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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION  
TO THE COUNCIL**

**Reinforcing the Transatlantic Relationship:  
Focusing on Strategy and Delivering Results**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1995, the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) extended EU-US co-operation beyond questions of EC core competence to the full range of political and economic issues, thus recognising the growing role of the Union as an international actor. Now, at the outset of a new US Administration, it is timely to assess this partnership and to reflect on the principles and themes that should guide it in future.

The NTA has provided the framework for a more structured and broad-based co-operation between the EU and the US. Many of the objectives set in 1995 have been achieved but there have been difficulties in setting priorities to ensure focused and sustained co-operation. As a result, the six-monthly cycle of EU-US Summits and ministerials has not developed its full potential.

No amount of strategic planning can guarantee fewer disputes or deeper co-operation. Although EU-US trade relations are generally harmonious, there will always be some disputes between the world's two leading economies but they must be managed and kept in perspective. Foreign policy contacts are many and frequent but as the EU profile's in international affairs develops, we will need to co-ordinate more. The prospect of enlargement also offers new opportunities for our partners. EU-US leadership on new global challenges is necessary if international action is to have any impact on issues such as organised crime, spread of infectious diseases or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. European Security and Defence Policy and the advent of the Euro will also bring new challenges.

Although difficulties occasionally arise between the EU and the US on policy matters or owing to the differences between them in institutional structures and administrative practices, the fact remains that relations between Europe and the United States is the most important strategic relationship in the world.

There is no miracle formula for strengthening EU-US relations. But to make co-operation more action-oriented, EU-US Summits need to become more focused and to define clearer priorities. Efforts should concentrate on the most important challenges – strategic themes – facing the EU and the US today. From these themes the specific issues of concern should be derived. Possible themes could be emerging security challenges, globalisation and the multilateral trading system, the fight against organised crime, energy issues, consumer protection, macroeconomic issues, the fight against poverty in developing countries and the digital economy.

The bi-annual EU-US Summits should be slimmed down, reverting to the original format of a restricted leaders' meeting. This may or may not be followed by a plenary session with foreign and trade ministers. Some have questioned the frequency of EU-US Summits, pointing out the cycle of six-monthly summits leave little time for preparation and follow-up between summits. At the 6 March EU-US ministerial, the US formally mentioned the need to review the format and frequency of summits. A reduction in the number of Summits could have a knock-on effect on other high level meetings with third countries. Such meetings have proliferated in recent years. Fewer of them, better prepared, might be more productive. The conclusions adopted by the Council in the area of external commitments on 29 June 2000 (doc 966000) also point in this direction.

The objective of this limited review of the NTA is to ensure that the political leadership exercises close control of a process that risks becoming too bureaucratic and cumbersome. Strong political leadership is required to set a co-operative agenda and to garner the true

potential of transatlantic relations. Now is the time to discuss these issues with the member states and the new US Administration. This communication is intended as a contribution to this debate.

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## **I. POLITICAL CONTEXT**

1. In 1990, under the Bush Administration, the European Union and the United States upgraded their post Cold war political relationship through the Transatlantic Declaration. In 1995, during the Clinton years, they launched the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) to establish a new foundation for their partnership in the light of significant changes in Europe, marking the Union's coming of age; from the Single Market, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Maastricht Treaty to the launch of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The ambition was to move away from an agenda focusing on EC core competence issues to an equal and global partnership covering all issues of EU competence.
2. Five years have elapsed since the NTA's creation. A new US Administration took office at the beginning of the year. At the same time, the geopolitical environment has shifted and new global challenges have surfaced. The Union's institutional and political agenda has expanded further to take in the launch of the euro, reinforced competence on Justice and Home Affairs, and not least a stronger CFSP as well as the emergence of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The prospect of enlargement is the single greatest challenge for the Union, simultaneously offering new opportunities for our partners. We are establishing an area of peace, prosperity and stability for 500 million citizens sharing the same values.
3. It is timely, especially given the new US Administration, to consider how to incorporate into the NTA such new dimensions and not least, how to ensure efficient EU-US co-operation. The new US Administration, the European Parliament and the European Commission run to 2004, which will help provide continuity for the pursuit of our common political and economic interests.
4. The Transatlantic links form one of the most important and complex relationships in the world. When they work together, the EU and the US make a difference on international trade issues, on foreign policy matters as demonstrated by our co-operation in the Western Balkans as well as on the new global challenges ranging from organised crime, the spread of infectious diseases to benefiting from the opportunities provided new technologies. If the EU and the US do not find common ground, prospects for progress on the international arena are reduced. Through consolidating the broad base of our relationship, we wish to move towards a real, balanced and more effective partnership. To do this, EU-US Summits should be used more efficiently to ensure a high level of political engagement.
5. This communication is intended as a contribution to a wider debate on the transatlantic relationship. The aim is to go beyond consultation towards a more action-oriented relationship based on real accomplishments. The ideas set out below are intended to help develop the full potential of the EU-US relationship by focusing on a number of strategic themes. In the light of the interests of the Union as well as the need to make EU-US co-operation more efficient and relevant to our common concerns, the Commission proposes that EU-US relations, in addition to the day-to-day agenda, should concentrate on a few of the following themes in the years ahead :
  - emerging security challenges
  - globalisation and the multilateral trading system

- the fight against crime, particularly organised crime
- energy issues
- consumer protection, in particular food safety
- macroeconomic issues
- the fight against poverty in the developing countries
- the digital economy

## II. SCOPE OF EU-US RELATIONS

- *Trade relations*

6. The two transatlantic economies enjoy an unprecedented degree of economic integration. The EU and the US are the leading participants in international trade, accounting between them for over 40% of world trade in goods and services. Their bilateral trade and investment relationship dwarfs all others, and they are each other's single largest trade and investment partner (close to € 1 trillion annually in trade and investment flows). Yet the EU and the US are not only trading partners, but at the same time competitors in both domestic and third country markets.
7. The cornerstone of bilateral and multilateral trade and investment co-operation remains the Transatlantic Economic Partnership (TEP). Last year, the Commission together with the member states made an evaluation of the TEP. Despite setbacks in ensuring the timely implementation of the TEP Action Plan, the conclusion was that the TEP had proven a useful instrument for developing a co-operative agenda in the trade and investment fields and that it should be reinforced and given further impetus. Discussion with the US on how to achieve this could start soon with the new Administration.
8. On the bilateral side, the EU and the US have a dialogue on most issues covered by the TEP Action Plan. Despite the existence of some problems, work has been satisfactory and progress made, notably in areas such as technical barriers to trade, regulatory co-operation, consumer product safety, food safety, biotechnology and competition. For services, the outcome is mixed.
9. On multilateral issues under the TEP, both parties have shared interests in developing the rules based international trading system. The main objective has been launching a new WTO Round. While no overall EU-US consensus has been reached yet, the exchanges have been positive and continue with a view to achieving a joint position wherever possible. Other issues, such as China's WTO accession, have proven the potential benefits for both sides of co-operation. Working together is essential, particularly to develop the multilateral trading system and to avoid excessive focus on bilateral/regional negotiations.
10. As far as trade disputes are concerned, there will always be some contentious issues given the deep inter-penetration of the world's two largest trading blocs. In practice, the number of disputes at any given time is limited. The key is managing these rifts and keeping them in perspective : at the most, 1-2% of the trade and investment flow

is affected. Such questions, however, tend to attract media attention far beyond their economic importance. As a result, trade irritants are sometimes blamed for casting a shadow over other aspects of the relationship between the European Union and the United States. In reality, there is little risk of a negative spill-over from individual disputes into the overall political relationship which is broader and deeper than ever before. In fact, both parties go to great lengths to contain disputes and avoid escalation.

11. The prevention of trade disputes remains a key goal in which respect and conformity with internationally agreed rules is crucial for solving potential conflicts. To this end, increased efforts should be made to find early solutions between the parties, and in this respect, the early warning mechanism for trade and investment matters is working satisfactorily within the TEP framework to identify contentious cases in the pipeline. Thought is being given to how the system can be improved, including a more structured follow-up. But in the end, even the best early warning system will not work in all cases and needs to be accompanied by improved co-operation and collective leadership.

- *Wider EU-US relations*

12. Although trade irritants tend to grab the headlines, the EU-US relationship is multi-faceted, and non-trade aspects have become an increasingly important element and are poised to expand further. There are many success stories, the most prominent being the effective co-ordination of policy and action in the Western Balkans. But it is fair to say that a 'partnership of equals' has not been achieved. Differences in institutional structures and administrative practices have hampered co-operation, and lack of political cohesion have, at times, weakened the European impact in Washington. Moreover, the American tendency to see relations with Europe through the prism of NATO/security, rather than in EU-US terms, could affect future developments.

13. In some ways, the United States are inclined to regard the Union essentially as a regional partner, focusing on the wider European issues. For the Union, one of the main goals is obviously managing more effectively our relations with our nearest neighbours. We are engaged in the Western Balkans, Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus, Central Asia and the Mediterranean/Middle East. At the same time, the EU is involved in an ambitious enlargement process in Central Europe. On top of this, the Union is also the world's largest provider of development assistance and is playing a world-wide role in promoting the integration of developing countries into the world economy.

14. For geographical reasons, Europe cannot to the same extent as the United States rely on military and technological solutions to achieve security; we need to engage constructively with our neighbours. The European Union has made a significant contribution to stability on a continent where millions of lives were lost less than 60 years ago. It will continue to do so by pursuing the enlargement process, by promoting the integration of the countries of the former Soviet Union into the international system, and by playing a major role in bringing about peace and reconciliation in the Western Balkans. It is important to stress this broader EU contribution to stability and security in any transatlantic discussion of burden-sharing.

15. In many parts of the world, the European Union and the United States work closely to present a more unified and coherent approach to foreign policy. There are many political, security and economic issues of common concern around the world that can best be addressed together. But even when there are shared interests, it is worthwhile recalling that the EU and the US frequently use different ways and means to reach similar objectives.
16. Outside the European continent, areas such as the Middle East, Africa and the Korean Peninsula offer examples of co-operative approaches. Even so, the EU is unlikely to engage on a global scale in the same way as the United States. We are however firmly wedded to multilateralism and support continued US engagement in the international process, be it in the UN, the WTO or the international financial institutions.
17. There will always be some differences with our Americans partners. While the European Union prefers a policy of engagement with countries of concern, the United States have tended in certain cases (Iran, Cuba) to resort to isolation or economic sanctions to pursue policy goals. There are other areas where we differ with the US, be it on the importance of maintaining existing arms control regimes such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), responding to 'countries of concern', climate change, attitudes to UN and multilateralism, the International Criminal Court, the death penalty or the use of extraterritorial power in the pursuit of foreign policy goals.

- *New international challenges*

18. The notion of foreign policy co-operation is widening to encompass global challenges from organised crime, money laundering to cybercrime and other illegal use of the Internet as well as migration-related issues; non-proliferation and soft security threats such as the spread of infectious diseases, environmental degradation and global warming. We have a common interest in dealing with this growing set of problems that cannot be solved by individual countries. Moving into this new zone of cross-border activities will require ever closer co-ordination with the United States.
19. In the absence of EU-US leadership or collaboration on such issues, there is a risk of inaction or stalemate, and the two most powerful economic and political blocs in the world could increasingly find themselves hindering rather than helping each other. Clearly, Europe and America need to reinforce their existing relationship, and our interests are best served by working closely together on the basis of shared values of democracy, rule of law and market economy. The danger is not of US isolationism but of unilateralism. A more cohesive Union, speaking with one voice or singing from the same hymn sheet, will be better placed to counter such tendencies.

- *The co-operative agenda*

20. It is also worth mentioning the longstanding co-operation that takes place in a number of other sectors. Officials on both sides work together steadily in areas such as customs, science and technology, education exchanges, competition, information society and maritime safety, just to mention a few.

The transport sector deserves a special mention owing to its importance for transatlantic trade relations. The dialogue needs to be strengthened, both in relation

to our analysis of the problems and the regulatory framework, with a view to paving the way for a more liberalised air transport market.

### III ASSESSMENT OF THE NEW TRANSATLANTIC AGENDA (NTA)

21. The origins of the NTA arose out of a conviction, on both sides of the Atlantic, in the mid 1990's that it was necessary to put the EU-US relationship on a broader basis than that provided by the Transatlantic Declaration of November 1990.
22. Senior EU and US policymakers saw the strengthening of the EU-US dimension as a way of providing additional "cement" for the wider transatlantic relationship at a time when the overarching security relationship had become a less dominating factor, following the end of the cold war. At the same time, US foreign policy initiatives to strengthen economic ties with its neighbouring countries (NAFTA), the Pacific rim (APEC) and the Western Hemisphere (Free Trade Area of the Americas) implied a need to reinforce the Transatlantic dimension in parallel.
23. In the end, this led to the signature, at the Madrid EU-US Summit in December 1995, of an ambitious political agenda (the New Transatlantic Agenda) accompanied by a detailed action plan ('Joint EU-US Action Plan') extending co-operation to all three pillars of the new Maastricht Treaty.
24. The NTA relied essentially on the structures arising out of the 1990 Transatlantic Declaration, at both political and official level. The main exception to this was the creation of a horizontal monitoring body, the Senior Level Group (SLG), composed, on the EU side, of senior officials of the Presidency (assisted by Council Secretariat) and of the Commission. The SLG oversees the NTA implementation process and prepares a report (Senior Level Group Report) to the biannual EU-US Summit about achievements and new priorities for the future presidency. A preparatory group, known as the "NTA Task Force", supports the SLG in its function.
25. The implementation of the NTA, and of its accompanying Action Plan, has led to the development of further, more detailed, instruments designed to promote bilateral co-operation in areas such as customs, education, and science and technology. Another prominent element was the Transatlantic Economic Partnership (TEP), launched in 1998 to intensify and extend multilateral and bilateral co-operation and common actions in the field of trade and investment. To this end, an official-level TEP Steering Group and a number of specialised TEP working groups were established within the NTA structure.
26. The NTA process has undoubtedly contributed to the creation of a broader-based and more structured relationship. Many of the objectives set in 1995 have been, or are in the process of being achieved. This has helped to produce a number of concrete results. Not in all cases, however, can these achievements be ascribed to the NTA.
27. It was always clear that the NTA and its offspring could not by themselves solve certain problems that lie at the root of many of the difficulties in the bilateral relationship such as:
  - the limits placed on the US executive branch by the essentially domestically driven legislative process of the US Congress,

- the institutional limitations placed on the EU by the Treaties and the structural constraints of the EU's decision-making process,
  - different levels of willingness to make economic sacrifices in order to advance global environmental standards,
  - a different level of consumer tolerance on issues such as the use of genetically modified organisms,
  - the constitutional inability of US Federal Administration to commit regulatory agencies and federal states in its dealings with the EU, and
  - the difficulties both sides face in ensuring the prompt and full implementation of WTO rulings.
28. Although institutional limitations and political constraints play an important role, high-level political leadership and commitment on both sides should help to overcome these difficulties and ensure that EU-US co-operation is successful and that budding conflicts are contained.

In any event, the NTA needs to be a living, not static, agenda. It has to evolve. With the positive changes now taking place within the EU, the growing capabilities of the EU as an external actor, and a new US Administration taking office, we are at a most opportune time to review the transatlantic agenda.

#### IV. THE CORE AGENDA : FOCUSING ON STRATEGIC THEMES

29. The main achievement of the NTA has been to broaden the scope of dialogue and co-operation. The next step should be for the NTA process to become **more focused and to have clearer priorities**. Despite the NTA emphasis on action-oriented co-operation, the formal structures for EU-US dialogue have largely been dominated by ad-hoc exchanges of information and delivered little in terms of concrete co-operative action.
30. There is a tendency for partners to choose short-term priorities, without always following up on previous initiatives. More often than not, the agenda is driven by the latest crisis, a shift in EU Presidency or new US concerns which crop up without warning. As a consequence, many initiatives tend to fade away as soon as they have served their purpose as summit "deliverables". The sheer number of initiatives and agenda items tend to undermine any attempt to set priorities and to generate a focused result-oriented agenda.
31. To start with, both sides could identify four to five common challenges (strategic themes). Through the selection of these themes, Summit leaders would provide a long-term political steer from which the priorities for co-operation could be drawn. By rallying round a series of strategic themes, the EU would improve the ability to define its own long-term agenda for EU-US relations.
32. In addition to the strategic themes that leaders would discuss at Summits to provide the overall direction for the transatlantic relationship, Summit agendas should remain sufficiently flexible to take account of the main issues of the day. But by focusing on the strategic themes, the agenda-setting exercise would become more disciplined.

Clearly, leaders are always likely to discuss a 'hot' topic such as the Western Balkans or the Middle East but there should be no need for them to get excessively entangled in issues that offer little scope for progress.

## V. IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC THEMES

33. The list set out below provides an illustration of strategic themes which would obviously have to be agreed with the US, reflect EU's increasing international role by setting out the global challenges and new forms of international action that can best be tackled through a common agenda. In addition, they are coherent with the Commission's internal work priorities for the EU. Within each strategic theme, Summit leaders should endorse one or two priority issues for follow-up at the level of officials (see point VI).

- ***Emerging security challenges*** : Security is already at the forefront of the EU-US relationship as witnessed by recent Summits. By definition a strategic theme, security will continue to feature as an integral part of the transatlantic dialogue. Questions such as NATO/ESDP co-operation and an envisaged missile defence system in the context of an overall strategic defence policy review will inevitably figure at the heart of the debate as well as efforts to prevent and manage conflicts in theatres of political instability, regional crises with wider security implications and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- ***Globalisation and the multilateral trading system*** : The key short-term objective is still the launch of the new WTO round. Both the EU and the US share the same aim to strengthen the WTO as the bedrock of the multilateral trading system and avoid over-reliance on bilateral or regional trade agreements. At stake is the WTO's credibility and ability to adapt to the new challenges of the multilateral trade system : How do we accommodate the needs of developing countries ? How do we use trade policy to tackle poverty, hunger and disease ? How do we respond to the concerns of civil society in areas of social and environmental matters and consumer protection ?
- ***Fight against crime and in particular organised crime*** : Crime has become increasingly global, and new information and communication technologies enable criminal groups more easily to operate across borders. This development has contributed to the growth of crimes such as money laundering, child pornography on the Internet and cybercrime in general, terrorism and trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings.

Redressing the situation requires enhanced law enforcement co-operation. This might mean discussing with the United States how to improve police co-operation - while fully respecting fundamental individual rights and in particular the right to privacy - through Europol (including exchange of information for law enforcement purposes), closer contacts between public prosecutors and magistrates in the EU and the US, strengthened legal and judicial co-operation in areas such as extradition, mutual legal assistance and deportation procedures. Trafficking in human beings also raises a number of issues where the EU and the US would benefit from comparing experiences, particularly in the context of the recently signed UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime and its two protocols.

- **Energy - preparing for the future** : In the light of international developments on the energy front, there may be scope for co-operation on certain energy issues. We have a shared interest in achieving greater price stability on the world oil market, including through the producer-consumer dialogue. We could also discuss our respective policies to enhance our security of supply and diversification of resources as well as current evolutions in gas and electricity markets. Various energy-related environment issues such as energy efficiency and renewable energies will also feature high on the agenda, including co-operation on research.
- **Consumer protection issues, in particular food safety** : Both the EU and the US have as an objective ensuring high levels of consumer protection. Issues relating to quality of life, including the assurance of safe high quality food, are of increasing importance to our citizens. In a globalised trading system, it is essential to consider the international dimension of consumer protection, notably in the areas of food safety and e-commerce where we must ensure high levels of consumer protection irrespective of the origin of the product or how transactions are carried out. Other priority issues could include further co-operation under the EU-US Veterinary Agreement and on biotechnology, as well as enhancing dialogue on the appropriate use of the precautionary principle, on labelling issues and on science and technology related aspects.
- **Macroeconomic issues** : Macroeconomic issues are covered by the New Transatlantic Agenda. An exchange of views on macroeconomic issues was in fact planned from the outset of the NTA but has been slow to take off. This aspect deserves to be reconsidered in view of the development of the Economic and Monetary Union since 1995. Suitable issues for an EU-US macroeconomic dialogue should be identified, taking account of the G7/G8 process and the consultation in other international economic fora. The EU and the US could continue to explore the role of employment and social policies in the economic process, particularly in the light of the Lisbon Summit in May 2000.
- **Fight against poverty in developing countries** : The EU and the US share the objectives of sustainable development and reduction of poverty in developing countries even if we do not always agree on the most effective way of reaching these goals. Our work to roll-back the spread of communicable diseases in Africa is a good example of tackling a global threat together and will continue to be at the top of the agenda, bearing in mind the development strategies pursued in the framework of international organisations. We should promote sustainable economic growth and trade liberalisation for the world's developing countries, not least to avoid an aid-dependant culture; to discuss the impact of globalisation on developing countries and how to engage them in the WTO Round; how to support regional economic partnerships through a system of incentives and co-ordinate efforts for debt relief under the HIPC initiative. Improving technical assistance, including the employment of women in micro-projects to pull back the frontiers of poverty, and even better co-ordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief are also key issues.
- **Digital Economy** : During the 1990s, the US economy in particular benefited from an unprecedented level of economic growth which has been credited to a substantial increase in multi-factor productivity, including growing use of information technology related products and services. The advent of the Internet

for use by business and consumers on both sides of the Atlantic is the most visible result of this development. A similar effect of the growth of the information, communications and computer-based industries has taken place in Europe since 1998 when most EU countries opened their communications services markets to full competition. The process of change has a far-reaching economic and social impact at domestic and global levels as well as political consequences, as demonstrated by the eEurope initiative. The transatlantic co-operation will aim at opening the way for the internationalisation of the Internet and its governance. At the same time, lack of confidence from consumers and business could undermine the rapid take-off of e-commerce; appropriate conditions need to be set up, including in the field of jurisdiction, on-line dispute settlement procedures and the fight against cybercrime. EU-US leadership could help develop e-confidence and send a positive message to the rest of the world. Common issues in relation to the restructuring of the information and communications industry, including a review of regulatory frameworks, also remain high on the agenda for the EU-US Information Society Dialogue.

34. The environment is an issue of major importance that will remain a priority in EU-US co-operation, but instead of being singled out, many environmental questions can best be addressed under other strategic themes. In fact, the environment is relevant to the security theme (security problems caused by water scarcity or climate change), to international crime (traffic in endangered species or in hazardous substances) as well as to sustainable development and consumer protection. In addition, there are some key environmental challenges at global level that need to be addressed in their own right, such as climate change.

## VI. DELIVERING RESULTS : IDENTIFYING PRIORITY ISSUES WITHIN THE THEMES

35. Once the broad strategic themes have been established by the Summit, it would be essential for the proper management of the process that one or two specific priority issues should be identified within each theme. Both the selection of themes and the direction of priority issues need to be done at the political level. To ensure continuity and visible results, this limited number of issues should be the main preoccupation of the NTA process in between summits, or even on a multi-annual basis.

- *A rolling work programme*

36. Following the selection of priority issues in agreement with the US, leaders would task officials with deepening the dialogue and/or develop ideas for co-operation within these parameters, largely on a multi-annual basis. With a limited number of "projects" in the pipeline, it should be possible to prepare some results and interesting discussions on a few of the themes at the Summit while allowing more time for follow-up for each priority.
37. In terms of calendar, leaders might request officials to **report back at the next Summit, the following one or even later depending on the subject**. The system of a rolling work programme may have to be adjusted if the frequency of Summits changes. As set out in annex II, leaders could review the priority issues upon proposal from the Senior Level Group but the total number of such issues should not grow in the process. New priorities should only be added if old ones have been completed or dropped.

38. This rolling programme would ensure a top-down approach focusing on accomplishments and results. For instance, leaders could **instruct officials to identify possible solutions to a problem, proposals for co-operation or revert with an EU-US position in advance of international negotiations, all within a specific deadline.**

## VII. MAKING SUMMITS WORK : RESTRICTED FORMAT

39. To avoid the unwieldy format of current arrangements, Summits should consist of a restricted meeting of leaders, which may or may not be followed by a wider meeting with foreign and trade ministers. But the three separate ministerials preceding the leaders' meeting should be abandoned (see annex I for details). It would also be helpful for the EU side to agree basic rules on Summit participation.

Some have questioned the current frequency of EU-US Summits, suggesting that the present six-monthly tempo allows too little time for efficient follow-up and preparation between meetings. At the EU-US ministerial on 6 March 2001, the US stressed the need to reflect on the format and frequency of transatlantic Summits and ministerials. A reduction in the number of EU-US Summits could have a knock-on effect on other high level meetings with third countries. Such meetings have proliferated in recent years. Fewer of them, better prepared, might be more productive.

## VIII. BUILDING PARLIAMENTARY LINKS

40. No discussion of transatlantic relations is complete without a reference to parliamentary links. The role of Congress on foreign policy, regulatory and trade issues of concern to the EU has to be taken into account. Congress often has its own agenda as witnessed by the question of unilateral sanctions for foreign policy purposes or funding for Western Balkans. Any meaningful strengthening of EU-US ties requires a significant effort by the EU to engage with both Senate and House where knowledge of EU matters remains limited.
41. The European Parliament has established links with US legislators through the EP/US Interparliamentary Assembly. These have recently been reinforced by the establishment of a Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue. A deepening of contacts between the European Parliament and both Chambers of Congress should be encouraged to establish common ground and to help overcome the regulatory differences and misunderstandings which often lie at the root of bilateral problems.
42. We should also aim to improve EU lobbying on the Hill via a co-ordinated approach involving both member states and the Commission. Both have an important role to play in nursing links with Congress to promote the European agenda. Indeed, this will be particularly important in dealing with the new Administration and Congress, not least to ensure that wherever possible the member states and the Commission act together in Washington and speak with one voice.

## **IX. ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY**

43. Public diplomacy aside, there is also a need to promote transatlantic dialogues between stakeholders if we are to gain broader recognition of European views. The many contacts between well-established lobbies and interest groups have proved particularly useful when EU positions differ significantly from those of the United States. Given their input into the political process, the existing people-to-people dialogues under the NTA (business, environment, consumers and labour) could be further strengthened - depending on an evaluation of their functioning - to increase awareness on both sides of the Atlantic in relation to deep-seated regulatory and 'cultural' differences. Support for building and expanding people-to-people links, including co-operation in education, contributes to bringing transatlantic relations closer to the citizen.

## ANNEX I

### SUMMIT CHOREOGRAPHY

#### *EU-US Summits : creating a strategic process*

- During the first years of the NTA, **Summits were relatively simple affairs with a restricted leaders' meeting followed by the plenary Summit**, attended by trade and foreign ministers. The addition of a raft of ministerial preparatory meetings (separate sessions of trade ministers and foreign ministers as well as a joint ministerial) is a recent phenomenon dating from the London Summit in May 1998.
- Judging by recent experience, the aim should be to **revert to the original format**, with or without the participation of trade and foreign ministers, in part to encourage Summits to focus on the strategic themes, without too many other distractions, and in part, to slim down what has become a vast bureaucratic symphony with few benefits. Summits should be 'stand-alone' events. Little is done in the ministerial meetings that could not be handled through other ministerial contacts or the Senior Level Group.

#### *Political Relations*

- Meetings under the NTA (Summits/ministerials, Senior Level Group, Task Force) have a cross-pillar remit and thus cover foreign policy issues. Frequently this leads to a certain duplication on the foreign policy front with the EU-US political directors' Troika and the EU-US foreign ministers' Troika which take place each semester. This separate CFSP strand, existing in parallel with the NTA process, is a vestige from the 1990 Transatlantic Declaration.
- Since the Task-Force and the Senior Level Group will have to focus on the management of the strategic themes/priority issues, the CFSP meetings should provide the opportunity for in-depth discussion of current foreign policy issues. This approach would restore the separate value of the CFSP strand, particularly if the foreign ministers' meeting immediately before the Summit is abolished.
- In parallel, the EU-US Troika working groups should become more operational. On the one hand, they could feed into the Political Directors' and ministerial meetings, and on the other, they should engage in the priority issues under the strategic themes.

#### *Trade relations*

- On trade, relations lend themselves less easily to meetings at fixed points in the calendar. Regular and ad-hoc contacts between the EU Trade Commissioner and the US Trade Representative, and/or their respective officials should continue.
- In addition, foreign and trade ministers should hold video-conferences to review progress on the priority issues and generally oversee the agenda-setting in advance of Summits.

## ANNEX II

### IMPROVING THE STRUCTURES OF THE NTA PROCESS

Establishing the strategic themes and the sub-set of priority issues at the level of the Summits would have an immediate 'cascade' effect on the organisation of the EU-US Senior Level Group and the Task-Force. Efforts to modernise the Summits would need to be underpinned by a review of their working methods. Some ideas are set out below on how this could be done.

Without going into detail, it is fair to say the Senior Level Group (Director General/Political Director level) and the Task-Force (Director level) have been valuable 'housekeeping' bodies for the NTA process while only rarely meeting its objective of contributing to a more action and result-oriented co-operation. One of the main criticisms levelled at the two bodies is the blurred division of work which has led to significant overlapping and occasionally repetitive meetings.

#### *NTA Structures : making them work*

The starting point is the need to maintain both the Senior Level Group and the Task-Force as well as the TEP structure. Not only is the web of EU-US relations complex, but the management and implementation of the priority issues under the strategic themes will require close monitoring by officials. Both the Senior Level Group and the Task-Force will have to assume more responsibility for the management of progress on EU-US co-operation.

#### Senior Level Group (overall management)

According to the New Transatlantic Agenda, the mandate of the SLG is 'to oversee work on this agenda and particularly the priority actions we have identified.' In respect of the priority issues, the Senior Level Group should provide the oversight and drive while the Task-Force is responsible for the monitoring and ensuring the operational follow-up.

To offer effective guidance, the Senior Level Group should :

- Assist leaders in the selection of priority issues to be discussed at the Summit and to review progress on the identified issues.
- Meet several weeks before the Summit to take stock of progress, to ensure that targets are being met and that leaders have the necessary input for a substantive discussion of the priorities they have identified.
- In the light of the outcome of the actual Summit, the SLG should meet shortly afterwards to assess the impact for further work and to update instructions to the Task-Force and the TEP Steering Group.

In addition, the SLG officials might envisage holding **one-off SLG meetings on a thematic subject to ensure an in-depth exchange**. Other ideas for the SLG have been floated such as abolishing it altogether or replacing it by a sherpa model. But in either case, this would leave a political gap in our network of contacts and could be difficult to manage, both institutionally and practically on the EU side.

#### Task-Force (operational responsibility)

The Task-Force should be the operational motor of the NTA process by providing day-to-day management, both in terms of organisation and substance.

- The Task-Force would oversee the implementation of the priority issues, in the light of the orientations offered by leaders and the Senior Level Group; the Task-Force would in effect be responsible for delivering results on the various priorities according to the timetable set by leaders. Since the Task-Force organises the work, it might ask experts from both sides to take an issue forward (this method has worked well on communicable diseases and the new economy) and then monitor progress on a regular basis.
- At the same time, the Task-Force should maintain its role as 'clearing house' for all NTA issues by ensuring overall co-ordination. Given that the NTA ranges much wider than the strategic themes, there is a need to continue a broad-based monitoring of work in other sectors under the Task-Force umbrella. To avoid saturation, this can be done on a subject rotating basis or by introducing written replies. In many fields, Commission services work efficiently with the US Administration through their own channels, and the aim is not to duplicate this process but to preserve coherence.

### TEP Steering Group

The TEP Steering Group and its related working groups should continue work under the existing remit as set out in the TEP Action Plan. This includes overseeing the implementation of the TEP action plan and providing a horizontal forum for bilateral consultations, early warning issues and other matters. The TEP Steering Group reports to the SLG.

### *Downsizing*

Finally, it should be mentioned that at the level of officials, a number of adjustments have already been made over the last year to streamline the NTA process by simplifying procedures and making the exercise less bureaucratic. These measures cover :

- fewer meetings of the Task-Force and the Senior Level Group (quality, not quantity);
- shorter and more targeted agendas for these meetings;
- more extensive use of videoconferences;
- shortening and re-ordering the format of the report submitted by the Senior Level Group to the Summit;
- efforts to limit the number of Summit statements and deliverables to avoid inflating the output of Summits.

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