

AMB. SCHNABEL ON THE FUTURE OF U.S.-EU RELATIONS

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U.S. Ambassador to the EU Rockwell A. Schnabel addressed students of the College Of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, on the future of the transatlantic relationship March 11. In his speech, he discussed current U.S.-EU issues such as strengthening regulatory cooperation, the Greater Middle East initiative, and fighting terrorism.

Below are remarks by Ambassador Schnabel, as prepared for delivery:

“THE FUTURE OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS”

Introduction

Thanks to Professor Thompson for the opportunity to speak to you today on a very important subject – the Future of Transatlantic Relations. I was about your age when I left my native Netherlands to live in the United States. Back then, my move to a distant country was considered unusual. Today, it is commonplace in our increasingly interconnected world.

As the countries of Europe grow closer through the EU, and as a united Europe deepens its relationships with the U.S. and the rest of the world, I believe this trend will continue.

As students at one of Europe’s most prestigious universities, I know many of you will go on to be government and business leaders throughout the continent. I also hope a few of you might try your luck in the U.S. as I did.

As the future leaders of Europe, you will no doubt face many of the same issues we face today. Primary among them is how to continue to develop the Transatlantic relationship in a way that is both mutually and globally beneficial.

The strength of the U.S.-EU relationship effects not only our respective populations. Actions we take on our economies, our foreign policies, and to combat global scourges like terrorism and disease, have ripple effects throughout the world.

Economic Ties

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Transatlantic economic relationship. Just as people are moving among countries and continents with greater frequency, companies are doing so as well. Our businesses and economies are increasingly interconnected, and it is often difficult to distinguish between a U.S. and an EU company.

Today, for example, U.S. firms have European affiliates that are treated as EU companies, and European firms manufacture in the U.S. What this means is that when the U.S. economy is thriving, Europe benefits, and vice-versa. It is in our mutual interest to see the relationship not as competitive, but as complementary.

It is for this reason that the U.S. strongly supports the EU's Lisbon goals. A stronger, more competitive Europe will benefit the U.S. It is also why we are working hard with the EU and other countries to ensure a successful outcome to the Doha Development Agenda.

Throughout my tenure here, and into yours, we should continue to work to reduce the trade and regulatory barriers that hinder the free flow of goods and services between our economies. Strong and open economies in the U.S. and Europe not only help our own citizens, but those of developing countries as well. Our economies are engines for global growth, and countries such as Korea, China and Brazil have all benefited from trade with us.

Our goal now should be to increase the benefits of global trade to countries in most need of it, including those in Africa and the Middle East.

Foreign Policy Ties

What is true for our economies is even more salient in the area of foreign policy. Transatlantic political cooperation is not just desirable but essential to address the global challenges we face today. The United States fully supports European efforts to speak with a unified voice on security and foreign policy issues. But as the European Union looks to play a greater role in the world, it is important that it view the United States as a partner -- not a rival.

The strength of a US-EU relationship is our shared objectives. Where opinions differ is in the approach to these goals. Consider,

for example, a current issue we are discussing with the EU: a Greater Middle East initiative. This is an attempt to expand political, economic, and educational opportunities throughout the region. Lack of reform is among the root causes of extremist violence. There is no U.S. or Western "plan" to impose change on the region. The best ideas for reform will come from the people of the greater Middle East, and cannot be imposed from abroad.

We are coordinating closely with EU members to build on the efforts that the EU has made with its Barcelona Process, as well as on our own programs, the Middle East Partnership Initiative. We are listening to civil society, business and education leaders from the region on their ideas about how we can best support modernization, as well as talking with governments in the region. Concretely, we have programs supporting NGOs, women's empowerment, and parliamentary reform. When we support positive reform in the region, this should not be seen as a substitute for full engagement in the Middle East Peace Process. But the lack of a full peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors cannot be used as an excuse to delay these needed reforms.

There is a broad range of common objectives in which our cooperation is making a difference:

- Our long-term commitment to bring stability to the Balkans.
- Our work in Afghanistan to create a functioning state to replace the failed state of the Taliban.
- Our participation in the Quartet working for peace in the Middle East.
- Our active cooperation to address the terrible threat posed by proliferation of WMD in North Korea, Iran and elsewhere.

On Iraq, last June European leaders voiced their "commitment to the development of a prosperous and stable Iraq with a representative government and a thriving civil society." Helping Iraqis recover economically from decades of neglect, mismanagement and corruption is a huge and long-term task that requires the assistance of the entire international community, and America is hopeful the EU will play a leading role in that process.

Fighting Terrorism

The threat of international terrorism, unfortunately, is not likely to disappear before you all are in positions of authority. It therefore has to be addressed taking both a short-term approach, to ensure the safety of our citizens now, and a long-term approach. Within ten days of the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, the leaders of the EU gathered in Brussels for a special Summit to take decisions on how to respond. Since then, US-EU cooperation has made significant progress, including:

- crackdowns on terrorist financial networks,
- improved law enforcement coordination,
- agreements on Europol cooperation, mutual legal assistance and extradition,
- improved civil aviation and cargo traffic protections.

But much remains to be done. It is vital that we work together to continue to improve the security of our citizens and to stop the spread of terrorism at its source.

Enlargement

Finally, I'd like to add that in all three areas -- economics, foreign policy and fighting terrorism -- the U.S. views enlargement as an enormously positive event that will strengthen both the EU and the Transatlantic partnership.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what the U.S. is looking for in the European Union is a strong European partner, not a weak European rival. We have made considerable progress in our transatlantic relationship, but much remains to be done.

I wish you luck as you complete your studies and look forward to the day that you bring your fresh ideas and energy to the European and Transatlantic dialogues.