

Ambassador Feinstein's Remarks at PISM

May 10, 2011

Good afternoon. It is a real pleasure to be here at the Polish Institute of International Affairs today, one of Central Europe's leading think tanks, particularly as a veteran myself of America's think tanks. I want to thank Marcin Zaborowski, my good friend and a good friend of the United States, for inviting me.

I'm going to talk about the state of transatlantic and bilateral relations on the eve of President Barack Obama's visit to Poland, so it's fitting that I do so at a place like PISM that embodies the open discussion of ideas, values and interests that is so crucial in the transatlantic community. PISM has been a valuable partner for our Embassy, recently hosting Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller for a discussion of the new START treaty.

So when I say that both transatlantic and bilateral relations have never been more important, this is a place where you understand what I mean. After previewing the Obama visit, I will explain how the U.S. views the relationship with Europe, and how bilateral relations with Poland play a key role within it. I won't speak for too long, because I look forward to answering your questions.

I say that transatlantic relations have never been more important for the United States and for Europe because we share values and we share interests. And because the challenges of the 21st century require that we work together.

President Obama's visit to Poland later this month, along with Ireland, Great Britain and France, is an important symbol of this partnership. In fact, this trip will be President Obama's eighth trip to Europe, more than to any other continent and more trips to Europe than any other U.S. president at this point in his term.

In facing a daunting international agenda today, the U.S. 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.

When President Obama lands in Warsaw, he will be reciprocating the visit of President Komorowski to Washington in December. He will focus on three main pillars of our relationship: promoting democracy, expanding prosperity, and strengthening mutual security. But most importantly, he will be taking the time to consult your leaders and get to know today's Poland so that we can jointly build a partnership for the 21st century. We often talk of the importance of increasing mutual understanding through people-to-people exchanges, and this visit clearly does that at the highest levels.

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, 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.

Now let me turn to my second home of Poland. America looks to Poland as one of our closest allies and friends. Our bilateral relations are broad and deep, forged over more than two centuries of supporting each other in war and in peace. And now, as we anticipate President Obama's visit, we can be proud of our achievements in broadening and deepening our relationship for the new century. Our relationship is one that values and encourages Poland's emergence as a strong and influential member of NATO and the European Union. It is a relationship built on a shared strategic view. No one agrees about everything, but I sometimes like to say the laws of physics bring Poland and the United States closer together.

Poland is the eastern frontier of the EU and America is the western edge of the transatlantic space and because we tend to see the world through a similar lens, we have a unique opportunity, and I might even say responsibility, to forge transatlantic solidarity together.

America's relationship with Poland is built on three pillars of cooperation: promoting democracy, expanding prosperity and strengthening mutual security. Allow me to briefly review them.

Foreign Minister Sikorski, in a tribute in Washington to Professor Geremek, said that democracy has two main advantages: it is morally superior to the alternatives and has achieved better practical outcomes. And today, Polish and American cooperation on democracy promotion is substantive. In March, Secretary Clinton and Minister Sikorski announced the establishment of a democracy dialogue between our two countries; the only such dialogue the United States has with another country. During their meeting, they discussed Poland's plans to share experiences and knowledge with the government of Tunisia. And, the Foreign Ministry has already dispatched two distinguished teams to Tunis for consultations on the applicability of Poland's experience.

We have coordinated our actions on Belarus, supporting Warsaw's lead to announce strong sanctions to punish Lukashenko following the brutal post-election crackdown in December and, as important, announcing an increase in support to civil society and democracy activists in Belarus, to let them know clearly that they are known and supported by the international community.

Together we helped to establish the Community of Democracies, born in Warsaw 10 years ago, under the leadership of Professor Geremek and Secretary Albright, and last July Secretary Clinton attended the 10th anniversary meeting in Krakow, and established nurturing of civil society as a key task for the CD.

The second pillar of our cooperation is promoting prosperity in both of our countries. Trade and investment between Poland and the United States is probably more than you think – but not nearly enough. In 2010 the value of U.S. investments in Poland was \$30 billion, and U.S. firms now provide direct and indirect employment to an estimated 350,000 workers in Poland. Since 2008, the interest in Poland as an investment destination has grown, and the scope of investment – high tech, energy, research and development – is as important as the size.

One final point. The BRIC countries are of course emerging, but the levels of investment in Europe and central Europe are significant. Total U.S. investment in three central European countries – Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – totaled \$83 billion last year, twice the value of U.S. investments in India.

Nonetheless, America is the world's largest economy and Poland is one of the EU's fastest growing, so there is a lot of scope for growth.

Energy is an area of particular interest. We are cooperating on clean energy, including wind and biomass. We have signed two agreements with Poland on nuclear cooperation. Poland is a member of the Global Shale Gas Initiative and the Embassy will co-sponsor a conference at the Copernicus Science Center on May 18 with the Foreign Ministry.

Secretary Clinton puts a very high priority on promoting energy diversity in Europe to ensure the security of supplies, competitive prices, and political independence.

Security is of course fundamental and we have made very significant steps in the last two years. Both of our governments have much to be proud of. At NATO, we agreed to adopt a new Strategic Concept which fundamentally reaffirmed the importance of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the article that makes an attack against one an attack against all, and reinforce collective defense as a core task of the Alliance. Presidents Obama and Komoroski announced a new air detachment in Poland to provide a boost to the U.S. capacity to train with Polish allied and partner air forces in the future.

We have signed an agreement for ballistic missile defense cooperation in Poland, as part of a NATO system to provide for the territorial defense of Europe against the growing threat of ballistic missiles.

The NATO summit also agreed on a strategy for Afghanistan. America and all of the NATO allies greatly appreciate Poland's contributions to ISAF, and we honor Poland's sacrifices and commitment. I travelled to Afghanistan and saw the contribution Poland is making, and heard from ISAF commanders about how honorably Polish troops are serving.

We have also strengthened ties between the American and Polish peoples in the last year. We have supported the Polish-American Freedom Foundation's internship program for more young Poles to work at leading American companies. We have expanded the Fulbright program, with the generous support of the Polish government, to over 80 scholars per year. We have celebrated the opening of the Kosciusko Foundation and look forward to the opening, soon, of the German Marshall Fund office in Poland. And, the Atlantic Council helped organize the new Wroclaw Global Forum, the next session of which will take place in June.

To sum up, Poland and America are united in wanting a strong Europe and a strong bilateral relationship. President Obama's upcoming visit to Poland is proof of that. Our democratic governments, regardless of political party, understand that our two peoples want this and therefore work to keep the bonds tight and expanding. We believe that good things happen when we combine our unique historical experiences, ideas and resources.