

EU-US Summit 2010

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On Saturday 20 November 2010, the EU-US Summit was held in Lisbon, following the NATO summit. This was the first summit under Lisbon Treaty rules and the first since the November 2009 summit in Washington. President Obama had declined an invitation to participate in an EU-US summit in Madrid in May 2010 under the Spanish Presidency, as the US administration felt that there were no pressing issues to be discussed at that time.

Some commentators in the press criticised the speed with which this year's two-hour summit was held, following the NATO summit, viewing it as "an afterthought" (*Time* magazine) and a "lightening-fast" summit (*Deutsche Welle*). Others ascribed the brevity of the summit to the more streamlined agenda and the clearer lines of responsibility on the EU side under Lisbon Treaty rules, which led to greater efficiency in dealing with the matters arising.

The structure differed from pre-Lisbon summits, as Presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy and High Representative Catherine Ashton represented the EU. In a clear break from pre-Lisbon days, responsibility for foreign policy in the EU no longer rests with the six-month revolving Presidency, which is currently held by Belgium. In March 2010, speaking at a high-level conference on the transatlantic relationship, Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State, Anne-Marie Slaughter, welcomed the creation of the role of the High Representative. At the recent summit press conference in Lisbon, Commission President Barroso said that the answer to the famous Kissinger question, posed when he was US Secretary of State, of who the US should call on foreign policy issues, was now Catherine Ashton.

In a press statement in advance of the summit, President Obama said that the "substantive agenda shows that the transatlantic friendship is more important than ever". He outlined the main points of this agenda as:

- (i) Dismantling remaining obstacles to trade in the transatlantic market;
- (ii) Transatlantic cooperation on security, in particular cyber security;
- (iii) Increasing cooperation on green and clean technologies, and coordinating even more closely on a series of global challenges;
- (iv) Foreign policy issues such as Iran, Sudan and the Middle East Peace Process;
- (v) International Development.

The conclusions of this summit were short and to the point, and conveyed European Council President Herman Van Rompuy's desire to get things done and to move the partnership forward beyond diplomatic expressions of friendship.

On the economy, the partners took steps to increase trade and investment through the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC), which was established at the 2007 summit. The

TEC was mandated to streamline regulation, encourage innovation, eliminate barriers to trade and investment and to report on progress achieved in 2011.

Building on agreements at the G20 summit in Seoul last week, the partners reaffirmed their commitment to “pursue policies that avoid unsustainable imbalances” and “avoid competitive devaluation or exchange rate policies that do not reflect underlying economic fundamentals.”

In a similar vein, the EU-US Energy Council was tasked with the development and faster deployment of clean energy technologies, the promotion of energy security and the diversification of supply.

The partners confirmed their shared vision on the future of security. An EU-US Working Group on cyber security and cyber crime was established. The leaders also welcomed the agreement of NATO's Strategic Concept, which further strengthens the EU-NATO strategic partnership. President Obama remarked that as NATO has agreed that the transition to Afghan responsibility will begin early next year, the EU's role as a major donor to Afghanistan and a trainer for police forces will become more important.

Visa policy was also discussed at the summit, and leaders prioritized citizens' security in the forthcoming negotiation on a Passenger Name Record (PNR) agreement. The transfer of passenger data has caused ripples in the EU-US relationship, particularly as the US privacy regime is not considered by the European Parliament to be as stringent as that of the EU. In recent weeks the European Parliament called for caution in exchanging airline passenger data, and in advance of the summit there was a call from the Parliament to “explore less intrusive alternatives” than the collection of PNR data. In addition, the transatlantic partners pledged to continue work towards negotiating a comprehensive agreement on data protection.

At a global level, the leaders discussed common efforts to promote security, to promote stability in Afghanistan, to address the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to strengthen the Middle East peace process.

Commenting on the summit, President Obama concluded “this summit was not as exciting as other summits, because we basically agree on everything.” Anthony Dworkin at the ECFR points out however, because the relationship is so broad, “there are no fundamental questions about their relationship, so there is no urgency about repairing them.”