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Bilag  
1

Journalnummer  
400.C.2-0

Kontor  
EUK

2. marts 2005



Til underretning for Folketingets Europaudvalg vedlægges Udenrigsministe-  
riets notat om danske bestræbelser på at styrke EU-USA samarbejdet –  
”39kataloget”.

P. B. Olsen



## Catalogue of proposals for concrete EU-US actions in strategic areas

The European Security Strategy underlines the irreplaceable nature of the transatlantic relationship and that acting together the European Union and the United States can be a 'formidable' force for good in the world. Policy discord on some questions should not keep us from acting on common challenges. EU-US cooperation will be judged on our ability to act together on issues of concern to citizens on both sides of the Atlantic and all over the world. The taking office of the Bush II administration and the new Commission represents an opportunity for identifying ways and means to bringing EU-US cooperation to its fullest. In this vein, and building on the commitments at the EU-US Summit in June 2004, The European Council in November 2004 agreed on the shared responsibility of the EU and the US to address key threats and challenges, such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the Middle East Peace Process and poverty. We should see the visit of president Bush in February and the celebration in 2005 of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) as opportunities to move cooperation forward in strategic areas. This catalogue contains 39 proposals for concrete EU-US action within the four strategic pillars of the New Transatlantic Agenda.

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## **I. Promoting peace and stability, democracy and development around the world:**

### **Supporting the Middle East Peace Process**

We should seize the present window of opportunity to suggest a positive agenda for EU-US cooperation on concrete steps in the short-term as well as for the development of a longer-term strategy for full implementation of the Middle East Road Map and the realisation of the two-state solution. Based on the High Representative's short-term programme of action key areas for immediate cooperation should be to

- *Cooperate on joint political and financial support to Palestinian elections*
- *Coordinate support for restructuring Palestinian security services and for the overall PA reform process*
- *Jointly mobilise financial support to the PA*
- *Undertake joint efforts in dialogue with Israel on short-term measures to increase confidence*
- *Coordinate efforts to ensure stability, security and development of Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal*

The leadership transition on the Palestinian side and the new Israeli government offer a window of opportunity for change, which must be explored. President Bush has reaffirmed his two-state vision and declared that he will use the next four years to realise this vision. We should use the next months to work on and suggest a positive, concrete and realistic agenda for EU-US cooperation in the short term. This should be based in particular on SG/HR Solana's short-term programme of action for support to the Palestinians in the areas of elections, restructuring of the Palestinian security services, overall reform and mobilisation of financial support to the PA. The EU and the US should also coordinate closely in regard to support to the implementation of the Gaza disengagement and discuss areas for concrete cooperation, including on the reestablishment of security as well as development of Gaza in general. In regard to the longer-term strategy for the implementation of the Road Map we need to ensure close coordination between the EU and the US on approach and strategy. We should be aware that a stronger EU-US partnership might overshadow the role of the Middle East Quartet.

### **Consulting on Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA)**

The EU and the US have agreed to meet frequently, including at capital level and in the region, for policy consultation and for sharing information and experiences on the various reform activities in the Broader Middle East. In order to ensure that meetings take place on a systematic basis and that the outcomes of the various consultations are collected, organized and developed, thereby avoiding overlaps, gaps and inconsistencies in the reform efforts, and with a view to translating into action the intentions in the joint declaration on Peace, Progress and Reform in the Broader Middle East issued at the EU-US Summit in June 2004, we should

- *Set up a Transatlantic Clearing House for Reforms in the Broader Middle East*

It is important that international organizations are associated and regional actors are deeply involved in the modernization processes in the Broader Middle East. In the longer term, we should therefore

- *Extend the Clearing House to other actors, including the United Nations and regional partners*

The promotion of democracy and development in the Broader Middle East is an important and challenging commitment

for the EU and the United States. We share the same long-term objectives of political, economic and social progress in the Middle East and Mediterranean region. The EU and the US should take full advantage of the complementarity and synergy between their respective efforts carried out mainly in the context of the US Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership ("the Barcelona process"), the EU Association Agreements, the European Neighbourhood Policy and also through the EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and Middle East.

The G8 summit at Sea Island on June 8-10 2004 and the subsequent establishment of the Forum for the Future demonstrates a new aspiration for transatlantic cooperation in the Broader Middle East. At the EU-US Summit in 2004, we pledged to support peace, progress and reform in the Broader Middle East. Later, we have agreed that representatives from the EU and the US in the region will meet frequently to exchange information and experiences on the various reform activities. Policy consultations at capital level would be held as well. The EU should transform all these intentions into an actual Transatlantic Clearing House for Reforms in the Broader Middle East. The Clearing House would ensure that meetings between senior officials and diplomats from the EU and the US take place on a systematic basis and the outcomes of the various consultations are collected, organized and developed. The aim would be to exchange ideas and practices and, in particular, avoid unnecessary overlaps, gaps and inconsistencies in the various reform efforts in region. The approach would be pragmatic: to improve synergy between distinct and independent endeavours, not to develop strategic coordination or joint programming across the Atlantic. A preliminary meeting for representatives from the US government, the EU Commission and the EU Presidency could explore the idea and scope of the Transatlantic Clearing House. In a longer term, the Clearing House may be extended to other actors, including the United Nations and regional partners. The UNDP and the Arab Human Development Reports are important sources of knowledge and inspiration for reform efforts in the Broader Middle East. Accordingly, it is vital that regional actors are deeply involved in the modernization processes and external actors recognize the need for local ownership. Reforms in the Middle East can be encouraged, but never imposed from the outside.

## Combating terrorism

Since the attack of 11 September 2001 the EU and the US have been working together closely to combat terrorism - a key threat to our common security. The EU-US declaration on combating terrorism from Dromoland Castle sets out the framework for our cooperation with a special emphasis on the important aim of preventing terrorist financing. Building on this common framework, a number of concrete initiatives are proposed to give further impetus to our joint efforts in countering terrorism by developing our cooperation in the respective areas of Homeland Security, full compliance with UN resolutions and Long Term counter-terrorism efforts.

## Homeland Security:

EU cooperation on crisis management is developing, and policy formulation on protection of critical infrastructure has started. Increased EU/US cooperation in this area is therefore even more relevant. The EU and the US should

- *Strengthen the dialogue on responding to terrorist attacks, including with CBRN<sup>1</sup> contaminants*
- *Consider the establishment of a rapid alert system linking bio defence specialists in the EU and the US*
- *Participate on a mutual basis in crisis management exercises*
- *Work together on research and development of homeland security technologies*
- *Share information concerning risk and vulnerability assessment in the area of critical infrastructure*

<sup>1</sup> Chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN)

In the joint EU-US declaration from Dromoland Castle we commit ourselves to a dialogue “on responding to terrorist attacks, including attacks using CBRN contaminants”. At the European Council in December 2004, the EU decided to deepen its cooperation on civil protection. At the same time a European Programme for critical infrastructure protection with transboundary effects is to be established in 2005. The area of Homeland Security lends itself to increased transatlantic cooperation. Progress has been achieved in the areas of law enforcement, intelligence, immigration and transportation security. Cooperation should be extended to the areas of civil protection, including protection of critical infrastructure. The proposal on a rapid alert system linking bio defence specialists in the EU and the US is based on the already established European system RAS-BICHAT. The aim of the RAS-BICHAT system is to communicate reports and information necessary for coordinated efforts against attacks and threats. The system ensures surveillance of bio-terror threats 24 hours a day and manages communication in an emergency. A national contact point in the US as well would be required. The proposal to share information concerning risk and vulnerability assessment in the area of critical infrastructure should be seen in the light of the decision to establish a European Programme for Critical Infrastructure, which includes the identification of critical infrastructure having transboundary effect, the analysis of vulnerabilities and interdependencies, and the outlining of protective solutions. The EU and US should share information concerning risk and vulnerability assessment in this area.

### Full implementation of all UN Conventions and Resolutions, incl. 1373 and 1267:

- *Strengthen our dialogue on how best to support the work of the UN CTC with special regard to the objective of counter-terrorism capacity building in third countries*
- *Share information on technical assistance to ensure coherence, explore synergies and identify good practice*

In the Dromoland Declaration we acknowledge the need for technical assistance to countries where counter-terrorism capacity must to be enhanced in order to ensure the full implementation of all UN Conventions and Resolutions, especially SCR 1373. We should further develop our cooperation in the field, as the EU and its Member States and the US are the main providers of technical assistance in the area of counter-terrorism. We share a common interest in supporting the UN CTC in developing its role as facilitator of technical assistance. In the meantime, there should be improved dialogue and information sharing in order to explore synergies in providing assistance, building on the work already done within the G8 Counter-Terrorist Action Group. The EU has selected 7 priority countries for action, both in the field of political dialogue and of technical assistance. Within the framework of the structured dialogues with the US (in the format of COTER troikas) on the issue of counter-terrorism with the EU, there should be increased focus on the exchange of views on priority countries and sectors of the EU and the US respectively. Therefore, the mechanism is in place for increased cooperation in the field. Furthermore, the EU has decided to establish a network of national experts to respond to requests for technical assistance by third countries. It should be considered to set up a mechanism for sharing information on experts within the field of counter-terrorism.

### Long-term counter terrorism efforts

The rise of extreme fundamentalism as an international security threat needs to be addressed long-term on a global scale. The EU and the US should

- *Share information on strategies to counter root causes of extreme fundamentalism and terrorism*
- *Share information on and coordinate planned initiatives to reduce the long-term terror threat*
- *Join efforts to stabilize states threatened to become “failed States”*

Both in the EU and the US there is understanding of the need for also long-term strategies to address the socio-economic factors that contribute to the continued rise of extreme fundamentalism and extend the recruitment base for terrorism.

Several EU and US development initiatives within this area are already under implementation. The inherent long-term perspective of development assistance cooperation lends itself as a strategic instrument for addressing recruitment and tacit support for terrorism. This should be a core theme of a EU/US dialogue on the subject. Compared to the extensive exchange of information and coordination taking place between the EU and the US on our police, intelligence and military efforts, the exchange of information on long-term strategies as well as specific interventions is more limited. Specific interventions are at the most coordinated locally (as in Jakarta, Indonesia). Shared understanding and analysis of the situation in countries specifically targeted as well as a shared strategic view of what needs to be done, potentially increases the efficiency and impact of our efforts. Hence, the EU and the US could commit themselves to exchanging information on their respective long-term strategies towards countering the root causes of terror and on planned specific interventions. This could also lead to exploring possible areas for joint or coordinated efforts as well as on sharing lessons learned. The venue for such an exchange would preferably be through already existing transatlantic structures for information exchange between the two sides.

### Countering proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction

With resolution 1540 the Security Council has codified the obligations, which states must fulfil to effectively counter proliferation. The challenge now is not to invent new concepts or regimes but to assist states in ensuring compliance with these obligations and to reach out to states currently not parties to key non-proliferation, export control and other WMD related regimes. With this common aim the EU and the US should

- *Develop common criteria for assessing compliance in the UN 1540-framework.*
- *Attune offers of assistance as well as targeted political pressure on third states of particular concern.*
- *Work together in PSI (Proliferation Security Initiative)*

The unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on 28 April 2004 affirmed that proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The effectiveness of UNSCR 1540 as a universal non-proliferation instrument and the work in the 1540 Committee would be significantly enhanced if common transatlantic criteria for assessing compliance in the UN 1540-framework were established. Work to this end should be initiated among experts, e.g. through American experts joining their European colleagues in CONOP/CODUN. As important as defining non-compliance is how to rectify it. Developing the right instruments to address and assist states in non-compliance and using them efficiently is a common transatlantic objective. A coordination mechanism – preferably in New York - to attune and where possible combine efforts in this regard would vastly enhance the outreach effectiveness of our actions. We should keep the common commitment to the PSI on the top of our agenda. As PSI develops we should continue to explore how we as transatlantic partners can sustain and develop the initiative to further our common mission of non-proliferation. The EU can contribute by promoting the Interdiction Principles to new partners and maintaining a high level of operational activity, including through regional exercises.

### " Winning the Peace "

Unsolved conflicts affect the lives of millions and often have global ramifications. Managing crises and building peace afterwards is a common objective. To win the war as well as the peace demands complex responses combining military and civilian instruments and assessing short and long term aspects. On both sides of the Atlantic more elaborate approaches are being developed to this end based on experience gained. The EU and the USA should promote cooperative ties between our crises management structures in order to

- *Explore common concepts, training and exercises in the field of crisis management*
- *Improve our own capabilities as well as those of other players (UN, AU) in this field*

The EU and the US should develop practical cooperation on capacity development by sharing information and lessons learned in areas like training, exercises and crises management concepts. As a first step direct contacts should be initiated between the EU crisis management structures of the Council and the Commission and the US Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization at the Secretariat level. Cooperation could be facilitated through political supervision (in the EU by CIVCOM/PSC) and by a MoU as appropriate. A joint seminar on concepts and lessons learned on capacity development may provide a useful starting point. Other organisations, including the UN and the AU, could also benefit from such activities. Both the EU and the US support capacity development in regional organisations such as the AU. Closer EU-US liaison in this field could ensure higher efficiency of assistance. A joint task force of experts at the secretariat level could be established. The UN High Level Panel recommends the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission aiming at improving international proactive assistance to states in conflict and post-conflict situations. The EU and the US share the objectives set out for the Peacebuilding Commission and should work together towards its creation and on UN capacity building to meet its objectives.

### **- Case in point: Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan we are confronted with the global challenges on the scale of one nation: Peace building in a post conflict environment based on national ownership and priorities; the fight against terrorism through addressing root causes as well as threats from actual terrorists; the fight against poverty, underdevelopment and disease; and the need for social, political and economic reform. A great number of states on both sides of the Atlantic are engaged individually, combined or as members of the UN, EU or NATO in providing security for and reconstructing Afghanistan. Making it work in Afghanistan will require perseverance and resolve. Afghan development strategies and implementation plans are a cornerstone of international assistance to Afghanistan. Together, the EU and the US should therefore

- *Promote the Berlin Work Plan and assist Afghan authorities in priority areas such as counter narcotics*

The Great Lakes region in Africa, the Sudan and Iraq pose other common challenges.

## **II. Responding to global challenges**

### **Stemming epidemics and their consequences**

The great epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Measles and Polio first and foremost threaten the lives and the development of the world's poorest people and nations. The EU and the US should continue to take the lead in the fight against these epidemics. Securing a global success in the fight against a preventable disease attest to our ability to unite with the World for a better future.

The continued spread of HIV/AIDS is closely linked to the lack of efficient women controlled protection. Developing a safe, effective, and affordable virus-killing microbicide could help women protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections, most critically HIV/AIDS. A united effort to further its development could within this decade give the world's women a way to effectively protect themselves. To help end the spread of HIV/AIDS, and with the aim of ensuring the global availability no later than 2010 of a female controlled protection against HIV/AIDS-transmission, the EU and the USA should together commit themselves to

- *Strengthen existing EU/US research cooperation in Microbicides, including through more funding*

In the wake of the HIV/AIDS-epidemic 15 million children have already lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. The number of HIV/AIDS-related orphans is now rising dramatically in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. In Africa alone it is estimated that there will be 18 million orphans by 2010. It is of vital importance that countries facing a rapid rise in the number of HIV/AIDS-related orphans by 2010 have the capacity and opportunity to adequately take care of these children within the framework of their existing social schemes. Asking relevant international development agencies to set specific targets together with partner countries for what needs to be done at the country level and help focus and ensure the needed international assistance accordingly, the EU and the US should commit themselves to

- *Support the development of country action plans for HIV/AIDS orphans*

Polio is set to be the next disease to succumb to human ingenuity. We must ensure that the opportunity presenting itself in this decade to eradicate Polio is not lost due to the latest setbacks in especially the immunization programs for Africa. By putting pressure on relevant countries to step up or continue to focus on the fight against Polio and - if needed - ensure additional funding is made available for the immunization programs, together the EU and the US should be committed to

- *Encourage and support countries to followthrough on the eradication of Polio no later than 2010*

*Microbicides* is a product applied vaginally against virus infections. It works by killing or immobilizing virus. Women now account for more than half of individuals infected with AIDS globally - and married women are now amongst those most at risk of HIV transmission. Both the EU and the US fund microbicide research. However, more could and should be done to accelerate its development.

The number of *children orphaned by AIDS* worldwide will likely reach at least 25 million by 2010. The vast majority of these children will grow up in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe in countries lacking the capacity and opportunity to take care of them adequately. It will take a long-term effort to strengthen the often weak and resource strapped health systems and social services in these countries to handle the rising burden of HIV/AIDS-related orphans.

The eradication of *Polio* could help end needless human suffering, and would constitute a high-return monetary investment for developed as well as developing countries alike. Brought under control through rigorous immunization programs in most countries, Polio still threatens some of the poorest people in the World. Eradication was set to be achieved in 2000 by the WHO. However, for the time being Polio is again on the rise in Africa, propelled by the weakness of regional health systems and the suspension of immunization in some areas.

### **Slowing climate change: Energy – Hydrogen and Fuel Cells**

Different approaches on the Kyoto Protocol should not keep us from taking joint action in other areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing diversity of energy also carries the potential of lessening our strategic dependency on fossil resources. In order for the EU and the US to deepen cooperation in the area of new energy technologies including Hydrogen and Fuel Cell technology the EU and the US should

- *Remove barriers for co-operation between universities and industry on both sides of the Atlantic*
- *Consider this field as a possible spearhead area for co-operation on standards, IPR and patents*
- *Exchange lessons learned/best practices on public support for strategic research on new technologies*
- *Exchange lessons learned/best practice on public-private co-operation in the field*
- *Chart opportunities for EU-US co-operation in developing new energy technologies*

General differences on how best to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should not stand in our way for deepening cooperation on hydrogen and fuel cell technology. There is a widespread wish among universities and companies to strengthen the transatlantic dimension of their activities further. Legal impediments for the free flow of knowledge in the field across the Atlantic should be subject to a critical review. This includes ensuring that new technologies and products only need to be approved one time by preparing common approval schemes based on international standards. As regards IPR (Intellectual Property Rights)/patents problems can arise from the fact that the patent system differs from Europe to the USA. For example the rules of "first to file" in Europe differs from the American "first to invent" principle. EU-US exchange of road maps etc. would increase transparency on existing opportunities for coordination and cooperation in relevant areas - and agreement to leave other areas to open competition. A way forward could be to let the European Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technology Platform meet with the corresponding bodies in the US responsible for defining new programmes. One aim could be to identify best practices for enhancing the use of hydrogen and fuel cell technology (e.g. setting up regional clusters, 'lighthouse projects', or fiscal incentives). In the US, Government incentives for strategic research follows schemes where different competing clusters of cooperating companies and research institutions are being supported to pursue research & development to reach comparable goals. The model primarily used in EU framework programmes consists in bringing together a large number of actors in big networks, integrated projects or technology platforms. It has been claimed that the EU-model endangers industry participation due to the reluctance of private companies to share know-how in open-ended settings.

### **Co-operating on research and large projects including ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor)**

The solution to a number of major global problems depends in part on improving economic and health conditions through scientific and technological progress. The Humane Genome Project successfully completed in 2003 is an example of this and ITER potentially another. We should take advantage of the possibilities we have at hand. In order for us to greatly promote cooperation on crucial fusion energy research the EU and the US should

- *Reach early agreement on the geographic location of the project in Cadarache, France*

The EU and the US should engage in an on-going dialogue to identify and plan co-operation on large-scale research programmes of mutual interest. One possible area of co-operation could be the concept of "New Safe Medicines Faster" with the aim of creating new methods of developing and testing new medicines faster without compromising on quality and safety. We should maximize the potential benefits of a common approach between the EU and the US in this area and

- *Cooperate on new methods for faster development and testing of new safe medicines*

### **III. Contributing to the expansion of world trade and closer economic relations**

The economic relation between EU and US is the most important in global trade. Barriers that hinder the flow of goods, services and capital between EU and US must be reduced or eliminated. In this

regard, the adoption at the EU-US Summit in June 2004 of a joint declaration on strengthening our bilateral economic partnership was important. We should further transatlantic economic cooperation and make it more concrete. The stakeholder consultations in the EU and the US constitute an important step in this direction. The EU and the US should also

- *Set up equal, transparent and stable investment conditions*
- *Achieve convergence on competition rules*
- *Assure a level playing field in the area of public procurement*
- *Further the transatlantic regulatory cooperation*

At the EU-US Summit in June 2004 we agreed to look at new ways to make the transatlantic economic relationship stronger, and to give it new impetus. The EU and the US launched a consultation process inviting interested parties to engage in a discussion of concrete ideas on how to further transatlantic economic integration, including by spurring innovation and job creation, and by better realising the competitive potential of the economies and enterprises. Building on this consultation process, transatlantic trade and economic cooperation should be furthered and made more concrete. Focus should be on 'WTO+' issues – i.e. going beyond what can be obtained multilaterally in the WTO by consensus among all members - and on regulatory cooperation. Potentially negative repercussions for the WTO-negotiations will thereby be avoided, and at the same time, the transatlantic process might contribute to maturing issues for future inclusion under the WTO umbrella. As to regulatory cooperation concrete possibilities for potential agreements should be defined. EU and US should aim at working from the broadest possible basis - inter alia by focussing at mutual recognition of educations and qualifications, convergence of technical standards, common authorisations, smooth transfer of human capital, procedural convergence etc.

#### **IV. Building bridges across the Atlantic**

##### **Extending and deepening the Knowledge Society**

The challenges of globalisation such as delocalisation demand global responses. Increased transatlantic co-operation in the development of a knowledge society, understood as research, development and education, is one such response. The US and the EU should co-operate to improve the creation and use of existing knowledge. Increased mobility and competition should be the governing principles for such a co-operation.<sup>2</sup>

As the starting point for a more thorough analysis for improved co-operation we should

- *Increase the scope for mutual recognition of diplomas*
- *Standardise translating of marking scales at university level*
- *Expand existing and develop new student exchange programmes between the EU and US*
- *Discuss common framework for the education of researchers*

Familiarity with the emerging system of European higher education following the Bologna reform is slowly increasing. There are still obstacles for the recognition of European Bachelor degrees abroad. This is now an issue for negotiation and

<sup>2</sup> Agreements between two universities on having a common pool of counsellors of researcher students.

the Fulbright system of scholarship committees is helpful in this respect. Furthermore, the area for vocational education and training could also be the subject for further analysis. Marking scales vary among European universities. A first step to enhance better cooperation across the Atlantic will be a harmonisation of European scales. This is now emerging by introducing the ECTS-scale or ECTS-based scales at European universities. A next step would be creating a "translation scale" between the ECTS-scale and the American scale. EU and US should investigate further the potential for such a scale. Bilateral cooperation between European and American universities is currently supported through the Fulbright programme, the Erasmus Mundus programme and a number of specific agreements. In order to enhance cooperation and improve the educational level and outlook of both American and European university students, existing and new exchange programmes should be developed, including analysing the potential of facilitating entry, residence (study/work) and taxation. Furthermore, the establishment of European Colleges in US should be considered. Many research students from the EU spend a year at an American university as part of their doctoral programme. This cooperation should be further developed. Networks between postgraduate schools for research students have to be better supported and less formal ways may be used too. The French-German system of "Co-tutelle doctoral" may be used as a model for less formal co-operation.

### Strengthening interparliamentary dialogues

Parliamentarians play an important role in increasing mutual understanding across the Atlantic.

The interparliamentary relationship between the European Parliament and the US Congress is the longest and most intensive in the history of the European Parliament (Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue). The actual experience of parliamentarians, not least from national European parliaments, of the day-to-day business of other parliaments and constituencies can greatly contribute to understanding political realities on each side of the Atlantic. To this end, the EU and the US should

- *Encourage expanding inter-parliamentary exchange programmes, joint debates and visits*
- *Encourage inter-parliamentary debates on sectoral issues of common interest*

The European-Parliament has already established an extensive Inter-parliamentary dialogue with the US Congress. National parliaments in the EU member states have also in varying degrees established contacts and exchanges with the US Congress. The structure of the different dialogues has primarily developed as a result of initiatives taken by parliaments themselves. The Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue aims to strengthen and enhance the level of political discourse between European and American legislators. The Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue includes bi-annual meetings of European Parliament and US Congress delegations and a series of teleconferences, organised on specific topics of mutual concern. The Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue's Steering Committees maintains contacts with the Senior Level Group (SLG). It is important to bear in mind and respect the independence of the national parliaments as well as the European-Parliament when thinking of ways to promote Inter-parliamentary dialogues. But there is scope for Governments to encourage parliaments to further develop relations across the Atlantic. In relation to the European-Parliament it could more specifically be considered to encourage the European Parliament to establish a system of secondments (exchange) of committee staff members dealing with issues of common interest.