Key Issues for TTIP: Senator Lugar offers introductory remarks at the German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Talk on transatlantic energy security with Special Envoy Amos Hochstein

May 27, 2015

Through the Trans-Atlantic Energy Action Project, The Lugar Center and the German Marshall Fund of the United States are partnering to improve understanding of trans-Atlantic opportunities for energy security and economic cooperation, particularly in relation to the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The project’s first event in 2015 featured a discussion on transatlantic energy security with U.S. Department of State Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Amos Hochstein. Former United States Senator Richard Lugar offered introductory remarks.

See pictures from the event here and watch the event here.

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-Former U.S. Senator Richard Lugar

Senator Lugar’s full remarks appear below:

"On behalf of the German Marshall Fund and The Lugar Center, I welcome you all to this conversation on energy security in the trans-Atlantic arena. It is a special pleasure to welcome Amos Hochstein, the State Department Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs, and Laure Mandeville, the U.S. Bureau chief for Le Figaro to moderate the discussion."
With many crises consuming attention in far-flung parts of the world, it can be tempting for policymakers to become complacent about the strength of the trans-Atlantic alliance. That would be a mistake. Rather, continual deepening and widening of the Alliance is required to meet the economic, diplomatic, and military challenges of today and tomorrow.

Cooperation on energy security is fundamental to strengthening the Alliance. Nearly ten years ago in Kiev, I remember then Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko pointing to a map of gas pipelines with a warning that Russia would cut off the gas in the middle of winter – an act that she viewed as an existential threat to her country. Parenthetically, I’d add that President Obama joined me on that particular visit to Ukraine, his first to the region. Russia did so a few months later on January 1, 2006. It did it again in January 2009. In fact, many countries of Central and Eastern Europe faced gas or oil supply disruptions and political ultimatums over supply. In those days, a highly motivated but insufficiently prominent group of U.S. diplomats struggled to make headway; Brussels deferred to EU Member State governments for action; and too many EU Member State governments tended to advance their own interests at the expense of their neighbors.

I share that bit of background to explain why Amos has two titles: first, Coordinator for International Energy Affairs and second, Special Envoy. Prior to creation of the Coordinator position, the highest ranking energy-specific official at the State Department was an office director. That meant that energy failed to attain sufficient priority on the Secretary’s agenda and the Department had insufficient ability to build expertise across its Bureaus. In other words, our diplomatic apparatus was not prepared to meet one of the most pervasive national security concerns our nation faces.

To complement the global remit of the Coordinator, we also felt that the inter-linked challenges of energy security in Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia required a specifically-designated Envoy for the region. The energy security of our allies in Europe threatened their economic vitality and took a toll on NATO, while the independence of nations further east was imperiled by dependence on Russia. Progress required hard labor of constant U.S. diplomacy between capitals and reach to the highest levels of governments.

Establishment of the Coordinator and Special Envoy positions would not have been possible without bipartisan cooperation in Congress. I give special thanks to then Senator Joe Biden’s partnership in this area.

Fortunately, the Europe of 2015 is far more cognizant and motivated to solve energy security concerns than was the Europe of 2005. I commend our allies for the real progress being made from interconnector pipelines, to the Third Energy Package, to the Southern Corridor. In my judgment, the United States has played an important role as a partner, honest broker, and sometimes thorn in the saddle. The role for U.S. diplomacy is as strong as ever, and Amos’s team is at the spearhead of that effort.
We also should expand the set of tools we have to help Europe diversify to build more competitive markets. Prior to leaving the Senate, I offered legislation to expedite LNG export permitting to Europe, and I renew that call today. The U.S. has long-benefited from its advocacy of open markets and free trade. Taking a step backward toward resources nationalism of our oil and gas wealth will ultimately undermine our long-term energy security and economic interests abroad. We also should consider the ways in which the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, can advance our mutual energy security interests. Trade in ideas, technology, and energy services will increase healthy competition between the U.S. and Europe, as well as strengthen each of our industries on a global scale.

Once again, thank you, Amos and Laure for joining us today. I also thank the European Union’s delegation in Washington for its partnership.

Click here to learn more about the Trans-Atlantic Energy Action Project.

This project is funded in part by the European Union.