

TRANSATLANTIC POLICY NETWORK (TPN)

The Partnership Report

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TPN would like to express warm thanks for their generous contributions, support and involvement to its members and to the German Marshall Fund of the United States

THE 2006 TRANSATLANTIC SUMMIT: HALF-FULL OR HALF-EMPTY?

The Vienna Declaration

Transatlantic summiteers meeting in Vienna on the 21st of June gave themselves high marks for having delivered “real results” over the last year from the Transatlantic partnership. Examples, they say, can be found “in the Middle East, Iran, the Western Balkans, Belarus, on the frozen conflicts, and Sudan, as well as in our efforts to promote transatlantic trade and investment under last Summit’s Economic Initiative.” (Full text at: <http://www.eurunion.org/partner/summit/20060621sum.htm>)

They went on to report their decision “to further strengthen our strategic Partnership by adopting a number of priority actions to support our cooperation in the following four areas:

- Promoting peace, human rights and democracy worldwide;
- Confronting global challenges, including security;
- Fostering prosperity and opportunity;
- Promoting strategic cooperation on energy and energy security, climate change and sustainable development.

So far, so good...

TPN welcomes this renewed - and indeed reinforced – commitment, first to the concept of “strategic partnership” itself, and more specifically across a wide range of our common economic, political and security interests. This well reflects TPNs own 10-point, 10-year action plan for strengthened Transatlantic partnership.

But more needs to be done...

TPN remains determined to push for broader and deeper political commitment to strategic partnership on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, the term “partnership” seems recently to have become the declared objective of both the US and Europe in relations with any and sundry third countries – thereby inevitably blurring and debasing its true meaning and value. The risk is that transatlantic relations remain just another foreign policy “subject”, instead of the most important geo-strategic priority for both Europe and the United States.

So what is still missing in the development of a truly strategic XXIst century transatlantic partnership?

- First, a renewed articulation of our common commitments and purposes to replace the New Transatlantic Agenda, which is no longer new but rather a turbulent decade old.
- Second, a framework for the permanent engagement of our political communities.
- Third, a firm commitment whenever possible not just to principles and dialogue, but to *outcomes*, complete with road-maps and time-lines. The most promising focus for this approach is clearly our bilateral economic relations, where TPN maintains its commitment to the completion of the transatlantic market.

Bottom-up or top-down?

TPN well recognise the long-standing debate over bottom-up vs. top-down approaches to building transatlantic partnership – a debate which itself amply demonstrates differing experiences and points of departure. But this debate can also be seen largely as measure of the continuing failure on both sides to actually come to terms with and focus on what is at stake.

TPN’s own experience over the past 15 years surely demonstrates that success will require both bottom-up and top-down engagement and decision-making. Viewed in this light, Vienna 2006 was likewise *both* half-full and half-empty.