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“The EU-US Trade and Technology Council: a closer transatlantic cooperation”

Panel: Transatlantic dialogue in the framework of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC)

Meeting of the External Relations Section of the European Economic and Social Committee

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Chair, Colleagues,

Thank you for inviting me to join the discussion today.

And let me start with some general comments.

The COVID-induced crisis accelerated progressive and profound transformations of our societies, which will stay with us as driving forces for our future competitiveness and well-being.

I think here of digital and green transitions, but also about nexus between trade, technology and security.

But crisis exacerbated as well inequalities and revealed dependencies and vulnerabilities in our supply chains, including in the area of health or access to crucial raw materials.

We face distortions in the global level playing field, and we see trading rules applied through a power-based prism. And, we know that only trade based on rules can create win-win outcomes.

And all that has to be seen in the context of growing geopolitical instability.

It is clear that the EU needs aligning with like-minded partners to cope effectively with what geopolitical reality puts on our shoulders, both domestically and internationally.

From this perspective, 2021 has been a breakthrough, a landmark year for transatlantic relations.

In January, we emerged from four years of nearly entirely dysfunctional relations.

Since then we have come through trust building efforts based on a good will, understanding of common interests and responsibilities and shared values.

We have found solutions to multiple legacy files that were harming our relationship and the quality of our life.

In March, we concluded the negotiation of the adjustment of 80 EU's WTO tariff rate quotas as a consequence of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

During the June Summit, we have grounded the Airbus-Boeing dispute and established a Cooperative Framework for Large Civil Aircraft. We also discussed at that meeting how to protect our planet, foster green growth, and drive forward a sustainable global recovery.

Earlier this month, both partners agreed to hit the pause button on the steel and aluminum trade dispute and to start discussions on a new Global Arrangement on Sustainable Steel and Aluminum.

We have been focusing on enhancing and creating new avenues of cooperation to deal with our ongoing challenges, but above all, to identify areas of common long-term interests.

It is in this context that the EU suggested to establish the Trade and Technology Council and the TTC was created during the June EU-US Summit, as an unprecedented platform for a better and more intense cooperation on many issues.

It is a place to identify risks and possible frictions before they materialize, to exchange information and look forward together. The TTC has the potential to be the main channel for communication between us.

Ten groups have been established covering a big range of issues. From artificial intelligence and semiconductors, through export controls, investment screening and supply chains, to global trade and its sustainability. The groups have been given specific tasks, elaborated their work programs covering broad range of issues that can bring benefits to our societies.

By facilitating putting our potential together the TTC platform can strengthen our global agency.

One particularly promising area of cooperation between EU and US is regulatory cooperation. Both partners have immense standardization capacities and huge technological potential.

With the global rise of China we are in a global technological race, and it is increasingly important for our competitiveness to strive for a close transatlantic regulatory space, especially for new technologies.

It does not have to be about harmonization, the TTC effect can be about making our regulations compatible and ensuring that the future global standards are based on democratic values and ethics.

From the protection of labor rights, combatting forced and child labor, to addressing trade-related aspects of climate and environmental action, many relevant aspects of citizens' concerns can be tackled in the framework of the TTC.

I mentioned important dependencies and ongoing shortages in our supply chains. The TTC is a place to identify how much we can do together regarding semiconductors to secure their supply, including in the leading edge capabilities and to reflect on how to avoid a subsidy race in this context.

The Council is and should remain a living platform where new topics can be added if found relevant and other dropped when settled.

It is a bilateral platform but it can and even should reach to other like-minded countries or international organizations when needed. It will allow us to make our cooperation on shared global issues and responsibilities more effective.

The TTC is committed to transparency and engagement with stakeholders.

First virtual round table of EU and US representatives of business community, trade unions and civil society partners took place in Pittsburgh.

Both the Commission and the US International Trade Administration websites have set up designated platforms for stakeholders to facilitate being in touch and engaged. We hope to see stakeholders dialogue across the Atlantic.

I am extremely pleased to see Cathy Feingold, Monique Goyens and Garrett Workman in our panel.

The European Parliament has been following, and will continue to do it in an engaged way and with great attention, all developments of the TTC.

If we have learnt one lesson from the TTIP negotiations it is that transparency is a must when we discuss trade matters.

The International Trade Committee is actively monitoring all the developments in the Trade and Technology Council and its discussions.

Commissioners Vestager and Dombrovskis came for an exchange of views with the International Trade Committee at the end of October where other interested committees took part: the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, and the Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age.

Last week we had as well a plenary debate on the TTC.

Commissioners stressed that both the EU and US are ready to lead the way to setting the rules for 21st century, were it be to promote a democratic model of digital governance or leading the way to setting the rules for the 21st century technologies.

Moreover, the Transatlantic Legislative Dialogue, which gathers Members of the European Parliament and US representatives of Congress, has agreed to establish a subcommittee to follow the work of the TTC. It will complement the scrutiny by our respective parliamentary committees.

MEPs and US representatives of Congress will have the occasion to have an exchange on the TTC during our upcoming 84th EU-US inter-parliamentary meeting scheduled for 11-12 December.

What do we expect from the TTC?

More collaboration, more conversations, a minimization of conflicts, and a greater compatibility between the EU and in the US in terms of how we deal together with the trade and technology challenges.

As the largest economic partnership in the world, when the EU and the US closely collaborate together, it has the potential to create globally a strong "Transatlantic effect".

We stand in an unprecedented window of opportunity where the EU and US can set the foundations for the rules of tomorrow's challenges. Let us seize it!