



TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATORS' DIALOGUE

Brussels & Washington, DC – 24 August 2020

JOINT STATEMENT

While the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented us, Members of the European Parliament and of the US House of Representatives, from meeting in person for our bi-annual inter-parliamentary meetings, we have managed to hold regular online exchanges between April and July 2020.

In these conversations, we expressed our deep sorrow at the loss of life and the human tragedy that the pandemic has wrought in our countries and the world, and discussed the importance of transatlantic partners working together to meet the challenges posed by the current global environment. What was evident from our discussions was a common and firm conviction that it is not only imperative to nurture and improve our EU-US partnership but also to find ways to increase our cooperation and pull together our common values, knowledge, talents and resources, for four main objectives:

- To help us overcome the acute health crisis. We need transatlantic and international solidarity and cooperation to assist with funding, developing and distributing a Covid-19 vaccine and effective treatments. We need to learn from each other using lessons-learned and science-based measures to mitigate the virus' spread through social distancing, testing and tracing methods, which have been proved effective and efficient.

- To ensure we exit this severe economic recession quickly. EU-US trade constitutes the world's biggest commercial artery and is a prerequisite to restart our economies. As we restart our economies, we have to carefully protect numerous sectors and markets, and avoid a protectionist spiral, and work together to ensure that others around the world are abiding by the rules-based international trading order. Ongoing and escalating tariff wars are serious irritants that detract us from properly addressing the crisis and fulfilling the potential of our commercial cooperation. The same is true of visa restrictions, which impede academic, scientific and economic cooperation between our citizens at a time when we need it most. We should strive to solve our bilateral discrepancies through dialogue and by reinforcing our ties.

- Our friends, allies and partners around the world depend on and expect transatlantic leadership in the international arena. This is true on the health front in the World Health Organisation (WHO), in the economic domain at the G7/G20, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and in the security domain, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The international institutions and norms we helped build in the last 70 years are



under pressure. Failure to engage and lead them will result in others rewriting the rules in their own authoritarian image for their advantage and to the detriment of democratic norms around the world.

- Competitors such as China and Russia are exploiting this moment of adversity, to try to undermine our unity and leadership. Challenges of this magnitude require a common vision and trusted collaboration. Russia continues its efforts to undermine western democracies and divide allies against one another through a combination of disinformation campaigns, election interference, and other nefarious activities. These attacks on international norms and institutions should not go unanswered, and all democracies must recognise that Russia remains a major adversary and a threat.

China has modelled the ongoing Russian playbook by spreading fake news and disinformation about its role in the pandemic and its international assistance. We also have to continue to call out Chinese assaults on human rights, democracy and international law, as seen in its repression of the Uyghurs and other minorities, the strangling of fundamental freedoms, rule of law and autonomy in Hong Kong, and its illegal maritime claims in the South China Sea. While we should strive to cooperate with China where appropriate and keep it anchored and accountable in the international system, we must show China, in a clear and united way, that there is a cost for its behaviour.

Our respective economic exposure, interests and leverage with China may not be identical. However, we will be more effective in defending our common interests if we do so in a coordinated and multilateral way. We should all strive to hold each other accountable to adhering to international trade rules and on technology issues, in terms of market and ethics. We have to be strategic and make sure that through coordination, for example on export controls and investment screening, we reduce risks to our sovereignty over sensitive technology and critical infrastructure. The recent announcement of an EU-US dialogue on dealing with China is a welcome first step in this direction. At this moment of great power rivalry in a hyper-interconnected world, transatlantic unity is critical and imperative.

In our discussions, we emphasised the need to pay attention so that the economic downturn does not lead to serious cuts in our **defense** budgets and our commitments towards the NATO Wales Pledge – of spending 2% of GDP on defense and 20% of it on new equipment. We have no choice but to spend more strategically and more efficiently to meet the challenges by our adversaries. While fighting the Covid-19 pandemic we must also not forget our efforts in fighting other existential threats, such as climate crisis and nuclear proliferation.

As we look to exercise our leadership role abroad, our credibility and success also depend on **making sure that our own houses are in order**. During this time of domestic upheaval, it is clear that much work needs to be done for racial equality and justice, and the demonstrations of solidarity that followed in Europe showed that our citizens want us to continue to combat abuse, racism and all forms of injustice together. The serious infringements of the rule of law, growing trend towards authoritarianism and rise of anti-Semitism incidents and rhetoric in some EU Member States are equally weak and



unacceptable spots, which should be corrected by showing demonstrable leadership and accountability. We must strive harder to replace populist and authoritarian politics, which divide our societies on both sides of the Atlantic, with the politics of hope.

Whereas in recent years relations at the executive level have been tense and problematic, the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue has remained an open channel of cooperation and trust. As legislators and elected representatives of the peoples and citizens of the US and the EU, we commit to continue listening to each other and **working together responsibly**. We are part of the glue that keeps this important alliance together.

Over the coming months, the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue will strive to positively impact EU-US relations by **facilitating discussion, building ties between parliamentarians, and enabling frank exchanges of views** on these important topics and others. As the world recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, we will continue to meet by video conference and other electronic means until travel and in-person meetings can resume.

As we know, in any partnership we have disagreements. When that occurs we work hard to resolve our differences, and sometimes we have to agree to disagree. But our friendship, our common history, and our values are the foundation of this partnership, which is like no other alliance in the world.



[signed]
MEP Radek Sikorski
EU Co-Chair

[signed]
Rep. Jim Costa
US Co-Chair

[signed]
MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri
Vice-Chair

[signed]
MEP Nicolae Ștefănuță
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Co-signatories:

[signed]
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Chair of the EP Committee on Foreign
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