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ATLANTIK-BRÜCKE E.V.

“Signal from Hamburg”

XXX German-American Young Leaders Conference
August 24 to 29, 2008 in Hamburg-Blankenese, Germany

Crisis, Conflict, and Change: It’s Time - Again - for Coordinated Transatlantic Action

German and American Young Leaders Conference Tackles Issues with Spirit of Renewed Cooperation

Sixty-four Americans and Germans from top academic, corporate, foundation, government, military and media organizations met from August 24-29 2008 in Hamburg, Germany for the 35th anniversary of the Atlantik-Brücke’s Young Leaders conference “Beyond Transatlantic Evergreens: How Can Young Leaders Influence the Future.”

Participants suggested that events such as the upcoming U.S. Presidential election and 60th anniversary of the National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) hold significant potential for new approaches to building and enhancing Transatlantic relationships rooted in shared values, mutual respect and cooperation. The week-long discussion was marked by a cooperative tone and focused to large extent on the need for strengthened Transatlantic ties, particularly in the face of a shifting global economic and geopolitical landscape.

Attendees agreed that the Transatlantic relationship has struggled to respond to challenges posed by (re-) rising powers (e.g. China and Russia) in an increasingly complex and unstable world. The group discussed and proposed solutions to pressing foreign affairs, economic and social issues, including the current conflicts in Georgia and Afghanistan, and the global crisis in financial markets. In general, the group suggested the following measures as steps to confront new challenges and reinvigorate longstanding Transatlantic relationships:

- In the future, NATO will find itself increasingly involved in conflicts that require a new comprehensive approach that should be integrated with humanitarian operations and civilian capabilities.
- In Afghanistan the Transatlantic relationship faces an immediate, critical test. Success in Afghanistan is needed as a demonstration of our ability to effectively address common security threats.
- Recent crises in financial markets demonstrate the interdependence and vulnerability of global economic systems. In addition, globalisation, competition over scarce resources and energy dependence are sources of concern at home and potential conflict abroad. These issues must be jointly addressed to mitigate potential and real economic and social unrest.

Specific areas of focus and recommendations included:

Facilitating greater European-U.S. cooperation in a changing, multi-polar and globalized world by:

- Implementing a comprehensive approach that includes civilian and military means including new policies, procedures and plans for civil military organization.
- Expanding NATO's concept of security and how it addresses challenges and new threats, including those related to energy, health and cyber security.
- Rebalance military capabilities and develop civilian capabilities to meet new and emerging threats via enforcement, policing, and governance.
- Establishing Transatlantic, Iran-focused initiatives between Iranian and Western Young Leaders to influence a secure, sustainable future by leveraging existing exchanges and initiatives and developing new exchanges when necessary. This is all the more important, since the current situation in Iran, and similarly in Russia and Georgia, indicates that military action is not always a preferred option.
- Securing success in Afghanistan, which is threatened by the lack of political will and U.S. reluctance to work through multilateral organizations, via:
 - Leveraging 60th anniversary of NATO to demonstrate a more coordinated Transatlantic approach to addressing Afghanistan.
 - Enhancing political support in Germany by issuing a binding cross-party statement of support for and commitment to German involvement in this multinational endeavor.
 - Establishing an independent and credible international audit body to report regularly and comprehensively on the situation in Afghanistan in order to advise decision makers and keep the public informed.

Greater economic interdependence and need for harmonization by:

- Strengthening the Transatlantic Economic Council and making the harmonization of rules and regulations of financial markets a priority.
- Incorporating a Transatlantic climate and energy partnership within the framework of the Transatlantic Economic Council to accelerate the development and adoption of clean energy and other technologies, e.g. the:
 - Creation of shared Transatlantic research and development funding pools.
 - Reconciliation of national climate policies.
 - Integration of technology markets.
- Expanding the G8 to include additional leading economies, reflecting a renewed emphasis on economic performance and contemporary relevance instead of historical prominence.
- Encouraging the EU and United States to agree to terms and a timeline for incremental decrease of agricultural subsidies.
- Diverting funding of foreign assistance donor nations from traditional aid to assistance for micro-financing and small and medium-sized enterprises, supporting peoples rather than national leaders.

- Agreeing on minimum business-practice standards and create a CSR rating system to provide transparency for consumers and market-driven incentives for companies to align business goals with social and environmental needs.
- Establishing a shared framework that aligns long-term corporate performance and management compensation.
- In the long-term, establishing a Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement.

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