

Hearing on the Lisbon Treaty

House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe

December 15, 2009

Opening Statement of Chairman Bill Delahunt

This hearing will come to order.

It's with a deep sense of responsibility that I conduct my first hearing as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe -- as I agree with the observation of Secretary Clinton who noted that "***Europe is our essential partner.***"

And the subject of today's hearing - the Treaty of Lisbon – would appear to signal a substantial change in the infrastructure of the EU. And it behooves us to be **especially** aware of the potential implications for that partnership – as there is **no** other relationship closer or **more** significant for the US. And for Europe.

The economic data is empirical proof of that premise. According to the Delegation of the EU to the US, transatlantic flows of trade and investment amount to around \$1 Billion a day. Together, our global trade accounts for 40% of world trade and 50% of global GDP.

Furthermore, it is also my own belief that this partnership is a **predicate** for political and economic stability and the expansion of democratic values **globally**.

The evolution of a European entity has been **dramatic** in an historical context, since Robert Schuman's famous speech in 1951 proposing that France and Germany pool their coal and steel resources in a new organization that other European countries could join.

I won't take this time to review the history that led to the treaty of Lisbon. But I believe that as the evolution and growth of the EU proceeded over time, our partnership with the EU became **ever** more critical and will continue to do so. And as the President recently stated, in response to the final approval of the Treaty "***a strengthened and renewed EU will be an even better transatlantic partner with the US.***

Some experts suggest that the passage of the Lisbon Treaty will have positive implications for US – EU relations; in part due to the creation of new posts, such as the European Council President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs, along with an increased role for the European Parliament. Combined with more authority in specific policy areas, **these** changes will provide the EU with a more **coherent** voice. Given our shared vision for democracy, human rights, and global security, these new allocations of power within the EU system could offer the US a more active and assertive overseas partner in addressing our shared challenges and in promoting our common causes.

While some cast deeper integration and enlargement of the EU as a **threat** to America's leverage over individual member states, it is my own profound conviction that the interest of having a stable and dependable multilateral partner in Europe **outweighs** the short term interests of any particular bilateral relationship.

Why hold a hearing on the implication of the Lisbon Treaty, at this premature juncture? Much ambiguity exists as to the Treaty's implementation within the EU even amongst its own member states – much less in its working relations with other nations? It is indeed accurate to say, as with all significant reform, that only trial and practice will reveal a measure's true character and consequence. But as we've seen all too often in the cases of the "wars on terror and drugs", financial regulation, and global warming, it is our lack of foresight and thoughtful consideration to anticipate and prepare for new challenges and opportunities that diminishes our ability to promote and preserve the interests and well-being of our own citizens. It is our sixth President John Quincy Adams who warned: "***Idleness is sweet, and its consequences are cruel.***"

So proactive inquiry and thoughtful consideration facing the European – US relationship will not only inform us what may occur, but better prepare us for whatever options may be available.

It is with this purpose that we hold today's Hearing. **Understanding** the meaningful reforms encompassed in the Lisbon Treaty will assist our government in making the most out of the US – EU relationship. President Obama has aptly stated that "***[i]n America, there's a failure to appreciate Europe's leading role in the world.***" With this in mind, and by holding this Hearing here today, we are taking Europe, and the EU, and the individual member states seriously.