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*Opening remarks*

*Transatlantic Policy Network*

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It is good to be in Washington again. In a different political reality. With a lot of expectations and fully aware of the common challenges ahead.

For quite some time we have been coming to our annual meetings with messages about challenges we Europeans face. We talked about global shifts and our home grown problems that have shaken Europe profoundly. Last year, 2016, was a particularly bad year. But today, we come in the middle of a year which has brought good news.

On the economic side there is a positive move in the European Union. Both in the euro area economies and in the rest of the Union there has been growth, employment is down, inflation is picking up, the ECB is preparing for the new economic reality.

Regarding political dimension of European reality, let me underline that since the end of 2016 we have seen a wave of elections at national level, in which, to say the least, radical, anti European parties have lost. In France, we could see a politician winning the elections under the European Union flag. And we hope this trend will continue.

We also see in Europe a growing support of citizens for the European integration. Here an impulse has come from the Brexit referendum. This referendum has also created an unprecedented unity of the 27 member states.

Maybe the political news is not all good as we can find in Europe one or two governments that practice democracy while bending the rule of law. But the day of change will come.

On migration, there is a visible progress in building long term resilience of Europe to this long term challenge that will stay with us for decades. Still a lot to do at home and outside and make European solidarity work.

We spare no efforts to make our economies more competitive, so we work on deepening and broadening single market hoping to achieve one day a transatlantic digital market.

We have been for a while making some bold steps forward on security which will contribute to the strength and efficiency of NATO. And last but not least, we are moving forward with the badly needed reforms of the architecture and governance of the Economic and Monetary Union.

But we have come to see you not only to share a good news about Europe. When it comes to the transatlantic relationship I would say we live a worryingly interesting time. We must work on it jointly. Also, because we have a common global interest. We must work on renewing our joint commitment to shared political values, to liberal international order, to free trade. We must cement our mutual trust. We live times when trust matters as never before. We hope you would agree with us that national interests can be compatible with global engagement. So yes, we need to go again to a proactive strategic transatlantic agenda.

There is a big space for the role of business in this transatlantic effort. Its basic and let me say irreplaceable role is providing strong bridging mechanisms for a proactive, based on mutual trust, strategic transatlantic agenda.