimate interim president of **Venezuela** until free, transparent and credible presidential elections are called in order to restore democracy. We reiterated our full support to the National Assembly, which is the only legitimate democratic body of Venezuela. We strongly condemned the authorities' lethal repression and violence against peaceful protestors and called for a halt of illegal raids, arbitrary arrests and of all other violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also called on the authorities to urgently allow humanitarian aid to enter the country in accordance with international humanitarian principles. We believe that this unprecedented social, economic and democratic crisis cannot be resolved by attempts that entail the use of force. We called upon our respective executives to proceed carefully, consult allies and engage with other countries in the region to build an agreement around new presidential elections based on an agreed calendar, equal conditions for all actors, transparency and international observation.

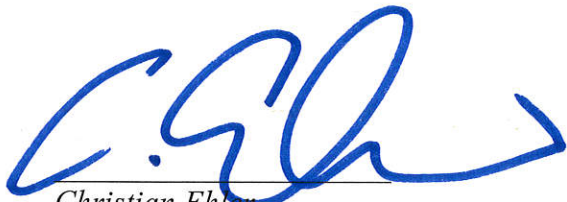
We are concerned by the territorial gains of the Taliban and various terrorist groups in **Afghanistan**, and the continued attacks against civilians and the security forces and reiterated our full commitment to fighting all forms of terrorism. We paid tribute to all coalition and Afghan forces and civilians who have paid the ultimate price for a democratic, secure and stable Afghanistan. We expressed our support for the peace process and call on the Taliban to engage constructively in intra-Afghan peace talks, denounce violence and commit to the full respect for the human rights of all Afghans, including religious and ethnic minorities. We particularly stressed that no backtracking on women rights is acceptable. We also encourage the government to step up efforts to stamp out corruption and urge our regional partners to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorist financing and human smuggling. Afghanistan is at a crucial point in its history; as absent further efforts, all of the progress and sacrifices hitherto could be wasted. Withdrawing coalition forces prematurely could have

negative consequences. We encourage NATO's Resolute Support mission to continue its training and oversight of the Afghan army and police and recognise that a security presence and assistance might be required in the long term, in order to support the Afghan security forces in the suppression of terrorist groups. We also welcomed the ongoing process to ratify the EU - Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD), which is the first contractual relationship between the EU and Afghanistan and welcomed the EU's financial package of 474 million euros to support state building and public sector reforms in the areas of health, justice, elections and migration.

Conclusion

This being the last inter-parliamentary meeting before the European elections of May 2019, we looked back with satisfaction on the close contacts and work accomplished by the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue over the last eight meetings since June 2015 in Riga. We are particularly proud of the policy-oriented approach of our dialogue in the areas over which we have responsibility as legislators and are determined to intensify our parliamentary partnership in between our bi-annual meetings, in these testing times for the transatlantic alliance.

We look forward to achieving progress on the issues we discussed and plan to meet again towards the end of the year.



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