



TTIP: Freedom and Responsibility

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Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Ich bin erfreut heute bei Ihnen sein zu können. Und ich bin der SPD sehr dankbar, dass sie dieses Treffen organisiert.

Es gibt viel über das Transatlantische Freihandelsabkommen zu sagen, oder auch TTIP, um das Englische Akronym zu verwenden.

Und ich würde es gerne auf Deutsch sagen. Jedoch ist unser Treffen heute sehr wichtig für mich, sodass ich genau das sagen will, was ich auch meine.

Und während ich das liebend gerne in der Sprache von Goethe tun würde, wird es uns allen besser ergehen, wenn ich dies in der Sprache von Shakespeare tue.

Aber bevor ich das tue, lass Sie mich mit Ihnen ein Zitat eines großen Deutschen Politikers teilen.

Dort wo ich gerade stehe, kann das nur einer sein und zwar Willy Brandt.

Als er sein erstes Regierungsprogramm vorstellte hat er das Land gedrängt: "Mehr Demokratie wagen."

Aber er hat auch gesagt: "Wir wollen eine Gesellschaft, die mehr Freiheit bietet und mehr Mitverantwortung fordert."¹

¹ Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you today. And I am very grateful to the SPD for organising this meeting.

There is a lot to say about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP to use the English acronym.

And I would very much like to say it in German. However, our meeting today is very important to me. So I want to say exactly what I mean.

And while I would love to be able to do that in the language of Goethe, we will all be better off if I speak in the language of Shakespeare.

But before I switch to English let me share a quote with you from one of Germany's great leaders.

Standing where I'm standing, I can only be talking about Willy Brandt.

In presenting his first programme for government he urged the country, "To dare more democracy".

But he also said this: "We want a society that grants greater freedom and demands more joint responsibility."

That remark comes from a very different time and is about a very different subject.

But the principle Chancellor Brandt outlined is essential to any discussion about the opportunities and risks of this negotiation.

Because a core objective of this agreement is to create more opportunities by expanding the freedom to trade.

But TTIP is just as much about responsibility.

It's about negotiating responsibly. That means making sure that TTIP is a way to make government more efficient, and European values more protected not less so.

And TTIP is also about all of us fulfilling our responsibility to join the democratic debate about this negotiation – governments, citizens and civil society.

Let me start with TTIP and freedom.

Freer trade with the United States will create economic opportunities for Germany.

The starting point is this. More than 15% of Germany's workforce is employed because of exports beyond the European Union.

More exports mean more demand for labour.

And TTIP will expand German firms' ability to export all across the economy.

There are so many examples of this – from makers of medicine to builders of the most sought after cars in the world – but let me give you three very specific stories:

The first is BHS Tabletop, from Bavaria. They make crockery and pay up to 25% tariffs on their exports to the United States. A huge cost! TTIP would eliminate tariffs on crockery, driving growth and job creation in the whole sector.

The second is Articomed in Schlüchtern, in Hessen. They make surgical instruments used in knee operations. They would like to export to the US but the regulatory costs are too high. TTIP would lower those costs...

... by having similar electronic forms for sending in data from clinical trials

... or by making our systems for tracking and recalling medical devices compatible.

The third is Alfred H. Schütte, which makes factory machines and employs 600 people in Köln. Different EU and US standards means it costs them 10 to 15% more to produce a machine for the American market. TTIP will strengthen regulatory and standards cooperation on engineering, helping to bring these costs down.

Like I said, these are just some individual examples.

I haven't spoken about how better access to US government contracts would create business for the construction sector.

And I haven't touched on how exports from the US to Europe would lower prices and boost choice for consumers, and make all our firms more competitive.

But the principle is clear – by increasing the freedom to trade across the Atlantic, TTIP will create opportunity throughout our economy.

So what about responsibility?

It applies first of all to how we negotiate this deal.

Negotiating TTIP responsibly means making sure nothing gets in the way of our high quality public services like health and water.

The EU knows how to do this. We have done it in many trade agreements before. TTIP will make clear:

- That authorities don't have to open public services to competition from private providers if they don't want to;
- That they don't have to privatise or outsource any service if they don't want to;
- That they can keep monopolies in public services and utilities if they choose;
- And that they can change their policies, and bring outsourced services back into the public sector whenever they want, as long as they respect property rights.

Negotiating TTIP responsibly also means protecting our strong regulation on health, safety and the environment.

We must focus our regulatory cooperation work on areas where EU and US regulations are similar, like car safety, engineering and medical devices. Doing so allows us to create opportunities while keeping our high standards.

By the same logic, we must keep us away from areas where we don't agree. That's why TTIP will not change our laws on hormone beef and it will not change our laws on genetically modified food.

And we must be very careful how we approach investment. This is the most sensitive TTIP issue. As you know we are still working on a European approach, after the recent public consultation.

Let me just say this.

A responsible approach to this issue needs to recognise that Europe, as world's largest foreign investor, has an interest in rules that mean investors are fairly treated.

However, it also needs to make that companies cannot abuse investment agreements and that there is no ambiguity about Europe or Germany's right to regulate.

I believe it is possible to find a balanced investment system. One that protects investments but provides the cast iron guarantees people need.

Negotiating TTIP responsibly also means being ambitious:

- Ambitious regulatory cooperation helps us make better decisions because regulators can share expertise and data.
- Ambitious cooperation on the enforcement of rules cuts costs. Double EU and US inspections of the same factories for compliance with the same rules is wasteful. We should use our limited resources for more important priorities.

- Ambitious removal of trade barriers – including public procurement barriers – lowers prices for the government as well as consumers. That means making governments' money go further, helping pay for things like better public services and enforcement of regulation.

Finally, negotiating TTIP responsibly means recognising that a closer alliance with the United States will help protect European values in a changing world.

The European Union and the United States are much more similar than the debates on TTIP would suggest. In the age of Snowden, it is easy to focus on our differences. But the truth is that we are much more similar to each other than we are to many other countries – on human rights and democracy, on open markets and on high standards of regulatory protection.

Negotiating TTIP responsibly means making sure it cements our transatlantic alliance on all of these values, so that we can jointly advance them in the 21st Century. We will not be the largest two economies in the world forever. So we will need to stick together in future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My final point is this. Willy Brandt's call to responsibility can also be applied to how we debate this agreement.

Transparency is a precondition for a high quality public debate. It is our responsibility in the European Commission to provide it:

- That's why we have put EU negotiating proposals online.
- It's why we're making sure national governments and the European Parliament have the access they need to follow our work closely.
- And it's why I'm personally travelling to as many Member States as possible and talking to as many people as possible about what this deal is about.

But the responsibility for a high quality debate extends beyond the Commission.

National governments have an important role to play in getting the facts out. I want to thank Vice-Chancellor Gabriel for his commitment so far. And I am very encouraged by the discussion we've had just now.

But as the people's representatives, national and regional parliamentarians also have a key role.

Too often the debate has focused on things that are not on the table - like GMOs, hormone beef, water or culture.

You are in a unique position to inform them about the real issues in this negotiation:

- How to make sure TTIP delivers the most economic gains...
- How to strengthen public services and regulation...
- And how to maximise TTIP's potential to strengthen our voice in the world.

People are interested in this deal, more than any other trade deal in the past.

We owe them a debate that focuses on the facts.

I am ready to take up my responsibility to do so. I hope you are ready to join me.