

Remarks to American Chamber of Commerce Participants

Remarks

John Kerry

Secretary of State

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SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you. Thank you very much, Joseph. Thank you. Appreciate it. Let me see if I can make this Kerry-sized. (Laughter.) Anyway, there we go. Thank you. Good morning, everybody – or good afternoon. What is it? I don't know anymore. (Laughter.)

PARTICIPANT: Afternoon.

SECRETARY KERRY: What?

PARTICIPANT: Afternoon.

SECRETARY KERRY: Afternoon. Good afternoon. And you haven't eaten yet, right? (Laughter.) Anyway, and it's very dangerous because I think I'm all that stands between you and your food. (Laughter.) Is it true you're having a meal?

PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY KERRY: Beg your pardon?

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

SECRETARY KERRY: Okay, once I let you sit down. (Laughter.)

Well, I will not keep you too, too long, but I want to tell you, first of all, what a great honor it is for me to be here in Warsaw, in Poland. Joseph just talked about the remarkable transformation taking place here. It really is extraordinary. And in fact, it's encouraging and inspirational. I got to walk down the street, the main street this morning, heading towards the old city. And the Ambassador, our good Ambassador, was relating to me sort of the care that went into the rebuilding and the thought about replicating what was. And so you see the beauty even though it's more modern, obviously, it is reflective of what was there originally and a great, great statement about the spirit of this country and the sort of stubborn refusal, if you will, to be beaten down by history.

So I think it's a great statement. It's a great metaphor for a lot of countries today for the possibilities of what can come out of great conflict and tragedy through the determination and the imagination of the human spirit. And that's kind of part of what we're here to talk about here a little bit today – the story of Poland, a story really of resistance in many ways to so many different conflicts and occupations and challenges.

And I was saying just a moment ago over at the Embassy that when you hear the name Warsaw you don't just think of that abstractly, but you think of the Warsaw Pact, the Warsaw Convention, the Warsaw Uprising, the Warsaw Ghetto. I mean, there are great moments of defiance and of transformation affiliated with the name, and more particularly with the spirit and the history. And of course, we in Massachusetts, because of Casimir Pulaski and his historic letter to George Washington when he wrote of his willingness to be there to fight for our own independence, began a great tradition of our countries being unified in our depth of commitment and belief in the human spirit, demonstrated so much through democracy and through the commitment to the power of individuals to be able to make a difference. So we celebrate that, and I thank you because I've been in Cairo and Riyadh for two days, so you have given me weather much more accustomed to Massachusetts and my hometown – (laughter) – than 90 degrees at this time of year.

I'm going to try to – let me just talk for a bit about sort of what really brings all of you together, because I have great respect for the work that the Chamber has done. And the companies that have invested here and the relationship at a corporate level in business is really essential to what has helped Poland to be able to be the powerhouse economically that it is today.

When this organization, the Chamber, opened its doors not too long after Communism collapsed, the country – and indeed the continent and the world – were full of hope for what the future of free markets might be able to bring. But I don't think any of us could have predicted that it would have been as unbelievably successful and rapid as it has been here in Poland. The economic strength of this country now is truly nothing less than remarkable. And just as – I mean, if you think about it, one generation after the Gdansk shipyard strikes, Poland has become – as Joseph reminded us a moment ago – the sixth largest economy in Europe. It is one of the best places to invest in the world, and it is one of the economic powerhouses of the EU. It is also one of the few transatlantic economies to grow despite the global recession, which is a testament to the Polish people's innovation and resilience.

And that's why the United States made our bilateral trade such a priority, because trade has quadrupled here just over the last 10 years. So I just came downstairs from a meeting with a group of young people who represent young Polish innovators, a group that is part of this alumni program of young people chosen by the Ministry of Education. The Polish Government supports them to go and take part in a program at Berkeley and at Stanford. And they're collaborating with American partners on creative solutions to today's challenges. And it seems to me that they are a symbol of the way in which the aspirations of young people really unite us rather than divide us, as they do in some other parts of the world. Entrepreneurship, competition, open markets, these words were never associated with Poland's economy 25 years ago, but today they define it.

That's the measure of the transformation and that's what the world means when it talks about an economic miracle which has taken place here. I'm Catholic; I happen to believe in miracles, but this is a different kind. (Laughter.) And it has been really nothing short of phenomenal. It's taken hard work, and an awful lot of you here in this room really get credit for what is happening here. Several hundred – I think at least 100,000 jobs have been brought here through the companies that are here and represented.

The fast rise – but it's symbolic of something else, if I can just spend a minute on this. I was recently in South Korea, in the Republic of Korea, and there it struck me how this country that 15 years ago we were giving aid to, is now a donor country giving aid to other countries in the world. We go back to the Marshall Plan, which obviously Poland, because of the occupation, didn't take part in, but you look at the rest of Europe where it did take hold, and we see how investment and rules of the road and belief in the possibilities of that investment to turn a corner, in fact, produces transformation. And the same is true for Japan. Now all of those places are not just donor countries, but they're vibrant democracies in places that are contributing to a set of values that the world really respects and admires.

I think that if you look in other places – I was privileged to lead the effort over 10 years to open up our new economic relationship with Vietnam. Back in 1990, when we began that effort, nobody believed it was possible. Now Vietnam is one of the economic powerhouses of the world. We have vibrant investment, and it is a vibrant marketplace, a capitalist marketplace, which is very different from the place it was envisioned to be when I was there in the late 1960s.

So right now, right here in Europe, we believe we're on the doorstep of another great transformation that could actually make trade more open, make markets more free, make competition stronger, and create more opportunity for jobs. And it even can make a broader base of economic prosperity the hallmark of the next generation in the way that we want it to be.

And of course, I'm talking about the possibilities of TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Now, it's ambitious, but its potential benefits are enormous. I talked this morning with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister about it. This market could integrate the world's largest market, the EU, and the single largest economy, the United States, and create a consortium, if you will, of nations all adhering to the highest standards, not the lowest, creating a race to the top, not a race to the bottom.

And a market of that size can have a profound impact on the choices that other countries must begin to make with respect to transparency, accountability, corruption, all of the things that are really the key to attracting investment with the kind of confidence that money seeks, as it has many choices around this planet as to where to go and where to invest. TTIP will improve the rules that govern trade and it will level the playing field.

And by strengthening the rules-based trading and promoting greater transparency and regulations and standards that become more compatible, we will break some of the resistance to trade that exists and encourage this very, very important standardization, which is, in the end, I think, in the interest of everybody. If you know what the rules of the road are and you know the rules of the road are top level, you are much more prone to invest and locate and do business than you are at a place where you know you can't get a decision from the government because they don't have those rules or getting that decision from the government may require all kinds of hoops you have to jump through. And for our companies that adhere to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, that can be a particular challenge against countries where they don't.

So this is a chance to really even the scale, and I'll give you a few examples of why it's important to try to do this, leaving out the question of corruption practices. One of Poland's most successful retailers in the United States is a company called Inglot Cosmetics. And it has a successful brand of breathable nail polish, something I don't know anything about, folks. (Laughter.) But I am told that while cosmetic regulations between the EU and the U.S. are similar, they're still just different enough in order to raise production and administrative costs that make it more difficult for people to be able to sell or compete. In TTIP, we actually save this cosmetic company time and money so that it could focus on developing more innovative products and actually engage more in selling and sales, rather than reacting to a regulative marketplace.

You can take Poland's famous hams, which are enjoyed at dinner tables all across the United States, or you can look at Massachusetts cranberries and California grapes, which have found a growing market here in this country. These foods could be traded much more easily and cheaply than they are today, and that's if we ease the tariffs and ease the barriers that make it harder to be able to trade. TTIP will do exactly that.

So more compatible standards could also help auto manufacturers, like General Motors, which produces more than 2 million cars a year in the southern city of Gliwice. And these companies and others like them here in Poland would greatly benefit from an increased, two-way transatlantic capacity.

So bottom line, this really is an historic opportunity. And as you come here today and you break bread in a few minutes and have a chance to talk with each other and everything, think about what you can do to help us energize this process across Europe. For those of you who travel, and most of you do, those of you who engage in a daily basis here, get people excited about this possibility, because TTIP is a political and strategic bet that we're willing to place on one another.

And more and more – I said this during my nomination hearings, and I believe it to the core, and I've watched this evolution over the years in terms of foreign policy – more and more foreign policy is economic policy. And more and more, as countries have less and less cash that they're throwing around, we will need to partner with the private sector in order to leverage change in countries. And if we can help create the framework by which countries invite companies to come and invest and be involved and streamline decision making, and help with economic zones, qualified economic zones, tax incentive, whatever it takes to create fast decisions, effective availability of workforce, all those kinds of things, that will be the greatest development to policy that there will be.

In the absence of an age when hundreds of billions of dollars would be thrown into a Marshall Plan, the new plan is really the private sector and its investment as people are competing globally to create more middle class. And as more middle class are created, more people will travel, more people will share the purchasing of goods, and more people will, in the end, have a stake in their communities that will lower the threshold of terrorism and the option that people take to choose to be violent in the choices that they make with respect to how they can define their future.

I'm telling you folks, that food vendor in Tunisia who burned himself to death was not part of a religious extremist group. He was not part of any ideology. He wanted to be able to sell his fruit without

corruption, without government interference. He wanted to touch his own sense of what the brass ring was. And the same thing in Tahrir Square. Those Egyptian kids, none of them were members of the Muslim Brotherhood, none of them came there with any ideology. They were texting each other and Googling, and using FaceTime and tweet and talking and trying to figure out how to really have part of the future. The same thing in Syria: It began as an effort by young people to be able to touch the future, and then it was co-opted by others with other intent.

So building these bridges of opportunity for people is going to define the future. And I believe that the private sector, business, chambers of commerce, and others are vital instruments of global policy, not American policy, that have ways in which we will reach global aspirations and be able to meet this growing demand by unbelievable numbers of young people bursting, a new baby boom generation, that are going to demand part of that future. Sixty five percent of many countries are under the age of 40, in some countries 60 percent under the age of 25. And if we don't educate them and provide jobs for them and opportunities, we're going to have great difficulties.

So I thank you for the privilege of being here with you today. We've come a long way in one generation. And for the sake of the next generation, we clearly cannot be satisfied. There's a huge task ahead of us. Poland is really helping, and you – all of you in this Chamber – are helping to define that road ahead. And we look not just to lecture you or to talk at you, but to partner with you in the effort to make sure that we meet your needs, and through that together meet our needs as global citizens.

Thank you all for the privilege of being with you today. Thank you. (Applause.)