

TRANSCRIPT
OPENING DINNER BRUSSELS FORUM 2008
Friday March 14, 2008

Welcome: **Mr. Craig Kennedy**, President, The German Marshall Fund of the United States

Introduction: **Dr. Gunter Thielen**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Bertelsmann Stiftung

Dinner Remarks: **The Hon. Dr. Javier Solana**, Secretary General of the Council of the EU and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy

Closing Dinner Remarks: **H.E. Anders Fogh Rasmussen**, Prime Minister, Denmark

CRAIG KENNEDY: Every year, we have to make this dome a little bit bigger. Pretty soon we're going to ask the hotel just to put glass over the atrium here to accommodate everybody.

I want to start out tonight first, again, by recognizing our partners and asking if they would just stand as I call their name. Please hold your applause until the end.

The government of Belgium, the Daimler Corporation, the Bertelsmann Foundation, Fortis, the government of Latvia, and the Tipping Point Foundation of Bulgaria, thank you very much for your tremendous support.

(APPLAUSE)

Now, several of our later speakers tonight always give kind of the perfect toast or sentiments for the evening. But I just want to start out by raising a glass to all of you, because it truly is this very unique combination of people that makes the Brussels Forum a very special event.

So thank you. And I'll be back in a little bit.

CRAIG KENNEDY: One of the things that we've done at every one of these Brussels Forum meeting is had a few words from a high representative, and this year we've asked our good friend and partner Gunter Thielen of the Bertelsmann Foundation to introduce him -- Gunter



GUNTER THIELEN: Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good evening. It's nice to see so many familiar faces tonight, returning to this forum for our ongoing dialogue. And it's great to welcome, as well, new faces in the table to expand our expertise and insight.

It's a special pleasure to thank our host, Craig Kennedy and his talented team in Brussels and Washington for bringing us together.

Thank you very much, Craig.

Ladies and gentlemen, the dialogue and debate has already begun. We have a full menu of topics for transatlantic collaboration, a fitting assignment for this audience. And I would like to encourage us to use these days, these two days, also to address the driving forces behind the agenda today.

What are the topics behind the topics? And I have three examples. The first, when we talk about evaluating democracy promotion, will we look not only for free elections, but also consider the quality of democracies. The Bertelsmann transformation index, which tracks about 125 countries in transition, recently released its latest report and they concluded that democracy is still gaining ground worldwide

About 4 billion people now live in democracies, with only 25 million living under autocrats and dictators. But we can't stop there. This year's data showed 75 countries with systems of free elections, but only 13 out of them – only 13 of these transitioning countries with a functioning separation of power.

For me, there is no doubt we need to direct more attention in the political quality of democracies. And, second, when we debate Russia's political trends, Russia's political trends, we will consider as well Russia's internal demographic and health challenges.

We often talk of a rising power broker, but Russia's population has been declining by nearly 700,000 people and citizens every year. What programs are underway for Russia to invest their oil and gas benefits in social and education and health systems?

And, third, when we talk about the Middle East and the Arab world, naturally there is concern for the immediate security crisis and potential escalation. But instead of looking at it only as a region of instability, we must also think about the potential of this region for innovation, opportunity and resources.

When I am talking about resources here, I do not mean only energy resources, but even more importantly, human resources – human resources. I would urge us to consider also talking about areas like education and development, where we can encourage the region's powerful human resources to bloom and promote equal participation in the globalized world.

There are just a few examples where we can look across disciplines for insight. Another challenge this weekend is to look across sectors for fresh ideas. In today's reality, businesses are breaking down barriers across borders faster than any international organization.

Interactions between the Middle East, Asia and Europe seem to be growing as fast as the number of direct flights between them. As we see from the growth of sovereign wealth funds, countries long labeled as emerging countries are now powerhouses in the financial world. And we in the policy arena need to keep pace with the ever-escalating integration of the marketplace.

Globalization has been a label we have discussed for years, but we continually witness innovation and adaptation. In today's interconnected world, business, civil society and the public audience are often in the driver's seat, just as often, or even more so, than governments.

It's our challenge to look across sections and sectors and take example from innovators who blaze new trails to break down borders. And I have the pleasure tonight, ladies and gentlemen, to introduce a man who has taken pride in being a trailblazer, a man who has dedicated his life to breaking institutional barriers, a man who prides himself in making a real-time impact in a real-time challenge, a man who tests the limits of borders and is always shrinking the distance between the U.S. and Europe, a man known for saying, yes, we can, when tasks are difficult.

It's my pleasure to hand the podium over to Javier Solana.

So, Javier, the podium is yours. Thank you.

JAVIER SOLANA: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Gunter, for your kind words, out of our friendship exaggerated, as you know very well.

Let me say a few words of thanks, first.

Thanks to you, Craig, and to the German Marshall Fund. It is the third time that we get here together. I think I have been with you the three years and it's been a real pleasure and I hope very much I will continue with this type of meeting, once a year, at least, here in Brussels, with good friends from the United States, from other countries and people from the European Union, from the countries of the European Union, from future countries of the European Union, trying to continue to keep these fundamental links that have been created, our fathers created, on the transatlantic links.

Let me think for a moment, if we were to meet not today, but a year from now. The world may be very different, or may begin to be very different. A year from now, we will have a new president of the United States. A year from now, we will have a new president in Russia. A year from now we will have already operational the new treaty, the Lisbon treaty of the European Union, with the possibility to have the European Union acting better, acting together, acting in a more coherent fashion.

Now, if I say, yes, only these three things, we can say many other things that will take from here to the next year, the Olympic Games in China, to mention another. I hope very much peace in the Middle East. Now, if you look at that, what is the obligation that we have today? I think the obligation we have today and tomorrow in this meeting is to try to continue constructing together a vision for the future, Europeans and Americans together, other friends from other places in the world – I see the ambassador of Russia here – to try to get together with a multilateral approach to solving the problems of the world.

There is no other way. When we look at the problems that we have today, let me mention just two, which will have no solution if they're not done multilaterally and together. And it will not be enough to have two, three, four countries – even eight. It will require, probably, all the countries of the world to work together.

It's climate change. Probably the first time that we are conscious that a problem of this dimension cannot be solved by a group of countries alone, that they have to be solved by all the countries, incorporated on a multilateral front.

Let's look at another of the problems that we may face in the foreseeable future, which is nonproliferation and all the issues that have to be linked to disarmament. And I would like to say to our American friends that I think the time has come. I would take a look at the question of disarmament, together with nonproliferation. And I hope very much that the next president of the United States will take and tackle this issue. It's the most important issue that we have in the agenda.

So we put the two together, climate change, with all the consequences, and nonproliferation and disarmament and all the consequences, in a world in which the one and the second are related through energy and therefore through the peaceful use of nuclear energy which will have consequences to fight climate change, but at the same time it would propose to us a big problem with proliferation.

Therefore, if we are able to solve those problems intelligently, in a multilateral fashion, and with the coordination with the country represented here, I think we have a big opportunity to move the world into a better place and to get really on our continent, our planet, a better place also from all aspects of life.

Let me just say a word about what I think is a concept that has to be put to place in our thinking, which springs from the two issues I just mentioned, nonproliferation and climate change. I think we have to begin thinking about what is the meaning of responsible sovereignty. I think it's a concept that we have to begin working about and trying to develop this concept.

I think at this point in time in we are living, it will be very difficult not to understand properly that everything that is done in the country has consequences for every country, and therefore that is no solutions of the problems of the country alone. And I think very much if this concept is worked, if this concept is developed, I think we have a possibility also to move into a world which will be more safe, safer, and at the same time with the capability to develop economically, politically, socially.

I hope very much that the meetings of today and tomorrow – as I said in the fourth time that we meet, the hope is that it will not be the last, that we will have many more occasions to meet together in this format, that looking as we look to the possibilities that the years ahead or the year ahead is going to open to us, that we are able to tackle this opportunity and move on.

Thank you very much to everybody who has contributed to these meetings in the last years.

Liz thank you very much to you and to what you represent.

Thank you very much to all the friends here, and let's have a good session today and tomorrow and let's see if we can contribute to maintain solid the transatlantic relations and extend it to other countries which are here represented today.

As I said, last year, we will have new circumstances. Let's hope that those circumstances allow us to move on forward together. Thank you very, very much and good discussions here today and tomorrow.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

CRAIG KENNEDY: ... at the Brussels Forum is respond to friendly criticism, suggestions, ideas from the people that participate.

Last year, the single biggest complaint I had was: What kind of meeting is this that doesn't have a major session on climate change? Even if you don't believe in it, it's a major issue in U.S.-European relations.

Well, this year we do have a major session on climate change. And we're also very lucky to get the Prime Minister of Denmark to come here and be part of that panel.

As many of you know, Denmark is hosting the Copenhagen Meeting in 2009. This will be the meeting that sets the tone for the future of climate change policy issues.

And to show that we actually respond to the will of the participants here, we've actually asked Prime Minister Rasmussen to say just a few words tonight about that agenda.

Prime Minister?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Mr. Kennedy, thank you very much for your kind words.

I am, indeed, happy and honored to participate in the Brussels Forum. As you know, I am a staunch supporter of a strong transatlantic cooperation, and I would like to pay tribute to the German Marshall Fund for its valuable contribution to a continued development and renewal of the transatlantic ties.

And let me also commend you for putting climate change on the agenda. I considered climate change one of our major common challenges. Many countries around the world experience adverse weather conditions. We need to protect our globe. We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through development of new technologies.

We need to protect our globe not only to counter climate change, but also to counter security problems. Climate change may lead to water shortage, may lead to devastation of agriculture, may lead to destruction of residential areas, all of which may lead to intensified struggle for life, fight over scarce resources, and new periods of great migrations.

It's my firm belief that we need a strong transatlantic cooperation to address these challenges appropriately and effectively.

And we're also faced with another security challenge. Due to our addiction to oil, America and Europe transfer huge amounts of wealth every year to regions and countries that may abuse the energy supply as an instrument in foreign and security policy.

And this transfer of resources to unstable regions poses another threat to international stability. And also, in that respect, we need a strong transatlantic cooperation to address the challenges appropriately and effectively.

As you mentioned, Denmark is going to host the U.N. Climate Change Conference in December 2009. It's my ambition and it's my hope that we will be able to conclude a



comprehensive global climate agreement aiming at developing a global, low-carbon economy.

And to that end, it is very valuable that the German Marshall Fund and others organize meetings like this, where people can get together and discuss ways and means to achieve this ambitious goal.

So I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this event. Thank you very much for a delicious dinner. And I look very much forward to participating in the discussion tomorrow morning.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

END