

Brussels Forum

March 22, 2014

Remarks by Senator Robert Menendez

Mr. Craig Kennedy: Now, it is my distinct honor to welcome and introduce US Senator Robert Menendez, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We are especially honored that the senator's first trip to Europe in his new role is to Brussels Forum. We are truly honored to have him join us this weekend. Senator Menendez, we look forward to your remarks. Please welcome him.

Senator Robert Menendez: Bonjour, Buenos Dias, good morning. I am thrilled to be here. As you've been told, my name is Bob Menendez and I have just been sanctioned by Vladimir Putin, I suspect, for standing up for the Ukrainian people, standing up for freedom, standing up for democracy. And if that is the case, I say, by all means, sanction me. And I would say sanction all of us who stand for the freedom of Ukraine.

Let me thank the German Marshall Fund for the opportunity to come before many government officials, parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, business and academic leaders here today and to commend the German Marshall Fund for an extraordinary convening of some of the most important high-level meetings that can take place between North America and Europe's political, corporate and intellectual leaders who are committed to

addressing pressing challenges on both sides of the Atlantic.

To paraphrase Vice President Joe Biden, good international relationships are always based on strong interpersonal relationships, and I welcome the opportunity to forge such relationships with many of you. So, as a brief introduction to those of you I have not had the opportunity to meet, let me say that you will find that throughout my career of 21 years in the Congress, all sitting on the respective foreign relations committees of the House and now the Senate, and as a chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I have a reputation for standing on principle.

I've always maintained that we are at our best when we have the courage to stick to our core values even when it is not convenient, even when it might be impolitic or risky. That's why I've always insisted that ending human rights abuses must be a top priority even if those abuses are happening in China and expressing our concern may not be convenient, or in Cuba, where public opinion may favor looking the other way. You will find that I have never been one to look the other way, never one to follow the crowd. That's why I voted against going to the war in Iraq, even when public opinion at the time was not with me.

And that is why I believe we must be resolved to stay strong now in this transformational moment in history. We must be resolved to stand on our shared principles and core values and we must do everything we can to protect the Ukrainian people from Russian aggression together. We live in a complicated and oftentimes dangerous world. Well, not everyone lives up to the ideals we embrace. Therefore, it calls for leadership and engagement with the firmness of purpose and shared values that we are willing to defend together. That must be our compass. We must stand together in support of a free and democratic Ukraine as the European Union did in signing the association agreements that millions of Ukrainians had hoped to see months ago, before all the bloodshed in Russian intervention.

We must also end the violence in Syria, together. And we must stand against Iran's attempt to build a nuclear weapon together. As the world has become more prosperous and more interconnected, our resolve to stay true to our principles becomes harder. But at the same time, it becomes far more important to act on them and to act together. No longer can horrific violations of human rights or criminal acts be deterred and prosecuted by just one nation. No longer can large corporations with wealth, power and a long reach be regulated by just one government. No longer can we

think of the environment as just a domestic issue that ends at our political borders. We are an international community, and on both sides of Atlantic we must continue to rely on our shared moral values as our compass to point us in the right direction.

For more than a year now, as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, I've tried to be an activist, independent, bipartisan chairman guided by the values I learned from my mother. The son of Cuban immigrants, I grew up in the shadow of Lady Liberty and Ellis Island, where in the last century the seeds of the transatlantic partnership we enjoy today took root and spread across America, a partnership that continues to evolve in this century and is as vital as any other time in history.

The German Marshall Fund aptly set the theme for this gathering: A World in Transition. I'm not quite sure they envisioned the transition we were talking about today in terms of some of the challenges. But it is an apt description of our challenges. The United States and Europe try to navigate the world. We have the finances to some basic questions before us: how do we mitigate the spread of radical Islamic fundamentalism from the Hindu Kush to the Maghreb and, of course, what King Abdullah called the Shia Crescent, the "Arc of Unrest" from the Gulf to the Mediterranean, that has turned the hope of an Arab Spring to a long

winter of discontent and what will the outcome be? How do we end the unspeakable violence against ethnic and religious minorities, the rising refugee problems in the Middle East and the spillover from the war in Syria and who will emerge to lead a post-war Syria? How do we end violence against women and the use of that violence as a weapon of war? How do we engage China not just as a strategic competitor but as a potential strategic partner? How do we stop the proliferation of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons and prevent them from falling into the wrong hands? And how do we stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon? How do we implement the fundamental principles of economic statecraft to go beyond free trade, creating new jobs and building on middle classes based on an economic growth 10, 20, 50 years from now? How do we implement smart policies that develop human capital, reform educational systems, foster research and development, help build our infrastructure? How do we enable companies to build 21st century workforces, expand supply chains and develop products more effectively? How do we address the modern challenges of immigration? Where millions of people around the globe want to live, work and contribute in our countries in the same way Europeans built and shaped the destiny of mind? And most importantly, how do we push back on Russia's blatant

and unacceptable abuse of military force in the Ukraine in the illegitimate referendum held last weekend?

The history of this young century will be written in how we respond to all of these challenges. But for the moment there is no greater, and I think, potential transformational challenge than Russia's aggression in the Ukraine, which brings with it world-shaping consequences that will flow from the choices we make.

In Syria, President Putin is actively propping up President Bashar al-Assad and perpetrating the world's worst humanitarian disaster. In Iran, the ink of the joint plan of action signed in Geneva in--last November was barely dry when reports surfaced that Tehran and Moscow were negotiating an oil-for-goods swap worth \$1.5 billion a month. And they have planned to build a new nuclear plant. All steps that only aid Iran in its pursuit of nuclear weapons while diminishing the sanctions that force that country to the negotiating table in the first place.

Today, our concern is for Ukraine. Tomorrow, it could be for Georgia or Moldova, two nations waiting to finalize their association agreements with the European Union. What other country might be the target of Putin's expansionist desires? Certainly, five years ago when Russian tanks rolled into Georgia and occupied big swaths of territory, who would have thought that Ukraine would be next? In my view, President Putin has

miscalculated. He has reignited a dangerous pre-1991 Soviet-style game of Russian roulette with the international community, and we cannot blink. Putin must understand that this violation of international law in the Ukraine will not come about without consequences. Our policies towards Russia require an urgent reexamination. The unity of purpose displayed at the UN Security-Council by the United States, European Union and the Group of 7 Nations in support of Ukrainian autonomy and an opposition to Russian authoritarianism, along with the EU's movements towards sanctions demonstrates the world's outrage as a call to action.

And I was pleased to see last week that the EU agreed on a framework for its first sanctions actions against Russia since the Cold War. In concert with the European Union's goals, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which I chair, passed an aid package to assist Ukraine during this critical time that provides loans for economic stabilization, approves an IMF reform package, which will give Ukraine greater assistance, supports planning for upcoming democratic elections, aids in the recovery of stolen assets, expands security cooperation between the two countries and holds Moscow accountable for its aggressive stance against Ukraine.

We are sending a message to the world with one voice that the annexation of Crimea and any further invasion in the Ukraine will not be tolerated. That is why the United States and the European Union must seriously consider what other use of economic sanctions that are strong and significant enough to force President Putin and the small group of elites that surround him to recalculate and change Russia's course of events. Now, I recognize that economic sanctions require sacrifices, but history teaches us that the cost of inaction can be far greater. We need to act together, not simply because we want to do the right thing by a country that has been invaded in the Crimea but because we are at a dangerous moment in history with global consequences. And the world is watching.

If the West does not appropriately, what will China say when it is looking at its territorial desires in the South China Sea? What will Iran say as we are negotiating in Vienna about nuclear weapons? What will others in the world--North Korea, whose march to nuclear weapons on a greater scale is still in play? All of them will be looking at what the West does or do not do in making a decision about Russia's brazen move into the Ukraine. They will be watching to see how far they can go. They will be asking what can I get away with?

The fact, is as a matter of principle, Ukrainian sovereignty cannot be violated simply for looking westward and embracing ideals rooted in freedom. Those ideals must always remain first and foremost in our collective response to international events, and we must promote them together.

As I said, the historic strength of our strategic partnerships has been in a set of shared values that we were willing to defend together as represented by the upcoming 65th anniversary of NATO. Today, our transatlantic relationship is so fundamental to American foreign policy that while it may seem to some we take it for granted, we never lose sight of Europe's abiding importance to our national interests as well as our economic well-being. Today, for example, the transatlantic economy is the largest and wealthiest market in the world, constituting more than 50 percent of world GDP in terms of value and 41 percent of GDP in terms of purchasing power. In fact, between January and September of last year, exports from my state of New Jersey to Europe were nine times greater than to China. The world may be in transition, new dynamics are at play, but what have not changed are the core values we share and the strategic bond that has always strengthened us.

During the 50 years in which the United States and Western Europe shouldered during the Cold War, there

was a certain clarity about the world, about the way it worked and the way it was organized. The structures put in time at that--the structures put in place at that time, I should say--transatlantic structures, Bretton Woods, NATO, IMF--were so successful they changed the world. The policy choices we made then and the bedrock foundation of the transatlantic community all flowed from the nature of that vast twilight struggle and the bipolar world of US-Soviet competition. Trade, democracy, human rights alliances, international organizations, diplomacy and security affairs all were organized through the lens of the Cold War. And the contrast inherent in US-Soviet competition was sharp and clearly focused. But in today's world, issues and events are far less clear, far less focused. We are confronted by a much more complex, fluid and unsettled state of affairs. We are arguably witnessing a transformation in the distribution and diffusion of power.

It is indeed a new era, albeit interconnected, but with a tendency towards absolutes and extremes that require a new way of thinking about international affairs. We face fundamental questions we have never faced before, and never thought we would have to face: what constitutes a state? How do states relate to each other across a range of economic, sectarian, political and military and even cultural dimensions when it comes

to the distribution of power? What is war when the enemy is an ill-defined series of stateless actors and victory can be secured not only by the power of our military but the power of our computer? And how do we recognize and define peace when the very nature of war and conflict comes with new metrics and new rules?

In 1907, Woodrow Wilson said we live in an age disturbed, confused, bewildered, afraid of its own forces in search not merely of its road but even of its direction. These words, I think, are as pertinent today as when they were delivered in Princeton. The world is on the cusp of transformation and it is up to us, like the architects of post-war Europe who came before us, to help shape that new world. And I would argue in that, that there are some who suggest that the transatlantic relation are less important than they were, that they are less central to the geopolitics of this century. And I would argue quite the opposite. Although a changing, dynamic and complex world with new centers of powers and new set of challenges will demand more time, energy and resources, it is not an overstatement to say that without strong cooperation between the United States and Europe, the world, simply put, will not achieve the peace, security and prosperity it deserves. Without strong transatlantic cooperation on sanctions, on missile defense, on our military posture in driving the P5+1 agenda at the

United Nations Security Council, there is no question in my mind, for example, that Iran will gain nuclear capability. And we cannot allow that to happen. If it does, it will set off a chain reaction of nuclear proliferation across the Middle East, across the Gulf and potentially across the world. And we cannot allow that to happen either.

We can and we must work together to bring a verifiable, irreversible end to Iran's nuclear ambitions and strengthen and reinforce international norms against Iran's nuclear proliferation together. Now, let me be clear, I have offered most of the sanctions that presently the United States has against Iran. I am very clear about my position on negotiations with Iran. I have always supported a two-track policy of diplomacy and sanctions. At the same time, I am convinced that we should only relieve pressure on Iran in exchange for verifiable concessions that will fundamentally dismantle Iran's illicit nuclear program, and that it be done in such a way that alarm bells will sound from Vienna to Washington, from Jerusalem to Riyadh should Iran restart its program any time in the next 20 or 30 years. Any deal we reach with Iran must be verifiable, it must be effective and it must prevent Iran from ever developing even one nuclear weapon.

In the interim, I hope we will stand together not to allow Iran to avoid sanctions and be open for

business to usual to trade with the world if we want to achieve that goal through peaceful diplomacy tools.

Now, on the broader issue of global trade with strong transatlantic cooperation, I believe the global Free and Fair Trade Agenda can only serve to increase economic prosperity around the world. Completion of TITA [sic], including strong labor and environmental standards, is essential we are able to construct a global rule space trade and economic order for the 21st century. As we think about the challenges and opportunity Asia presents, I would argue that transatlantic cooperation has a critical role to play in reinforcing international laws, norms and institutions to help shape the emerging order in East Asia. The rules that govern the maritime commons, for example, are the same for the North Atlantic as they are for the South China Sea. And transatlantic engagement is a necessity for the emergence of a rules-based order in Asia.

So, as I contemplate the challenges of the 21st century, it's clear to me that together the United States and Europe are the essential catalysts for a set of international laws, norms and institutions that can lead us in the right direction. We understand that transatlantic cooperation and coordination is the main stream from which international order will flow in the 21st century on a range of issues that are important to

all of us. With strong transatlantic leadership, we can address climate change and continue to be partners on energy and the environment. The United States has made great strides in energy efficiency and conservation. We are seeing the highest level of public transportation ridership in 57 years. And under the Obama administration we have more than doubled renewable energy use. But we still have much to learn from our friends across the Atlantic and much to share with the world.

American oil and gas companies are producing more than we could have ever imagined. And we are partnering with countries in Europe to expand the use of these technologies. The US may have invented Cap and Trade but Europe has actually implemented it. Separately, we may be strong but together we can lead the world to eliminate energy poverty and end the use of energy as economic hostage taking and even tackle the climate crisis.

On human rights, with strong transatlantic cooperation, we can avoid an erosion of global prosperity and security in a world where authoritarian regimes, like Russia and China, would exercise greater influence and where no attention at all would be paid to human rights abuses.

As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, I can tell you that we focus like a laser on human rights

and democracy. I understand the costs that brave dissidents endure for their willingness to tell the truth about the ugly realities of life inside authoritarian regimes--the torture, the abuse, the long detentions--for expressing nothing more than a desire for basic civil and human rights that we take for granted. In the initial years after the Cold War, a great deal of progress was made in achieving these basic rights for more and more people around the world. A number of countries in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and the western hemisphere were transformed from authoritarian to democratic societies. The democratic progress that had been accomplished led to a belief that the days of authoritarian states were numbered. The world believed that transformation to democracy was inevitable. The authoritarian states could not survive in world shaped by a globally integrated economy fueled by the vast unregulated flow of information across the Internet. That we could sit back and allow this process to take place, secure in the knowledge that time was on our side.

But I think the last decade has been a wakeup call. Freedom and democracy are not free and they are challenged. Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela, among other countries, have shown us that the forces of a globally integrated economy, fueled by the vast unregulated flow of information across the Internet alone, do not

guarantee the transformation to democracy. And now Crimea is under siege by an occupying force. To address this challenge, we need strong transatlantic cooperation to support all those who put their lives on the line for freedom and the rule of law. We know democracy doesn't just happen. It is hard. It comes with hard work and sacrifice and building civil societies. It requires transparent governs, strong institutions, democratic elections and, yes, oftentimes the blood, sweat and tears of those who long for freedom.

Clearly, we need strong transatlantic cooperation to continue the fight against extremism and terrorism, and we need to cooperate with all of our partners to end the violence and human suffering in Syria.

Let me close on that note. Last week, we marked the third anniversary of the peaceful uprising of Syrian citizens calling on their government for change. That change was met with a brutal force, including the use of chemical weapons on innocent civilians, which reminds us of the upcoming 100th anniversary of the onset of World War I and the first use of chemical weapons, including here on the fields of Flanders. Over the last year, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has demonstrated clear bipartisan support for a robust leadership to end the conflict in Syria. Last May, both parties came together to authorize proactive steps to

empower the moderate-backed vetted US Syrian opposition and establish a comprehensive Syria strategy to end the conflict. Last September, my committee provided the administration with authorization for the use of military force in Syria, paving the way for a deal to remove Syria's chemical weapons stockpile.

Unfortunately, despite the committee's actions and the world's attention, Assad has stalled on the timeline he committed to for removing Syria's chemical weapons stockpile, further underscoring that he is not capable of leading Syria. Again, strong transatlantic cooperation can be the vehicle to establish a framework for ending the violence and empowering the moderate opposition voices in Syria to lead a representative and inclusive process of rebuilding. Assad has no intention of complying with UN Security Council resolutions, such as 2139, to permit access for humanitarian assistance, demilitarize schools and hospitals and stop the bombing campaigns against civilians. We must work together to build a stable, representative Syria and bring an end to the violence and suffering that is spilling beyond Syria's borders.

So, when we look around the world, we realize that every so often we have a moment truly historic, defining moments, critical junctures that come at a time of great upheaval and change, when the old order gives way, sometimes painfully, often searchingly, when

old rules no longer apply and anew of unfamiliar order arises from the chaos. Today, we stand at a confluence of defining moments in the global economy in governmental and economic institutions, in societies in which people are demanding change and reforms while still coping with age-old sectarian violence and those still struggling with health and educational inadequacies, hunger, poverty, disease, not to mention a defining moment for women's rights, civil liberties and basic freedoms around the world. We are at a defining moment in Ukraine with the backsliding of a Russian leadership to a pre-1991 posture, in Syria with the fate of Assad, in the Middle East in what will bloom from the Arab Spring, in our trade relationships with each other as well as China and Asia, in the strategic threats we face from non-state actors and the potential for the worst players acquiring the more dangerous weapons and finding new ways to deliver them.

The genius of the post-World War II order was that our leaders reached a shared vision of the threats the world faced and developed a long-term strategy to address them. They created a web of complimentary institutions--the UN, the International Monetary Fund, NATO--that allowed the United States and Europe to exercise leadership in a way that was respected, not resented. Today, the stakes could not be higher nor the potential rewards greater. The question is: Can our

united vision and commitment to bold actions in this century match the vision and commitment of those who had the wisdom and the will to create international institutions which brought prosperity to millions and changed the world?

I believe that if we live, lead and govern by our shared values and ideals, the same values we saw people willing to die for on the Maidan, we can lead the world through this time of transition. And that is what we must do together: to strengthen, the transatlantic strategic partnership that led the world in the last century, and I believe can lead it again in this century.

And that is what I will work towards as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Thank you very much for having me.

Mr. Craig Kennedy: Senator, thank you so much. That was really, really well done. We're going to take a coffee break, be back at 11 and we'll get back to work.