Against the backdrop of President Trump’s controversial trade agenda—threatening to upend NAFTA, imposing ‘national security’ tariffs on our closest allies, calling the European Union a major ‘foe’ because of trade—the Lugar Diplomacy Series held a timely meeting with NAFTA’s chief negotiator, former U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills.

In his opening remarks to a group of Washington-based diplomats from some of America’s most important trading partners, Sen. Lugar noted, “At this time bedrock principles that have informed international trade negotiations for decades are being questioned by the Trump Administration and others.

“I have always believed that lowering international trade barriers and maximizing the exchange of goods, services, and human talent is fundamental to the economic security and living standards of citizens of every country. But it also is fundamental to global security, because strong trade relationships bind nations together in positive ways and prevent conflict,” he said.

The meeting was the 10th in the Lugar Diplomacy Series, held Tuesday, July 17, at the downtown offices of the Meridian Institute, a nonprofit organization that brings together diverse interests to solve global problems and a charter sponsor of the LDS.

In his introduction for Ms. Hills, who served as HUD Secretary under President Ford and USTR under Pres. George H.W. Bush, Sen. Lugar noted, “Her knowledge of trade issues and the intricacies international trade negotiations is unsurpassed in the United States. In fact, few people in history have been as instrumental in lowering international trade barriers.” Since leaving government she has run a successful consulting firm, Hills & Co.

As with all Lugar Diplomacy Series events, the talk was off-the-record to facilitate open and candid commentary on sensitive foreign policy topics. The Lugar Diplomacy Series was launched in October 2016 to strengthen diplomatic relationships and to provide diplomats with important insights into the U.S. government and policy from leading American figures in both domestic and international affairs.