“Transatlantic Relations – Prospects for Advancing Cooperation”

Abstract

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the geopolitical situation has undergone dramatic changes. We were used to dividing the world into two blocks and two political systems. Now, we are confronted with a multi-polar world. Today’s challenges are no longer confined to national borders and therefore cannot be solved on a national scale. Regional and international cooperation is key.

In this new environment transatlantic relations can play a significant role. There are numerous fields of activities where close cooperation can give a new impetus to a sometimes troubled partnership. Climate change, energy policy issues, terrorism, nuclear proliferation and the current financial and economic crises are only some of them.

A precondition for fruitful cooperation is mutual understanding which requires that we know each other. Nobody questions that Europe and the United States share common values, which makes us different from other world regions. Nevertheless, prejudgments and stereotypes still exist. We can fight them by strengthening personal contact, notably among the younger generations. Europe has already invested significant resources and effort into the implementation of student exchange programs - with success! But there is still room for improvement. Against this background, today’s theme is very topical.