Transatlantic relations

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The committee adopted the own initiative report by Elmar BROK (EPP-ED, DE) on improving EU-US relations in the framework of a Transatlantic Partnership Agreement. The report stressed that the transatlantic partnership, founded on shared values such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, was "a cornerstone of the external action of the Union". While reiterating the common commitment to combat terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), MEPs nevertheless pointed to a number of irritants that had led to recent disagreements between the two sides.

The report, adopted by a large majority in committee, "underlines the importance of NATO's role…[as] a crucial guarantor of transatlantic stability and security." It also called for close cooperation on the Iran nuclear issue and a common approach to relations with major geopolitical actors including China, India, Japan, Latin America and Russia. And it "encourages the partners to reinforce their common efforts to promote peace, prosperity and progress in the Middle East".

However, the committee did not shy away from criticisms of US policy. It urged the US to extend the Visa Waiver Program to cover all EU citizens and thereby end the "unjustified discrimination between the citizens from old and new EU Member States". It also strongly regretted "the combination of mistrust due to suspected violation of human rights and international law involved in the so-called extraordinary renditions in Europe," and reiterated Parliament's call for "the immediate closure of the Guantánamo detention centre." In another section, the report condemned the "extraterritorial approach that typifies much of the United States' foreign policy and foreign economic/commercial policy".

On the institutional front, the committee wanted to update the fundamental basis of the Transatlantic Partnership by replacing the existing New Transatlantic Agenda with a Transatlantic Partnership Agreement to take effect from 2007. It also reiterated the need to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the Transatlantic Partnership "by transforming the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue (TLD) into a transatlantic assembly," and suggested that the EP should establish a permanent post in Washington DC to maintain permanent contact between the two bodies.