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Press Availability

**Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller,
European Union High Representative Javier Solana,
European Union Commissioner Chris Patten
And Secretary of State Colin L. Powell**

**December 18, 2002
Benjamin Franklin Room
Washington, D.C.**

(2:00 p.m. EST)

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank Foreign Minister Moeller, High Representative Solana and External Affairs Commissioner Patten for coming to Washington for our semiannual US-European Union meeting of foreign ministers.

As the Danish presidency of the EU comes to a close, I would like to congratulate Per Stig Moeller for the superb job that he and Prime Minister Rasmussen and the entire Government of Denmark have done. The six months of the Danish EU presidency have been very eventful. We have seen, for example, the sweeping changes that NATO expansion and EU enlargement represent for the entire Euro-Atlantic region. Per Stig, I congratulate you. It's been a great pleasure working with you.

I'm sure that we'll be in touch, however, in the days ahead, for my European colleagues and I are in constant contact on the matters of the day, as befits the closest of allies. Still, we value the opportunity for these twice yearly formal meetings, the opportunity it gives us to step back and talk over the full range of issues that we face on a daily basis.

Today, we spent a great deal of time discussing the results of last week's EU summit in Copenhagen. Let me start by congratulating my EU colleagues on the historic decision taken at Copenhagen to admit ten new members to the European Union in 2004. The Copenhagen decision is a major step toward achieving a Europe whole, free and at peace.

The United States congratulates the EU, its member-nations and the people of the pending enlargement of the EU as we look forward to continuing our close friendship with this larger, stronger European Union.

I told my colleagues that the United States welcomes the visionary decision by European leaders at Copenhagen to build a truly inclusive European Union. We want to support them as they translate those decisions into action.

We discussed Turkey's evolution towards Europe. The United States commends the EU's decision to open, without delay, accession negotiations with Turkey upon deciding in December 2004 that Turkey has fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria.

Our conversation on European issues included Cyprus, as well. We agreed on our strong support for the United Nations Good Offices, Good Offices Mission and its efforts to reach a settlement by the end of February.

We also discussed how to implement decisions on cooperation between NATO and the EU in support of the EU's European Security and Defense Policy. We discussed this with regard to both Macedonia and, preliminarily, Bosnia.

In our talks on the North Korean situation, we shared our deep concern over North Korea's continuing activities in weapons proliferation and its nuclear weapons program. North Korea's December 12th statement is of particular concern as a step by North Korea away from its international obligations and a further challenge to the nuclear nonproliferation regime. All of this causes us concern.

We agree that North Korea's future relations with both the United States and the European Union depend upon its actions to comply with its continuing obligations. In this regard, the United States and the EU are in complete agreement that North Korea must come into complete compliance with all of its international commitments.

Counterterrorism has been firmly on the US-EU agenda since 9/11, and today was no exception. We reviewed the progress we have made on several agreements facilitating law enforcement and judicial cooperation and we look forward to the signing of the US-Europol Agreement this Friday. This agreement will authorize the full exchange of information between Europol and US law enforcement agencies.

My EU colleagues and I also had a good discussion on Africa, in which we reviewed some initiatives on development and some initiatives with respect to HIV/AIDS.

Our talks also touched on measures to relieve famine, our continuing efforts to help Africans resolve ongoing conflicts, and President Bush's trip to Africa next month.

We also discussed Iraq at some length. We share the view that Iraq must come into full compliance with all United Nations Security Council resolutions. We intend to see Iraq disarmed and no longer able to pose a threat to any country with weapons of mass destruction.

On Iran, we discussed EU assurances that its trade and cooperation Agreement will be firmly linked to changes in Iran's destructive policies in a number of areas.

We also reviewed a number of other regional concerns such as the deteriorating situation in Venezuela and the need to find a peaceful, democratic, constitutional and politically viable electoral solution, and to do so with urgency, urgency that is appropriate to the situation.

We discussed Ukraine. The United States and European Union are concerned about encroachments on press freedoms and we agreed to keep watching the situation very closely.

On Afghanistan, we talked about our mutual efforts to meet Afghanistan's early and urgent need for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. We also reviewed the efforts of the Afghan Government to restore stability and security to the country.

I think it's fair to say that we put our time to good use today and we've laid a good foundation for our cooperation in meeting the challenges we discussed in the days to come.

Mr. Moeller, High Representative Solana, External Affairs Commissioner Patten, good friends all, it has been a pleasure to have you here for this meeting. And Per Stig, I turn the floor over to you.

FOREIGN MINISTER MOELLER: Thank you very much, Colin. Thank you very much and thank you very much for your kind words. It has been a pleasure as president of the European Union to work with you. Your direct diplomacy has been very great to experience and we have had talks, very swift talks, we have brief talks, but always concrete talks where we have deliberated what to do, what was the best way to go, and this openness and frankness I appreciate it very much. It has been a pleasure to work with you.

And the fact is that between the European Union and the United States of America, more unites us than divides us. We have common values. We have common goals. We fight for the same things -- human rights, democracy, freedom -- all over the world.

We have had our historic moment in Europe last month. The enlargement of NATO, the enlargement of European Union last week was, of course, milestones in the history of Europe. And I think the support of the United States has been very valuable for this process in Europe.

Together, the United States and Europe can solve a lot of problems. I think, one might say, we can solve most problems together. But divided, we can either create problems or prolong existing problems. So that's why I think it's very useful that we've had these negotiations today between the European Union and United States of America about the problems of the world of today.

And I'm glad to say that we look upon the things around us in the world in the same way. We are together in fighting terrorism, and also the European Union is glad that we now can have this US-Europol Agreement on Friday.

We are both working to make Iraq respect the United Nations Security Council. Iraq has to cooperate with weapons inspectors, open everything for them and respect the decisions of the Security Council. And for us, it's very important that the further decisions are made through the Security Council and we are working with United States to make Iraq respect the world community.

We also share with you the efforts to make North Korea respect the agreement of '94 and we are working through KEDO, as you know, and we have contact our partners in that area so that we make the right moves to make North Korea respect the agreements and not become a threat to the world.

In the Middle East, we also working together. On Friday, we have this Quartet meeting and I am looking forward to that meeting. And here again, it's necessary that the United States and European Union are working together to stop the escalation of violence and, on other side, bring the violence down and create peace in the area, in the region.

And, finally, I will mention here, not to repeat you, Afghanistan, where we have cooperated also and which is necessary because it is necessary that the central government of Karzai really can stabilize the government, the security of the regime in Afghanistan, and that we can have a free and democratic Afghanistan.

We have had difficult cases, but we have solved them, or tried to deal with them, in mutual respect. We found a solution on the ICC problem, I think can be viable.

So I think that this meeting has been valuable, that the United States of America and the European Union continuously will work together to solve the problems of the world and make the world a better place to live in.

Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the Iraqi declaration does not appear to have yielded much of the information you were looking for. How do you plan to proceed now toward your goal of achieving disarmament?

SECRETARY POWELL: Our analysis of the Iraqi declaration to this point, almost two weeks into the process this weekend, shows problems with the declaration, gaps, omissions, and all of this is troublesome. In my conversations with other permanent members of the Security Council, I sense that they also see deficiencies in the resolution, in the declaration.

We will wait for UNMOVIC and IAEA to present their analysis tomorrow. We look forward to examining what they have to say. We will make statements after they have presented to the Security Council and then work with our partners in the Security Council to determine the way to go forward.

Iraq was given an opportunity in UN Resolution 1441 to cooperate with the international community, to stop deceiving the world with respect to its weapons of mass destruction. We are not encouraged that they have gotten the message or will cooperate based on what we have seen so far in the declaration, but we will stay within the UN process. The President made it clear he wanted to work with the UN and the international community, and we will share our analysis of the declaration with other members of the Council and discuss how to move forward in the weeks ahead.

As you know, Mr. Blix and Mr. El Baradei, Dr. Blix and Dr. El Baradei, have until about the 27th of January to complete their analysis of the declaration and to report formally to the Council.

QUESTION: Prime Minister Sharon of Israel indicated that he will not be cooperating with the Quartet or the proposed roadmap for Middle East until after the Israeli general elections, planned for the end of next month. How much would that complicate your efforts, both in the United States and European Union, in order to reach the vision of a Palestinian state by 2005?

SECRETARY POWELL: We have been in discussion with Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli Government, with the Arab governments in the region, and with Palestinian leaders for months over the roadmap. The roadmap is the manner in which we execute the President's vision of 24 June in his speech, and what we will do with the Quartet on Friday is to review all the comments we've received with respect to the roadmap, come as close as we can to agreement on the roadmap, discuss it with the President on Friday, and then continue to discuss the elements of the roadmap with the parties in the region.

Because of the Israeli election, to be frank, and because of the number of issues that are before the Israeli public right now, we think it would be wiser in this instance for us to continue work on the roadmap and wait until after the Israeli election is over. It's just a matter of weeks until that is solved, resolved, and then we will engage with all the parties in the region with respect to a roadmap if we have complete agreement on the elements of the roadmap, at least within the Quartet at that time.

There are elements to the roadmap that are received favorably by both sides and there are elements that there is disagreement. One would expect that. But both sides understand that in order for us to move forward toward this vision of the end of violence, the end of terror, and the establishment of a Palestinian state, a roadmap is necessary. You have to have a way to move forward. And that way forward will be performance-based, it will require action on both parts, both parties, but it must end with the end of terror and violence, or else it is very difficult to move forward.

FOREIGN MINISTER MOELLER: Well, it's obvious that the roadmap exists. You can read it on the homepage, so it's not a secret that there is a roadmap. But, of course, the final things have not been settled in the roadmap, but it's necessary that the -- to my opinion it is very important and to European Union's opinion, it's very important that the voters of Israel know what the world thinks about the situation. I think that being an enlightened voter means that you also have the information on which you build your vote.

And I think it's necessary to have, to combine the vision of President Bush and the initiative of Crown Prince Abdullah with a map to come to that goal, which is two states. How do we get there? And there is still some progress on the ground because we have these London task forces which still have cooperation between the Palestinians and Israelis. Money is coming back to the Palestinian Authority after all. Things which have been demanded from the roadmap, from the task forces, are being done -- not as quickly as some of us would like, but they are being done. It's not disasters and setbacks, all of it.

But it's very important that Israel knows that it must end with two states. And it's very important that the Palestinians know that they will never get two states if terrorism continues. Because there will never be the climate in which you can negotiate the final settlement between the two states. There must be built some trust in the middle of all this distrust which is in the region. And that is what the roadmap tries, gradually to build up trust so that you finally can make the final settlements between those.

And that's why the European Union the other day made a declaration saying you had to stop the settlements, because the way the settlements is now growing means that you will end up with a Palestinian state looking like a Swiss cheese -- a lot of holes. So if you are going to have this vision with two viable states, then you also have to make the Palestinian state viable at the end of the day.

So for us, we're looking forward to discussions on Friday, but the most important thing is not some details in the roadmap, but that the process starts and it will be performance-based and hope-driven. Israel has to give the Palestinians hope for the future. And the Palestinians have to show that they can stop the terrorism.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, it's been several weeks since Senator Lott made some comments in reference to Senator Thurmond's 1948 presidential campaign. Do you have

any reflections you'd like to share with us on those comments, and on the subsequent apology Senator Lott has made and whether those are acceptable to you?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, I was disappointed in the Senator's statement. I deplored the sentiments behind the statement. There was nothing about the 1948 election or the Dixiecrat agenda that should have been acceptable in any way to any American at that time or any American now. I will let the Senator and members of the Senate deal with this issue, and that's all I really have to say at this time.

QUESTION: -- whether the Senator's apologies are acceptable to yourself?

SECRETARY POWELL: Acceptable to who?

QUESTION: To yourself?

SECRETARY POWELL: I didn't -- you know, the Senator's statement is out there. I had problems with it. And I have known Senator Lott for a long period of time, we've done business together, and we'll see how this plays out politically. I regret what he said, I'm disappointed what he said, as he is. And I have listened carefully to the statements he has made. I think he is speaking with sincerity. And we'll just have to see how this plays out.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you have now asked the Danish Government for the possibility of using the Thule base for a missile defense. Could you please elaborate a little on what you have asked for and also what the American position is on any revision of the defense agreement or the agreement about using the Thule base from '51, please?

SECRETARY POWELL: We have had conversations on the use of Thule for missile defense purposes. After this meeting, the Minister and I will be meeting with the representative from the Home Government in Greenland, and I will present a letter to the Minister for their consideration.

The defense agreement of 1951, I think, has stood us all in good stead and I don't see a need to change or modify that agreement. I should take note of the fact that over the last 50-odd years, as issues have come up we've been able to resolve those issues with memorandums of understanding or other ways of dealing with those issues other than changing the 1951 agreement.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary and Mr. Foreign Minister as well, on Iran, which you said you discussed, the EU opened trade talks with Tehran this week, just as the US spoke about even greater concerns about especially two of Iran's nuclear facilities. Are these two policies clashing? Has the EU -- sorry. Has the US expressed its concern to you sufficiently? Will you change your policies?

And if you guys could throw in something on Venezuela, I'd be very happy -- not in the same answer.

FOREIGN MINISTER MOELLER: The European Union has started negotiations with Iran, dialogue trade. We have started trade with Iran under condition that we open a human rights and political rights dialogue. And as soon as we do not have human rights dialogue, political dialogue, the trade agreement does not exist anymore.

We think this is the best way to help the reform forces of the Iranian society to get more influence in their society because, in this way, the world outside Iran can come in and say this stoning, for instance, of women are not acceptable, that it is barbarian. And it means you must have a dialogue if you will have a chance to influence upon another people or another country.

So that's why we say we are not just trading with Iran; it's on a condition that there's progress on political and human rights.

SECRETARY POWELL: I certainly agree with the Minister, and that's what we did talk about. The two have to be linked. Progress on political reform and changes in their political system have to go along with the elements of the TCA, and there have to be benchmarks so you can measure progress as you go ahead.

We did not discuss the two reactors that you make a reference to, but I am confident that the EU is watching that situation as carefully as we are. We are concerned about Iranian proliferation efforts and efforts to acquire nuclear technology that might lead to a nuclear weapon. It's a country that has no need for nuclear power generation capability. It has more than enough fossil fuel to sustain itself for the number of years you care to project into the future.

So we are concerned that these facilities might have another purpose and we have discussed this with our friends in the European Union over time, and especially with our Russian friends who are helping with these kinds of projects.

Chris.

COMMISSIONER PATTEN: Perhaps I can just add one word. We are pressing the Iranians to sign the IAEA additional protocol which would allow inspection of sites at any time and in an unlimited way. And I should just make it clear that, for us, Iran is not a huge trading partner. It only represents about one percent of our trade.

It is true that the European Union is, for Iran, the biggest trading partner, and I hope that we can use Iran's ambition to open up to the rest of the world economy in order to create jobs, in order to encourage further political change in that country.

SECRETARY POWELL: And on Venezuela? We did discuss Venezuela. We are concerned about the situation there, watching it very closely, supporting the efforts of the Secretary General of the OAS to find a solution that is based on the constitution, that is based on a solid understanding of the electoral process, and that is democratic.

And in the last 24 hours there has been a little bit of movement with respect to the two sides reaching out to one another with a statement of their respective positions. But we have to be concerned, nonetheless, that the demonstrations that are taking place in the street, the potential for violence and the damaging effect that these disturbances are having on the economy and on the oil sector of the Venezuelan economy. So we're watching very closely.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you mentioned that you talked about Cyprus. Are you optimistic a solution could still be achieved before the end of February? And is the high priority for your administration, to the extent that you could even think about traveling to Athens, Ankara and maybe Nicosia, to achieve that solution?

And also, how would you assess Mr. Denktash's stand, where in the last few days we also see differences within the Turkish Cypriot community because of his stand?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think it is still possible to achieve a solution. We'll work hard for it. We're supporting Kofi Annan's efforts. We're in close contact with our European Union colleagues. If it involves travel and that could serve some purpose, always ready, willing and able. I'm not sure that's the right answer right now, but I think any one of us would do what is necessary and within our power to do to try to achieve a solution to this problem which has existed for so many years.

I hope that both sides, all four parties who really have an equity in this, will view the proposal of the Secretary General with seriousness and try to find a way to use this historic opportunity to resolve this longstanding problem.

FOREIGN MINISTER MOELLER: Yes, of course we hope the United Nations have a deal on Cyprus before February 28th so that we can have a united Cyprus which becomes member from the 1st of May 2004 in the European Union. I had hoped it would happen last week. Then we have had the ESDP and we've had the enlargement, but okay, you cannot get everything.

But there's still a chance. The two communities really want to unite. That's clear from the reactions from the last days. The Greek Cypriot leader at the enlargement meeting in Copenhagen last Friday made a very, very beautiful declaration saying that he will work hard to get the island united as soon as possible and before February 28th.

And we have in the European Union, in connection with the enlargement, of course, set money aside to help the Turkish Cypriots to arrive at the same level as the Greek Cypriots as soon as possible, as quickly as possible.

So I really think there are good possibilities now. This is an historic moment for unification. If you don't use this historic moment to finish before February 28, then it can take a very long time. So both communities shall think this is now, this now can be done. If not now, then when? And when is far away.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you.

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