

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Belgium, Steven Vanackere

Another three days of high level meetings are coming to an end and I'm very honored to speak before this exceptional gathering of guests from both sides of the Atlantic and even beyond. And I solemnly declare the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Brussels Forum a great success – because I've heard it from too many people.

Of course we have a broad range of speakers and issues to thank for that, but of course not let us not forget the tremendous work of Craig Kennedy, President of the German Marshall Fund and of his team: Thank you very much Craig. But next year you're going to have to deliver on the air-conditioning question.

Speaking of gratitude, John F. Kennedy said "as we express our gratitude we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." And shouldn't this thought be quintessential when we try to summarize Transatlantic relations? Should our highest appreciation not be read in our deeds, our kept promises, the organizations we have set up, the missions we participate in.

Although my pragmatic nature pushes me to respond affirmatively to this question - and I gladly illustrate this with last week's decision by the Belgian government to extend our involvement in Afghanistan for another year – I would not want us to forget the soul in our relationship. Yes it's about deeds, but it's also about inspiration. And I want to talk a little bit about this inspiration.

First of all it is a family affair. We can truly say that we are a spiritual family this family of the West living on both sides of the Atlantic. Even literally, we are family. The greater part of the American population is European by origin. And from this country, Belgium, alone thousands of men and women emigrated to the U.S. and on the American immigration wall of honor on Ellis Island we can see the names of 63,141 Belgians who entered the United States between 1892 and the 50s, 1954. Like all families we share a common history. Europe cannot forget that the United States came two times with its army to help us in the battle against tyranny, and twice with a relief program to help the population of our battered down country.

And, ladies and gentlemen, we are also family by values. We share the sense of democracy, we cherish the values of equality, of solidarity, of freedom. We know that the pursuit of happiness and the quest for freedom is a force for progress. This invisible bridge over the Atlantic is the drive behind an everlasting bond. We are joined by common history, we are joined by a common set of values and we are joined by a common dream.

At this moment in time our Transatlantic bond of history, values and hope needs to find a new, a modern translation endurable but ever-dynamic ally changing instruments of cooperation. I am of course referring to the strategic partnership between the United States and the European Union and to the expansion and restructuring of NATO. Indeed an effective response to the challenges of a globalizing world requires transatlantic unity of purpose and effective multi-lateral approaches fostering an open

and competitive transatlantic economy. Europe and America, two powers of comparable economic size still producing more than half of the world's GDP stand stronger when they stand together.

But, ladies and gentlemen - and I think this is underscored frequently in the last two days - we will do this in an era with more pilots in the cockpit than we have witnessed in the second half of the previous century. Even with a strong European-American partnership the West is no longer [French expression], as the French say. In a world of global challenges and of real interdependence we need to accept that the most pressing international issues – climate change, terrorism and peace, economic growth and development – cannot be solved by nations on their own. We have to cooperate in the name of mutual interests. And please, let us not be pessimistic or nostalgic about that. In a multi-polar world, fortunately, there are less zero-sum games. There is more room for win-win situations. And in any case, when this development, that's been called by Fareed Zakaria "the rise of the rest", not the decline of this or that, but the rise of the rest. When this development is the result of emerging powers applying recipes we ourselves have been advertising for so long, who are we to complain?

But still: In a new world we cannot do without leadership. We cannot do without responsibility. We cannot do without compassion. Therefore we must commit ourselves on both sides of the Atlantic to some objectives of mutual interest. That is also why I think there is a need for an international civil society in which we all see ourselves as what the French philosopher Edgar Morat (?) called citizens of *la ter patri (sp?)* – the world as our country. And what the American President Franklin Roosevelt called "members of the human community."

This does not exclude variations in our socio-economic models. You know that Europe, for example, is particularly attached to the so-called Rhineland model for which free market economy goes hand-in-hand with state-guaranteed social security and affordable health for all. That is probably why the passing of the health reform bill has been followed with such interest in Europe and the rest of the world for that matter.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a final comment to make. We cannot take it for granted that the new generations, who have no vivid memory of our common past, will look to Europe and America with the same allegiance that this audience shares. What is to prevent young businessmen to be excessively charmed by the vast commercial markets and the cheap labor markets of other continents and to forget the soul of the Transatlantic project? How can we put enthusiasm in the hearts of new political leaders when it comes to making the best of a shoulder-to-shoulder effort for our shared values?

The full potential in the Transatlantic idea has not yet been fully explored. I'm very pleased that for the first time in the five years' existence of our Brussel Forum a number of youngsters could participate this year. Therefore ladies and gentlemen, I'm very glad to announce to you that I have decided to launch a Brussels Award for Young Transatlantic Excellence. This yearly prize of 5,000 EURO will be granted to two youngsters, one American one European, 2,500 EURO to each, in order to prepare for a joint paper on a transatlantic subject. And this paper will be presented at the next edition of the Brussels Forum. And the German Marshall Fund has accepted to be trusted with the practical organization of the contest and the selection of the candidates.

I think ladies and gentlemen and I hope that you agree [applause] I really think that the best way to really feel at ease with our future is to assist in shaping it. I thank you for your attention and I wish you all the best have a safe trip home and see you next year. Thank you.