

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Vice President Biden: U.S. Committed to European Partnership

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States has no doubt about the need for a vibrant European Union because it is essential to American prosperity and long-term security, Vice President Biden said in a May 6 speech before the European Union Parliament in Brussels.

Biden, who is on a three-day diplomatic mission, praised the Lisbon Treaty, which has given the European Union expanded powers and responsibilities aimed at enhancing the efficiency and democratic legitimacy of the 27-nation bloc.

“What began as a simple pact among a half-a-dozen nations to create a common market for coal and steel grew into an economic and political powerhouse, a community dedicated to free thought, free movement and free enterprise, a Europe that one historian has called not so much a place but an idea,” Biden said.

“And I’m here to reaffirm that President Obama and I believe in this idea, and in a better world and better Europe it has already helped to bring about, a Europe where all member states benefit by negotiating trade agreements and fighting environmental degradation with one unified voice, a Europe that bolsters the cultural and political values that my country shares with all of you, a Europe that is whole, a Europe that is free, and a Europe that is at peace,” the vice president said.

Biden is in Brussels for consultations with NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and other NATO officials, and for meetings with EU and Belgian officials on a range of issues concerning mutual security, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran and its nuclear development program, counterterrorism, climate change and energy security, missile defense, relations with Russia, and the promotion of economic growth. It is Biden’s second visit to Europe as vice president, and is a direct effort to strengthen bilateral relations with the EU. The second part of his trip takes him to Madrid for bilateral talks with Spanish officials.

The United States and European allies have been working together in Afghanistan to bolster the Afghan army and police forces, while also working to help its fledgling government create the infrastructure it needs to lead the country independent of outside assistance. Efforts there are across two fronts — one military, to provide security while its military and police grow strong enough to confront insurgents, and the other civil, to provide infrastructure to meet the growing needs of a

modernizing nation.

“Across the troubled landscape of Afghanistan and Pakistan, we are working together to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida and the Taliban fighters and to train an Afghan army and police force,” Biden said. “In order to build Afghanistan’s governing capacity, the United States, the European Union and its member nations are deploying significant financial resources and civilian resources.”

Biden said that while sustaining these missions has not always been popular, “you all know as I do, it is required.” And it is leaders’ obligation to make the case to their populations, he added.

The United States and Europe are also standing together to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, a development that would endanger the region and allies in Europe, he said. Iranian leaders have spurned collective good-faith efforts and continue to threaten regional stability, he said.

“Iran’s nuclear program violates its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and risks sparking a nuclear arms race in the Middle East,” Biden said.

The United States and several European allies on the U.N. Security Council have been circulating a draft resolution aimed at imposing sanctions on Iran’s regime for not cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency on its fledgling nuclear development program.

“Tehran faces a stark choice: abide by international rules and rejoin the community of responsible nations, which we hope for, or face further consequences and increasing isolation,” Biden said.

NATO MEETINGS

Earlier May 6, Biden met with NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen and military and political representatives to discuss the NATO-led coalition effort in Afghanistan, enhancing relations with Russia and a proposed limited missile defense system for Europe.

Instead of an advanced missile defense system that had been proposed by the administration of President George W. Bush, President Obama has opted for a more limited system using Patriot missile batteries in several East European nations and ship-based anti-missile systems in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea.

Biden said the United States has proposed an adaptive missile defense system to deter and defend against missile attacks from rogue nations, like Iran, that might threaten the European continent.

U.S. Reaffirms Its Support for WMD-Free Middle East

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States joined the four other permanent members of the U.N. Security Council in expressing a commitment to fully implement a 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) resolution that would establish the Middle East as a region free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

According to a May 5 joint statement issued by China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States to the 2010 NPT review conference, the five countries “are committed to a full implementation of the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East and we support all ongoing efforts to this end. We are ready to consider all relevant proposals in the course of the Review Conference in order to come to an agreed decision aimed at taking concrete steps in this direction.”

The United States was one of the original sponsors of the resolution (PDF, 12KB), which was issued as an annex to the 1995 NPT Extension Initiative. The resolution noted that efforts to reach a comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbors contribute toward establishing the region as a WMD-free zone and called on all states to accede to the NPT and to take “practical steps” to verifiably establish the Middle East as a zone free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as delivery systems.

The joint statement said nuclear weapons-free zones around the world “have made and continue to make an important contribution to the strengthening of the international nuclear nonproliferation regime in all its aspects, and to achieving nuclear disarmament and the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.”

It calls for the consideration of additional zones “where appropriate and in conformity with the wishes of regional states,” and welcomes dialogue to “resolve the outstanding issues related to nuclear weapon-free zones.”

The statement expressed concern about the proliferation risks from Iran’s nuclear program and called for the country’s “full and immediate compliance” with its international obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano told the review conference May 3 that Iran has not provided his agency with the cooperation necessary for the IAEA to verify that the nuclear material in Iran’s possession is being used for peaceful purposes.

Calling for nuclear energy to be developed “in a culture of openness and transparency,” the five permanent members recognized that all states that are compliant with the NPT have an “inalienable right” to the research, production and use of peaceful nuclear energy, which not only can help meet energy and development needs while addressing climate change concerns, but also offers applications in areas such as medicine, agriculture and industry.

Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton said May 3 that the Middle East “may present the greatest threat of nuclear proliferation in the world today,” and that the Obama administration is “prepared to support practical measures” that will help establish the region as a WMD-free zone, but acknowledged that due to “the lack of a comprehensive regional peace and concerns about some countries’ compliance with NPT safeguards, the conditions for such a zone do not yet exist.”

The United States “want[s] to see every country be a signatory to the NPT. We want universal adherence,” Clinton said in response to a question about Israel, India and Pakistan.

“We continue to urge all states, every single one of them outside the NPT, to join the treaty, accept the full-scope safeguards by the International Atomic Energy Agency, as required under the treaty,” the secretary said.

Israel is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons, but it has not acknowledged having a nuclear arsenal and is not a party to the NPT.

Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs P.J. Crowley told reporters May 5 that the United States will discuss the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East with other participants, including nonaligned countries, during the May 3–28 review conference in New York.

Crowley said significant progress toward a comprehensive peace in the region “might give people confidence that the conditions could emerge that allow this to advance.”

Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Ellen Tauscher said April 30 that a WMD-free zone in the Middle East is “something that the region has to embrace, and they have to embrace it at the right time when all parties can participate.”

The 1995 resolution calls for a conference that all regional parties would attend. Tauscher said full attendance is “unlikely unless there is a comprehensive peace plan that is being accepted and worked on.”

But she said the Obama administration is working with

the other permanent members and members of the Arab League, including Egypt, to move forward on the resolution. "We believe that that is something that should be delivered upon and we've been working to get the elements together," she said, including a comprehensive draft that Arab and nonaligned states are reviewing.

But Tauscher said that while the Obama administration is seeking consensus to move forward on the 1995 resolution, there also needs to be "language that would deal with Iranian noncompliance of their NPT obligations."

"It's important to look at Iran specifically – an NPT party that is in wide variation outside of its commitments – and ... it is very important that is done together," she said.

U.N. Permanent Five Promote Nuclear Nonproliferation

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council strongly endorsed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and called on all 189 nations that participate in it to conform to its principles to block the spread of nuclear weapons, pursue disarmament and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

"The NPT is fundamental to protecting global peace and security from the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons," the five members said in a joint statement May 5 at U.N. headquarters. The permanent members, also known as the P-5, are Great Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States – and they all possess nuclear weapons.

The United Nations is hosting the eighth review conference of the treaty May 3–28. Every five years since the NPT went into effect in 1970, the review conference evaluates its operation and implementation. The pact is the primary barrier to the unchecked spread of nuclear arms across the globe. Delegates from the 189 nations belonging to the treaty are discussing compliance based on its three pillars – nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

"It has served the international community well for the past four decades," the joint statement said. And the five nations praised the international community's "shared commitment to seeking a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons ... in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all."

President Obama has made achieving a world free of nuclear weapons a central goal of his presidency. While acknowledging that it may not happen during his presidency or his lifetime, Obama has said it is a goal worth pursuing. Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a New START Treaty in Prague, Czech Republic, April 8 that, if ratified, would reduce each nation's nuclear arsenals over seven years to 1,550 strategic warheads and reduce the means to deliver them.

For Obama's efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and promote greater peace and stability, he was awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize.

And the permanent Security Council members also endorsed the 2010 START Treaty, which when fully implemented would result in the lowest number of deployed nuclear weapons since the 1950s.

The joint statement also endorsed the full implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which Obama has pledged to see ratified by the United States Senate. The CTBT aims to keep nations from conducting nuclear tests because such tests create instability and also threaten the environment with excess nuclear radiation.

"The proliferation of nuclear weapons undermines the security of all nations. It sets back the cause of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, and imperils the prospects for strengthening international cooperation in nuclear energy, including the role we wish to see such cooperation play in combating climate change and ensuring sustainable development of nuclear energy," the joint statement said.

United States Remains a Magnet for Immigrants

Author Steve Roberts chronicles the lives of 13 immigrant families

By Ralph Dannheisser
Special Correspondent

Washington – The United States continues to be a magnet for immigrants, and those newcomers contribute mightily to American life just as earlier generations did, says journalist and educator Steve Roberts.

Roberts, a former *New York Times* reporter and now a professor of media and public affairs at George Washington University, described age-old consistencies in the immigration experience – but also some modern twists – in a talk at the National Archives in Washington April 22.

He laced his talk with anecdotes from his new book, *From Every End of This Earth: 13 Families and the New Lives They Made in America*, which presents the stories of recent

immigrants from 17 countries. (Some family members came from different countries.)

Ranging from entrepreneurs and students to survivors of war, these immigrants traveled to the United States from Afghanistan, Burma, China, Greece, El Salvador, Egypt, Germany, India, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Syria, Ukraine and Vietnam.

The book's title was adopted from President Obama's inaugural address, in which he declared that American society has been "shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth," and that its citizens recognize that "our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness."

Roberts joked about his immigrant forebears and the much earlier ones of his wife, radio and television news commentator Cokie Roberts, who served as moderator for his talk. "Both of us are children of immigrants; it just happens our families came 300 years apart," he said. "Cokie's family came to Jamestown [with the original British settlers of Virginia] in 1620 ... and I'm the child of the Rogowskys of Bialystok" in Poland.

"Immigration is alive and well today, 100 years after my grandparents arrived," Roberts said, but while earlier waves of immigration originated in Europe, people now come from other parts of the globe.

In his home town of Bayonne, New Jersey, Roberts reported, "the Italian church has masses in Spanish. The old bus station is a Coptic Christian church. All the stores on Broadway that used to be owned by Jews are now owned by Indians." Indeed, he said, "the winner of the annual award for an essay about the Holocaust, given by the Jewish community, is a Muslim woman from Pakistan."

IMMIGRANTS' STORIES

Roberts' book describes a wide range of immigration experiences, from the young man from India who simply boarded a plane in New Delhi on his way to graduate school in Ohio, to the family that escaped a brutal civil war in Sierra Leone and ended up in Pennsylvania. "We're a haven for political refugees, who are fighting through terribly dangerous times," Roberts said.

He told of a young woman from Burma who immigrated with her family and, upon entering college, identified with fellow Muslim students and began wearing a hijab (traditional headscarf). "How can you do this? You're in America!" the girl's father demanded. "I can do it, Daddy, because I'm in America," she replied.

"It's a wonderful story," Roberts said, "because the point

here is choice. ... America allows you to become who you want to be, even if it's more devout, even if it's putting on hijab."

He recounted the story of Pablo Romero, born in rural Mexico, a school dropout at age 11, who worked in lettuce fields after coming to California at age 13. Drafted into the Army at 20, Romero devoured every book in the post library, ultimately attending community college at night, then the University of California, then medical school.

Romero now runs a neighborhood medical clinic in Salinas, California, "taking care of the children and grandchildren of the people he worked next to in the fields," Roberts said. "I do not know a better American than Pablo Romero."

One recent change, Roberts said, is that communication technology now allows immigrants to keep in touch with friends and family in the home country. There has also been a decline in "traditions that hampered women from emigrating alone," and a shift to a service economy that has created more opportunities – particularly for women – in fields such as health care.

A common thread in the U.S. immigration picture is "an elasticity to our [self-] definition," Roberts said. "Anyone from anywhere can define himself as an American in a way that's not true anywhere else in the world." And America continues to improve because immigrants bring "new energy, new blood and new entrepreneurial spirit."

Still, he acknowledged that "as much as we celebrate the glory of our immigrant history, America has always been ambivalent," passing through periods of "very virulent anti-immigrant feeling."

Opponents "almost always use the same language, whether it's against the Irish in the 1840s, the Italians in the 1920s ... or the Hispanics today, and that language is, 'American is now perfect and we have to pull up the drawbridge because the next group will corrupt our culture,'" Roberts said.

But, he insisted, "That's a profound misreading of American history – because the genius of America is that we're never finished."

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