

CSIS/GLOBAL HEALTH DIALOGUE
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Remarks by Jim Kolbe

Mr. Minister, Secretary General distinguished guest - Bon soir, merci beaucoup - to speak in French would cause you all to flee.

I speak in s as a small cog in the large wheel of foreign assistance, I usually get to travel for 24 plus hours to meet with local people on the ground in some of the most underdeveloped places in the world, like East Timor, Darfur, Sri Lanka, or Haiti. I had to choose between a six-hour journey to my cabin in Arizona, or a six-hour flight to this beautiful cultural center of fashion and cuisine. As I considered the options, I decided I would sacrifice and eat turbot tonight, and get to return to tamales and the unparalleled beauty of Arizona next weekend. Next time, I will have to host you in Tucson and we can eat food from a culinary center of the U.S.

Seriously, it is a pleasure to be with you this evening. It is important for us to come together and develop our working relationships, exchange common ideas and debate differences of opinion. Debating differences is something we do a lot in Congress, so I should be well suited for that part of this meeting.

Our cooperation and relationships have been vital to global health. In a meeting last week, UNAIDS Executive Director Dr. Peter Piot said to me and the senior Democrat on my subcommittee, Nita Lowey, that, “2005 was the least bad year in the fight against AIDS”. Obviously, there is no such thing as a good year in fighting AIDS, but it was not as bad as all the other years prior.

How could Peter make this “semi-hopeful” assessment? I believe in very large measure it is due to the increased commitment of the people in this room. Such commitment is not new in the Anglo-American-French relationship.

In 1940, Winston Churchill came to the U.S. Congress, and in a speech which launched the idea of Lend-Lease, he said: “Give us the tools and we will complete the job”. What transpired was a massive transfer of resources to Britain to fight the Nazis in return for long term leases for military forces around the globe – bases which, even today, are a vital part of our national defense structure. We were able to give Europe a hand up instead of a hand out. I believe this philosophy is one that all developing countries can adopt when deciding how to allocate resources for foreign assistance. By giving others the tools to complete the job, we can make more progress than if we try to do it alone.

The U.S. and Europe, even with differing constituencies and philosophies, have consistently led in the development and promotion of health around the world. This leadership could not be shared without the hard work of finding common understanding and building the relationships we are fostering in this room. But, we must take the time and make the effort to understand the problems that each of us face.

I am often asked by interest groups promoting development of health or education in one part of the globe or another why the U.S. doesn't give more to foreign assistance. But, I am also asked – and much more frequently – by those I represent back home, why we give so much. The answer to both questions is that we do about as much as American political reality allows. As I draw the outlines of our foreign assistance appropriations bill each year, it is always a struggle to find the right balance that will assure a solid majority for the bill's passage. This is not to say that Americans are not generous. Whether it is the tsunami in Aceh, starvation in Zimbabwe, or an earthquake in Kashmir, Americans have always responded generously to foreign disasters. But, then there is the reality of Katrina, and with it, the pressing needs of rebuilding our own shattered society in the Gulf States.

It is this political reality that dictates how support for foreign assistance is garnered in Congress. The same is certainly true in the parliaments of Europe. Therefore, we must better understand each other's limitations to know how we can complement our efforts abroad. It is this process of understanding that helps me to know when the fight is worth taking on in Congress, and when it is one that I can take a pass on.

With the collective leadership of Europe and the United States in world affairs comes shared responsibility. We have a history of common goals and common values. Cooperation between the U.S. and Europe has advanced democracy and freedom around the world. Today, we see elected leaders in the nations of the former Soviet Union, where brutal dictators ruled less than two decades ago. We see new democracies emerging in the Middle East, where none has existed in all of their history. It is this shared vision that creates a sense of acceptance from the rest of the world toward our approach. It says to developing countries that, if you are to be successful competing in our circles of trade and economic freedom, you must strive to become democratic, be committed to the rule of law, and take care of your own citizens.

In most cases, the U.S. and Europe are in agreement on issues of global health. We care about the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We are committed to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. We understand the relationship of economic growth and rule of law to improved lives in developing countries. But, we also have different approaches to global development. These differences should not be seen as a hindrance to cooperation, but rather, as a means to complement the work of the other.

For example, Congress appropriates funds to specific sectors and regions for direct development assistance. We want to see specific results tied to specific projects. We emphasize accountability from recipients. Generally speaking, Congress requires our aid agencies to do what might be referred to as the "harder side" of assistance. Direct budget support for countries is not seen in a favorable light by most legislators. Our annual appropriation bill is devoid of such assistance – with a few notable exceptions. With the United States as the largest donor of development assistance in the world, I think it is my personal responsibility as chairman of the committee that writes the assistance legislation to protect the political flank of my colleagues who support foreign assistance by keeping it direct and accountable.

Our colleagues on this side of the Atlantic look at foreign assistance somewhat differently. Specifically, they view budget support in a different light. We need to appreciate this even as we ask Europe to understand the political difficulties budget support faces in our Congress. Together, we can meet the needs of developing countries and form an interlocking web of support.

We can see this approach working well with the Global Fund on AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Now, we find Europeans, Japanese, U.S. and international health experts sitting down with those responsible in receiving countries for health systems to discuss where funds are needed and where the gaps are that donors might fill.

Today, we face new health concerns that threaten the entire world – developed and developing. We watch, anxiously and actively, the spread of Avian Influenza from one part of the globe to the next. Thus far, it has not reached the western hemisphere, but it is only a matter of time before it is found in our bird populations as well. We must be prepared for the very real possibility that this virus could soon mutate into a form that allows for human to human transmission in a state as viral as it is within certain bird populations. When – if – this happens, the world could be facing an epidemic the likes of which it has not faced since 1918, and perhaps, since the Middle Ages. As a witness testifying before my committee stated last week, “If you are a bird, this is already a pandemic”.

We have both welcomed the development of the Global Fund as a tool to provide better coordination of donors in developing countries hit hard by health concerns. But, it also helps us leverage additional matching funds. For appropriators in Congress, this is a powerful message that our money will be matched by other donors and thus, become a part of something larger and more cost effective.

The U.S. and Europe have proven themselves to be reliable partners in development related to military engagements. In Bosnia, the U.S. and Europe worked together to keep the peace and rebuild conflict-torn neighbors. At this moment, Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan are providing good examples of how Europe and America can work together for a shared goal using the resources of development assistance with our security forces.

Lest we despair too much about the state of the U.S.-E.U. relations, I am reminded of how much better it is now than in April, 2003 – just three days after U.S. forces invaded Baghdad, in fact –when I addressed the Transatlantic Policy Network and said that the transatlantic partners were “desperate” for something to bring us together and not drive us further apart. Today, I would not characterize the relationship as one driven by “desperation”, but rather cautious cooperation.

U.S.-European cooperation relies on common strategic interests. But, it is the mix of shared values and perceived threats that determine our individual responses to the challenges we face. Sometimes we are on the same path, as we are today in facing the

threat of nuclear proliferation in Iran. At other times, we diverge, as we did on responding to Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

That cooperation can be a mixed bag. For example, in responding to the challenge of development in the poorer parts of the world, we have a spotty record. The Global Fund stands as a good example of how well we can work together. On the other hand, our approach to trade and market access in developing countries has been very different. Similarly, with the Kyoto Accord, as see the environmental challenges of developed and developing countries through a very different prism than Europe.

But, I think we should agree that our collective successes have been more powerful. We should learn from them, duplicate them, and replicate them.

Let me return for a moment to the example of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and joint civil-military units deployed throughout much of Afghanistan. The goal is to expand the reach and enhance the legitimacy of the central government in outlying provinces of the country. The method used is to simultaneously improve security while facilitating reconstruction and development efforts. PRTs are just one element in a broad civil-military strategy, which includes continued Coalition combat operations, the expansion of NATO/ISAF, progress on the UN-led Bonn process of donor commitment to reconstruction, and an accelerated US Government assistance program that promotes the training and deployment of Afghan national army and police units.

PRTs represent a success in Afghanistan. They provide a model that anyone who works in Afghanistan can easily replicate to bolster our joint efforts. Our PRTs in Afghanistan have had significant success in moving forward the development of the country.

We are now trying to transplant this idea to reconstruction efforts in Iraq. The recent supplemental appropriation approved by my committee offered significant funding for new Iraqi PRTs. It is our hope that countries that could not politically support the war in Iraq might join our efforts with PRTs as part of our collective rebuilding efforts.

The future of our cooperation creates many opportunities. We recognize that differences in methods, approaches, and policies can be accommodated and meld the strengths of each to forge useful partnerships.

We must seize the opportunities to cooperate in forestalling Iran's nuclear proliferation threat, to allow trade to become the driving force for development in Africa, and to prevent, or at the very least, prepare for the prospect of an Avian Influenza epidemic.

Maintaining and strengthening U.S.-European relations is essential to global health. We must accept our shared leadership in this arena and strive to have common and complementary policies. We must say to the rest of the world that they, too, must account for the health of their own people if they are to be a part of a global economy and all it has to offer.

With all the work ahead in preparing the FY '07 foreign assistance budget, it is sometimes difficult for me to take a moment to reflect on the issues we are discussing at this meeting. But, when I leave Congress, I will look back on my service and remember the people like you that I have come to trust and rely on through the years of advice and assistance. You have enabled me to maintain the idealism that we can make this world a better place. Idealism begets optimism. And, so it is that I optimistically look forward to the day when we can say – contrary to Peter Piot's description of 2005 as the least bad year – that we had a really good year in global health.

Thank you, and I look forward to seeing all you of throughout this event.