

REMARKS
AT THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Ambassador Lee Feinstein
December 2, 2009
Warsaw, Intercontinental Hotel

Thank you, Roman, for the generous introduction. Thank you for the tremendous contributions you make not only to the Chamber, but also to U.S. - Polish Relations. It is a privilege to work with you, and to call you a friend. And I am delighted to accept your invitation to serve as the honorary chairman of your board.

I am so pleased to be here with you this morning to give one of my first public addresses since I arrived in Poland. This is a fitting gauge of the Chamber's importance, and the importance of the Polish-U.S. economic relationship. You, the American business community, are at the very heart of the relationship between our two countries. You bring investment to Poland. You create new jobs, products, and services. You do good works in communities throughout the country. You are tangible proof of warm U.S.-Polish relations; a relationship which is not only sound, but dynamic and beneficial to both our countries.

I would like to acknowledge several of my colleagues from the Embassy who are here with me today. Bill Heidt is the Embassy's new Deputy Chief of Mission. Bill, would you stand up? Bill is a Senior Foreign Service officer with posts as diverse as Jakarta, New York, and Poznan. He is an Economic Officer by background and has worked closely with American business around the world.

Jim Wilson is my Commercial Counselor and *ex officio* Member of the AmCham board. Many of you already know him. He arrived in August after serving in Madrid. Would you please also stand, Jim?

We are also very fortunate to have with us today Mary Glantz, our desk officer for Poland at the Department of State. Mary is the Embassy's primary point of contact for all things Polish. Would you also please stand, Mary?

I am extremely pleased to have such an outstanding team to support me as we go forward in furthering U.S. trade and investment in Poland.

I come to Poland with a mandate from President Obama and Secretary Clinton to broaden and deepen America's strong and enduring relationship with Poland. My goal— and I know you will join me — is to build a relationship that reflects Poland's growing role in Europe and on the world stage. We already have a secure foundation on which to build, based on the historic ties that bind our two countries. Those are ties reinforced by our common struggles for freedom and by generations of strong family bonds, including my own.

Secretary Clinton has called Poland “one of our closest Allies.” Today we are bound together more tightly than ever through our membership in NATO. We are moving forward together to advance President Obama's approach to missile defense, which Vice President Biden has said will provide better security for NATO, better security for Poland, and better security for the United States. Our soldiers stand shoulder to shoulder as Allies. The United States is also committed to assisting Poland as it moves ahead with modernization plans for its armed forces.

At the same time, Poland is becoming an increasingly influential and effective member of the European Union. We welcome this. A strong European Union is in America's interest because Europe is an essential partner in advancing security and prosperity.

Vice President Biden's visit to Poland gave new momentum to our relationship. He praised Poland as a "champion for its neighbors and a role model for the entire world." His visit stimulated new areas of practical engagement to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities of the new century.

As allies, our governments consult regularly on issues of strategic importance. Last month, Foreign Minister Sikorski met with National Security Advisor General Jones in Washington. Under Secretary Trojanowska from the Ministry of Economy is in Washington this week for economic meetings. Ellen Tauscher, the State Department's Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, is coming to Poland next week as head of the U.S. delegation to the Strategic Cooperation Consultative Group established in 2008. This intense scope of high-level activity continues to grow and is exactly the kind of exchange that is fitting and natural for two close allies.

Our economic relationship is also growing thanks in no small measure to your work. After the fall of communism, Poland's new democratic leadership was convinced that Poland's economic future greatly depended on attracting foreign capital, technology, and business acumen. It was then that Leszek Balcerowicz set Poland on a path of economic reforms designed to harness the power of free market competition.

The fruits of that economic approach are now visible for all to see. Supporting that vision back in 1989 were some of the people here in this room today, those first U.S. investors who came together as AmCham almost 20 years ago.

Today, U.S. companies have investments across Poland that provide a wide range of goods and services – from everyday products such as food and pharmaceuticals, to the most advanced helicopters, computers, and software solutions produced anywhere in the world. For U.S. investors, Poland is a market, a resource, and a global partner.

For Poland, these business opportunities provide yet another outlet for one of the most dynamic and talented workforces and entrepreneurial communities in all of Europe. Since arriving, I have met with government ministers, civil society and business leaders.

I would like to share with you now some of my initial impressions on where there are new opportunities for cooperation.

Let me begin with energy. The United States supports a Europe that is secure and prosperous; and that is why we support European efforts to diversify its sources of energy, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Projects involving new technologies like shale gas, wind, and the next generation of nuclear power and biofuels, can help meet these energy security and climate change goals, while creating new jobs and providing good return on investments. Prime Minister Tusk and President Obama discussed ways to intensify our cooperation in this area when they met in Prague in April. Vice President Biden, in his visit to Warsaw, emphasized the importance of strengthening and broadening cooperation on energy and energy security.

Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy, Ambassador Richard Morningstar, followed up with an excellent visit to Warsaw last month, where he praised Poland's work as a leader in Europe on developing alternative energy routes, sources, and technologies. And Polish experts from Minister of Economy Pawlak's team met yesterday in Washington with American experts from the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Energy, and State in a session of our Economic and Commercial Dialogue.

The two teams laid important groundwork for deeper cooperation on energy topics as diverse as energy efficiency and nuclear power – just the kind of efforts that can diversify Poland's energy mix. I look forward to suggestions from you on how we can give greater emphasis and substance to joint cooperation on energy and energy security.

Supporting innovation is a second potential area for greater cooperation. Increasingly, U.S. companies are bringing Polish brainpower into their services and R&D operations.

Just ten years ago, those companies would have talked about an inexpensive production base on the doorstep of the EU. Today, they are eager - and willing to pay a premium – to tap into the pool of talent and productivity that Poland has so successfully developed. Their efforts support what I understand to be a key goal of Minister Michal Boni's team of strategic economic advisors – increasing the intellectual value added of Polish exports and production.

In the recent report, *Poland by 2030*, the team lays out its plan for Poland to have high tech products make up 40% of Poland's exports, with comparable increases in the IT and R&D sectors. Tomorrow, a team of Polish innovation leaders, headed by Michal Kleiber, Head of the Polish Academy of Sciences, will join their U.S. counterparts in the latest of a series of biannual technology conferences. The goal is to link Polish and American researchers, companies, and government officials to help Poland build the infrastructure of innovation while supporting joint research efforts, particularly in health and energy.

In addition to tomorrow's conference, the U.S. supports Poland's efforts to promote innovation through a number of bilateral scientific and educational cooperation programs. The challenge is to build on these initiatives to create partnerships that will support U.S. companies' interest in making more effective use of Poland's intellectual resources.

Promoting investment is a noted priority area. I don't need to remind anyone that the past eighteen months have been a trying time for business. We all hope we have seen the worst of the global financial crisis. But governments are facing tough choices and tight budgets for several years to come. Poland, despite these difficulties, has proven to be a bright spot.

The Polish economy has weathered the storm better than most, and was unique within the EU in showing modest growth in 2009, despite the global crisis.

Growth in difficult times is thanks in part to smart planning and some fortunate timing. It is also due to the commitment of investors and business men and women such as yourselves, who continue to seek out new opportunities to build on the potential of Poland's remarkable transformation of the past twenty years. There is wide consensus that growth in Poland will continue to outpace the EU and the United States for the foreseeable future, with long-run growth potential in excess of four percent per year.

Despite the attractiveness of the business climate, you have all heard or seen and some of you may have experienced obstacles to investment. Every year the World Bank ranks countries around the world on "Ease of Doing Business." The latest report placed Poland at number 72.

The issues are well known to you, and they are, of course, not unique to this country, and they are far from unknown at home. It is a top priority of the embassy to work with you and with our friends here to do whatever we can to help you be successful.

Let me close with a final thought. I have talked this morning about how we might make good on the Secretary's mandate, a mandate to broaden and deepen the United States' strong relationship with Poland. I intend to rely heavily on all of you to help me do that.

My work is in national security, international relations, and politics; yours is the ground truth of doing business day to day in Poland. This is an unbeatable combination, and I look forward to our partnership.

Thank you for this opportunity to be here today. Congratulations on the 20th anniversary of the Chamber. And continued success in your third decade.

Thank you.