

## **Remarks for Gdansk Business Week Dinner August 19, 2011**

Good evening. Thank you so much for inviting me to speak at your graduation. I am honored to be a part of the first Business Week program in Gdansk. The program has a long and successful history from Washington State, and I am very pleased to see the program expanding here in Poland. Special thanks to the organizers from Washington Business Week and the Association of Washington Businesses for their efforts in exporting the program from the U.S. to Poland. Gdansk itself has always been a very dynamic, visionary place: giving birth to a movement that became hope for millions and eventually brought down the communist system and is now an inspiration for people seeking a better life for themselves from Belarus to Benghazi. Poland is now a democratic model for the world.

I would also like to thank all the sponsors – in particular Mayor Pawel Adamowicz, Marszalek Mieczyslaw Struk, the Gdansk Entrepreneurial Foundation, and the Pomeranian Development Agency – for your roles in making this possible. Your support allowed over 90 students from the US and Poland to participate in Gdansk Business week; you are investing not only in their future, but in Poland’s future business leaders, those of you celebrating your graduation today.

I also want to thank all the company advisors, who took time out of their busy schedules to volunteer here – in addition to the valuable advice and guidance you gave to the students throughout the week, your participation also shows the value you and your companies place on corporate social responsibility and community outreach. I would like to recognize some of the companies who have taken an interest in developing the business skills of young people in this local region through this program: thanks to Speed Net, Boeing, Microsoft, Weyerhaeuser, International Paper, and Bergmann & Associates.

Exposure to other countries especially when you are young can have big and unexpected consequences for you later on. My first trip to Poland was 31 years ago – New Year’s Day in 1980 to be exact, when I was a 19-year-old university student. And, as you can see, it had a pretty big impact on my career path, as here I am as the 25<sup>th</sup> US Ambassador to Poland.

So, congratulations to you on your graduation, for seeking out this opportunity and may it have the impact on your future that my very first travels to Poland those many years ago have had on mine. Studying and working abroad can also help you build relationships with counterparts in the U.S., and set the stage for future collaboration.

I don't have to tell you Poland is a remarkable place. I arrived here as Ambassador just under two years ago in the fall of 2009, as the global economy was slumping. And yet, Poland could boast at the time that it was the only country in the EU to grow, and escape recession. Amidst global economic uncertainty, Poland is an investment destination: sixth on the list of most attractive locations for investment, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development, ahead of Germany (ranked 9<sup>th</sup>) and Singapore (ranked 14<sup>th</sup>).

U.S. companies were among the first to come to Poland as the country transitioned to an open, free democracy in the 90's. Today U.S. companies are here in greater numbers and diversity.

U.S. investors are attracted to Poland's continuing growth, its political stability, a strong domestic market, and its culture of entrepreneurship and trade in which American businesses feel at home. The range of projects attracting American interest here is impressive— wind energy in Pomorskie, manufacturing and business services in Dolnoslanski, software development in Malopolskie, aviation technology in Podkarpacie, and biotechnology research in Mazowieckie, among many others.

Gdansk's most famous resident President Walesa once famously told the U.S. Congress to bring us your Generals and, indeed, General Electric and General Motors are contributing as much as they are benefitting from Poland's increasingly dynamic economy.

Trade between America and Poland is bigger than you think, but not nearly enough. The value of U.S. investments in Poland is \$31 billion, and some 360,000 Poles work in jobs generated by U.S. firms. I hope the size and scope of investments will grow with new investments in renewable and clean energy and other sectors. But for the world's largest economy and what has been Europe's fastest growing there is a lot of room to grow.

The overall U.S.-Polish relationship – like the commercial ties – is as strong as ever. The United States welcomes Poland’s leadership in Europe; its energy and optimism are contributing to a stronger European Union that is a better partner for the United States. Poland’s growing influence within the EU corresponds to the deepening and broadening of the relationship with the United States. Just last month a PEW poll revealed that 70% of Poles hold a favorable view of the United States, one of the highest rates in Europe. Statistics like these point the way toward an even stronger relationship between our two countries in the future. And, more importantly, forward-looking events like the Gdansk Business Week bear out these statistics in a very concrete way and bring our countries closer together.

My embassy is proud to offer patronage to the Gdansk Business Week, in addition to the programs in Boleslawowo and Gdynia.

So congratulations again to all the students for successfully completing a very intense, challenging week. I saw your packed schedule, so I know you learned a lot about teamwork, business ethics, communication, managing budgets, and decision-making. Your new skills were put to the test this morning with the mock shareholders' presentation and the mock trade show. I hope you took away positive lessons from those simulations and are inspired to apply what you've learned in the real world.

When President Obama was here in May, he and PM Tusk talked about innovation – coming up with new ideas, new technologies and getting them to the marketplace. You all can – and will – be a part of that. You all will be the drivers of Poland’s growth. But I also hope that you learned more about yourselves over the past week – that this experience has given you new insights into who you are and what you might want to do with your career.

Wiecie, że podróżowanie jest ważne. W ten sposób uczymy się języków. Świat biznesu nie ma granic a umowy często są zawierane w językach, które nie są naszymi ojczystymi. Poza tym nigdy nie wiadomo. Może też zostaniecie ambasadorami...

[There is another reason why it is important to go abroad – you have the opportunity to learn and practice foreign languages. Commerce crosses borders and businesspeople today often make deals in their non-native language. You never know. You may become ambassadors too.]

**Gratuluje i dziękuje bardzo za uwagę!**