

**TOAST ON THE OCCASION OF THE NETWORKING
DINNER OF BRUSSELS FORUM 2010**

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Distinguished colleagues,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen, •

It is a great pleasure to be with you here at the networking dinner of Brussels Forum 2010, the meeting place between the two sides of Brussels (Evere and the rond-point Schuman). Not being abroad (as initially foreseen) offers me this privilege.

As you know, Brussels Forum is all about the transatlantic relationship. On both sides of the Atlantic we definitely share the same set of democratic values.

Take a look at our Countries' constitutions and implementing practice. Freedom of speech for example: we all experience it and we just love it.

Take a look at the treaties which unite us and again our implementing practice. The North Atlantic Treaty stands for 60 years of common defense and for our freedom. This freedom was founded - and now I quote from the preamble of the treaty – “*on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law*”. And at the same time EU stands for almost 60 years of shared security and wellbeing, based on the same principles.

We believe that these shared values are universal values. This belief is the root of our continued cooperation and open door policy.

Deepening the transatlantic cooperation, on all available levels, is therefore a natural *course of action*.

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On the other hand, we know that we face pressing new challenges. The world in 2010 is extremely global and complex, and so are its threats and challenges. Globalization brings us world news (and analysis – in plural) at an unprecedented speed, but at the same time makes solutions (or beginning of solutions) considerably more complex.

The comprehensive approach to deal with the security issues we jointly face is not only a prospect, it is an imperative approach.

A reality for many European Countries is the constant pressure on the defense budget. Improving efficiency, bi- and multilateral cooperation, common projects and shared capabilities, and downsizing together with specialization is a way, probably the only one, to address the present (and – no doubt – the future) budgetary constraints. This is what I am doing right now in Belgium, while keeping my eyes on my major objective: to be a small but reliable partner to the allies and the member states.

The Lisbon Treaty clearly offers a prospect for solutions in this respect. That is why we should all maintain a high level of ambition while working at the implementation of the Treaty. I therefore look forward to continue during the ‘Belgian Presidency’ the discussion, initiated by Carme Chacon on the implementation of the mechanism of the so-called Permanent Structured Cooperation. It will be a revealing factor of our common political will. Our impatience on those matters was somehow expressed at the informal meeting in Palma, maybe minimizing the huge challenges Lady Ashton is facing right now.

And the new strategic concept that Nato is preparing will be faced with quite similar challenges, notably drawing a common line on what we think (and fear) will be tomorrows threats. And finding solutions that will take account of all the needs, not only the

military one's and those closely related to security. Nato will have to find also solutions to the needs for a global approach. Not only will those solutions be quite similar or comparable to those that the EU has developed or will develop; there will also be a pressing need of communication and coordination in order to have an optimal efficiency, in order to 'avoid unnecessary duplication' (maybe this phrase rings a bell ??).

All this will happen in the second half of this year, while Belgium will have the rotating Presidency of the EU, and will be the major support of Lady Ashton in the subject of interest to us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I use the words "cooperation", "partnership" and "relationship" I talk about Countries and Organizations, but I also talk about the political, corporate and intellectual leaders of these Countries and Organizations.

At this networking dinner we can give some meaning and content to these words.

May I therefore invite you to raise your glass to the team of the German Marshall Fund of the United States as they managed to bring us all together in this unique forum to help shape the common transatlantic agenda of Nato and EU.

Cheers, to NATO, to the German Marshall Fund and to you all, and thank you very much!