

AMBASSADOR FEINSTEIN'S REMARKS
4th KIRKLAND FELLOWSHIP ALUMNI CONFERENCE
JULY 2, 2011

Dzień dobry. Witam wszystkich i cieszę się, że mogę wziąć udział w dzisiejszej konferencji. To dla mnie zaszczyt spotkać się z ważnymi postaciami polskiej transformacji, a także uczestnikami programu Kirklanda.

[Greeting in Russian]

It's an honor to be with a distinguished group of Poles who played such a key role in Poland's transition, and a pleasure to speak to alumni of the Kirkland program who represent the broad geographic reach of this excellent program.

Greetings to PAFF President Jerzy Kozminski, and congratulations on PAFF's vision in creating a program that shares Poland's successful experience of transition to a peaceful, democratic society with a vibrant market economy. A program that shares this experience with young leaders from neighboring countries on a similar path was a brilliant idea, and brilliantly implemented. I'd also like to thank the Polish-U.S. Fulbright Commission for its key role in carrying out the Kirkland Program each year.

I'd like to acknowledge Jacek Michałowski, here representing President Komorowski, and who also deserves credit for his role in Poland's democratic transformation, and for the success of the Kirkland Program.

It is fitting for this program to be named in honor of Lane Kirkland, recognizing his leading role in bringing the support of the AFL-CIO to the Solidarity movement at a crucial moment in Poland's history. Kirkland could not have known at the time, but this turned out to be a crucial moment in world history, as Solidarity ultimately toppled communism in Poland and helped bring about its demise in many other countries.

The Kirkland program embodies the close partnership between the U.S. and Poland to foster the development and strengthening of democracy in countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. In fact, when it comes to democracy promotion the United States has no better partner than Poland. We work together to spread democracy from Belarus to Benghazi and beyond. During his visit to Warsaw last month, President Obama thanked Poland for its leadership in promoting democracy around the world, both by serving as an example and by sharing its experience to show a pathway for modernization and democratic reform.

Let me express American support for your efforts, because our view is that we must stand up for democratic principles and universal values not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is in our common interest. We know from experience that democracies don't go to war with other democracies, and that free markets bring prosperity and stability. Likewise, vibrant civil societies improve lives and help countries to become stronger and more prosperous.

In his inaugural address, President Obama made clear his administration's commitment to continue the American tradition of working to create the conditions for democracy and human dignity to flourish around the world. In his 2010 speech to the UN General Assembly, President Obama clearly expressed his personal belief that "history is on the side of liberty." The strongest foundation for human progress lies in open economies, open societies, and open governments. "To put it simply," he said, "democracy, more than any other form of government, delivers for our citizens."

You are among those with the capacity to develop this form of government in order to deliver for citizens. And the United States is with you. This is why the United States supports efforts to tighten cooperation with the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative. Even as we jointly plan and coordinate our assistance, we cannot be afraid to counter the weakening of democratic standards in the region, when elections are flawed or media freedoms are curbed. And we cannot be silent when Europe's last dictatorship attacks its own people.

The EU and the United States spoke with one voice in condemning Aleksander Lukashenka's December crackdown on opposition candidates and in showing solidarity with Belarusian civil society. We commend the leadership of Poland and other Central European countries in ensuring transatlantic solidarity on Belarus. And like the EU and the OSCE, we call on Belarussian authorities to end the harassment, legal and administrative persecution, imprisonment, violence, or torture of journalists. We call on Belarussian authorities to drop charges against all prosecuted journalists, including Andrzej Poczobut.

Completing the transformation of Central and Eastern

Europe is one issue that can be viewed in the wider context of democratic change further afield. Democratic reform in North Africa can benefit from the experience and expertise developed in this part of the world since 1989. During his visit to Poland, President Obama emphasized the clear need for Europe and the United States to work together to encourage democratic reforms and bolster civil society in not only in Eastern Europe, but also North Africa, and around the world.

While the countries of North Africa are dealing with a different set of circumstances and challenges, the architects of Central Europe's political and economic transformation can offer expertise. Importantly, they can help to persuade the skeptics that difficult political and economic reforms are necessary, beneficial, and possible. We greatly appreciate that Lech Walesa, Bogdan Borusewicz, and other Polish leaders have led delegations to the region to do exactly that.

As Kirkland alumni, you represent a growing network of future leaders of your countries equipped with the education, skills and vision to promote peaceful democratic development and prosperity throughout the region. The subject of your conference is the Polish Presidency of the European Union. So please allow me to make a few remarks on U.S.-Polish relations within the context of transatlantic relations.

In facing a daunting international agenda today, the United States has no better partner than Europe, where we work with democratic, prosperous, militarily-capable allies who share our values and our interests. This is why President Obama calls Europe “the cornerstone of our engagement with the world.” The transatlantic space represents what Poland’s first post-communist Foreign Minister, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, called a “community of interests,” where values and economic ties bind us closely together.

The United States has three overarching objectives in our policy toward Europe, and Poland plays an important role in each.

First, we work with Europe to promote prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. A country cannot be strong overseas if it is not strong at home, and that is why President Obama has made expanding international trade and investment a priority. And in this respect the importance of Europe and America to one another cannot be overstated. America and Europe are one another's biggest trading partners and foreign employers by far. Investment is over \$3 trillion a year and U.S.-EU trade accounts for almost 40 percent of world trade.

Second, we work with Europe to meet global challenges.

No matter what the issue is, whether it is responding to the stirring for democracy in North Africa and the Middle East; combating violent extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or opposing Iran's nuclear ambitions, Europe is indispensable. Together, we are vastly stronger in terms of legitimacy, resources, and ideas. That is why the United States supports a strong and united Europe, and a strong Poland within the EU, playing an important and influential role.

Third, which I've already alluded to, the United States is committed to the historic project of building a Europe that is prosperous, whole and free. Poland's bold and skillful democratic transition paved the way for Central and Eastern Europe. And, today, Poland's expertise and example are inspiration and sustenance for those seeking to build democracy in the eastern neighborhood. The leadership of Poland and Sweden established the European Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative. And America is proud to provide \$310 million in assistance to the countries of the Eastern Partnership, in addition to an additional \$450 million this year for Georgia, the remainder of our \$1 billion assistance package pledge. And we have just signed a five-year package of assistance with Moldova, under the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact.

All of this brings me back to the Kirkland Program. The participants and administrators of this program play a key role in that historic project. A Europe that is prosperous, whole and free is closer than ever thanks to the work and dedication of people in this room and your colleagues throughout the region. The Kirkland program plays a role, an important role in this project. And as the program extends to the Caucuses and Central Asia it helps to extend freedom and prosperity still further. The Kirkland Program is part of an ongoing process to insure a better future.

Takie programy, jak program stypendialny Kirklanda są dla nas wszystkich nadzieją na lepszą przyszłość. Dziękuję.

Thank you.