

Notes used for Remarks made at the NDI (National Democratic Institute)

by

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"Transatlantic Dialogue: Strengthening EU-US Cooperation on Democracy Support"

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Morning remarks:

- Welcome all participants
- Delighted we can support NDI and the Transatlantic Dialogue on Democracy
- Praise the quality of the project and the professional presentation
- Thank co-sponsors
- This is the right moment to have a dialogue on Democracy. The wider context of the EU-US relations seems particularly conducive. The election of the Obama Administration raised high hopes and expectations among the European public and governments. We are now in a phase of an end-of-transition on both continents: The new US Administration is well in place and the EU is moving quickly on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. There is an increasing will and commitment on both sides of the Atlantic to expand and deepen the cooperation. On both sides we realize that we need to work more together in order to respond to the challenges we are facing. Most of the challenges are common or global. Most of them need more than just EU-US cooperation. The increasing will to improve cooperation across the Atlantic and globally creates a new political space for more common action and cooperation. Overall this is a moment of opportunity for the Transatlantic Relationship.
- This is the right moment for cooperation; we are in an era of policy making on democracy support. One key weakness of the transatlantic coordination and cooperation effort is that historically, we do not start policy coordination early enough. The US has obviously a tendency towards a "traditional" super power mentality: first defining its policies alone, without necessarily much consideration, let alone consultation, of others, and then basically expect others, particularly allies, to follow suit. This simple reality explains a lot of the occasionally obvious absence of sense of ownership among the allies, even if in the end they decided to contribute to US initiated policies. On the EU side, we tend to have a difficulty projecting our own policies and positions, mainly due to the inherent difficulty to build sufficient intra-EU coherence on foreign policy matters particularly towards the US. This makes it difficult for the US to commit to policy coordination at an early stage of policy development. Thus, the Europeans are left with

unsatisfied expectations of real coordination and partnership. In fact, we need more events like the one we are having today. The two panels that will discuss recent developments in both the EU and the US will show that we are at a phase of planning work, at a phase of policy definition on both sides. Many people would have the traditional reaction, suggesting we talk at a later stage. However, now is the time. We need to think together and understand each other better before policies are determined in order to enhance coordination and cooperation.

There is a big margin of useful cooperation between the EU and the US on democracy. Advancement of democracy support by the EU and the US is of obvious and fundamental importance to both sides and the wider world. We have developed very different experiences in supporting democracy and we have a lot to learn from each other. We do not need to act together, but we need to learn from past mistakes and act coherently in complementary and not contradictory ways in the future.

Concerning particularly democracy support and sustainability of development assistance, this is a moment of considerable potential as the EU and the US look for new ways to cooperate in development assistance and the EU is carefully reviewing its policies and practices. We have considerable margin to be innovative in the future.

Integrating democracy and human rights in a broader foreign policy agenda is also a very important challenge for the 21st century. It is obvious that the EU-US coordination will increase the political space of support for democracy and human rights, particularly where there is significant competing economic or security interests. Furthermore I do believe that the 21st century will demonstrate quickly that it is the enlightened self-interest of all, including the EU and the US, to considerably increase the prominence of values in foreign policy. In that respect, EU and US cooperation can only help to accelerate what I believe is a real trend towards a freer and more democratic world, despite democracy's difficult global advancement, particularly during the last decade.

Excellent timing, phenomenal substance and extreme quality of participants, this is going to be a very interesting seminar.

Evening reception remarks:

When one thinks about democracy and the European Union, there are two main considerations that come to mind. First the fact that the EU is clearly the most successful peace and democracy advancement project since WWII. Democracy is an accession condition for states that want to become members of the EU. Consolidation of the democratic regime and democratic principles has to take place before accession. The EU has transformed the European Continent through expansion of democracy, peace and stability. It is not recognized or understood enough that the formidable success of the enlargement process is profoundly based on the aspiration of the peoples. First by projecting a positive image of what democracy is and what it can achieve, thus encouraging aspirations to join the EU, and then by building on that aspiration, accelerate the process of profound reforms needed for the accession to the EU.

A second aspect concerning EU and democracy is the criticism that the EU has received historically concerning the democratic deficit of its own institutions. This criticism was

justified when the members of the European Parliament were appointed by Member States. Later, they were elected but had no real power. Now with the Lisbon Treaty the European Parliament is in fact requested to approve all EU legislation. This basic new reality makes it much more difficult for people of good faith to argue about any significant democratic deficit in EU institutions. It remains true that the political life of a multinational democracy is very different from the political life of a state. Arguments can be made about the structure and the functioning of the political parties at the EU level in general and within the European Parliament in particular. However, I do consider obvious that the Lisbon Treaty represents a phenomenal progress in the quality of democracy at the level of the EU. Probably history will decide at some stage in the future looking backwards that the most important change introduced by the Lisbon Treaty for the way the EU itself will evolve in the long term, was the considerable expansion of the role of the EP.

Our guest of honor tonight, President Buzek probably personifies better than anybody else in Europe today the advancement of democracy in the EU. His personal path from Solidarność and underground fight for democracy to President of the European Parliament makes him a father figure for democracy in Europe, particularly Central and Eastern Europe, and personifies the formidable evolution of the European Union in the last two decades. At the same time, he represents the new European Parliament under the Lisbon Treaty that has in fact eliminated the debate about the lack of democratic legitimacy of the EU itself.

He also illustrates another important point particularly relevant in the context of the economic crisis we are in. President Buzek was Prime Minister of Poland for four years. He led his government into deep economic reforms. He was elected in the last European Parliament elections I understand with the highest number of votes amongst his MEP compatriots. This demonstrates in a spectacular way that a politician can be popular despite undertaking profound and necessarily painful reforms. This is a message of hope for all the politicians in power during the current economic crisis.

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