

AMBASSADOR FEINSTEIN'S REMARKS  
ATLANTIC COUNCIL FREEDOM AWARDS DINNER  
JUNE 1, 2012

Thank you for that introduction. It is a great privilege and a genuine pleasure to be back in Wroclaw for the Global Forum with so many good friends from both sides of the Atlantic, including Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, President Aleksander Kwasniewski, actor and director Andrzej Seweryn, as well as Deputy Secretary of State Tom Nides and Special Envoy Ellen Tauscher. Your presence here tonight – and that of the many other distinguished representatives of various governments, the international community, think tanks, academia, and NGOs – is a tribute to tonight's honorees, whose life work has been dedicated to the promotion of freedom and democracy around the world.

Your presence is also a tribute to the vision and hard work of Mayor Rafal Dutkiewicz and the Atlantic Council's Fred Kempe and Fran Burwell. The thought-provoking presentations and discussions of the past two days have again demonstrated why the Wroclaw Global Forum has become a premier venue for international discourse on freedom, democracy, economics, and security. Mayor Dutkiewicz and the Atlantic Council team have again done a magnificent job of bringing together leading thinkers to help us understand the key trends and challenges of our day and to help us chart policy directions for the future. They deserve a round of applause and our thanks for their tireless work. [hold for applause]

Through the Wroclaw Global Forum and its many other efforts, the Atlantic Council has ensured that the commitment to freedom and democracy remains a vital part of the Transatlantic relationship, as defining as our historic ties, active economic relations, and mutual security commitments. The Transatlantic partnership has been much in the news in recent days. President Obama hosted the successful NATO Summits two weeks ago in Chicago, which some of you attended. During the opening session of the NAC, President Obama stated: “For over 65 years, our alliance has been the bedrock of our common security, of freedom and of prosperity. And though the times may have changed, the fundamental reason for our alliance has not. Our nations are stronger and more prosperous when we stand together. In good times and in bad, our alliance has endured; in fact, it has thrived – because we share an unbreakable commitment to the freedom and security of our citizens.”

Our discussions over the past two days have made clear that our shared democratic values and our economic ties underpin the Transatlantic relationship with strength equal to that of the NATO alliance. We stand united, whether in confronting our own recent economic challenges or in working with our partners in North Africa and elsewhere to help them secure their democratic gains and harness the economic opportunities in the years ahead.

I am therefore honored to introduce now a leader, who has worked tirelessly to cement the Transatlantic relationship and to strengthen the ties between the United States and Poland.

President Aleksander Kwasniewski led Poland during a critical decade in Poland's history: thanks to his inspired and active leadership, Poland was among the first Central and Eastern European countries to join NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004.

On President Kwasniewski's watch, Poland also continued its political and economic transformation, laying the groundwork for its current economic strength and dynamic leadership on the European scene.

While in office and after, President Kwasniewski has been a vocal advocate for democratic reform around the world. From Ukraine and Belarus to Tunisia and Egypt, President Kwasniewski's support has given hope, know-how, and vital tools to democracy activists. Last summer in Vilnius, President Kwasniewski addressed the Community of Democracies, which Poland and the United States launched in 2000. During the Vilnius meeting, President Kwasniewski told his audience: "...no democracy can be an island. Democracy is not only something you believe in but also something you do. You do at home and you support elsewhere. This is a duty; call it civic or moral duty. The French used to say *noblesse oblige*. I say: *démocratie oblige*." President Kwasniewski is as good as his word. Thank you, Mr. President for your commitment to promoting democracy and freedom in Poland's neighborhood and beyond. The floor is yours.