

EU-US: The Indispensable Partnership

By Ambassador Angelos Pangratis

PART 2 (continued from Winter 2006 issue)

IV. EU-US: Global Challenges

Most of the biggest challenges of our times simply require a continuously increasing coordination and cooperation between the two biggest global partners. Some examples:

- Fighting terrorism is currently a key priority for both the US and the EU. The EU in its counter-terrorism strategy has committed "to combat terrorism globally while respecting human rights, and make Europe safer, allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice." In counter-terrorism the growing transatlantic cooperation already includes a wide number of issues such as: law enforcement cooperation involving several US agencies with EUROPOL, Extradition/Mutual Legal Assistance Agreements and issues related to judicial cooperation, border protection (biometric passports, ports and airports security, etc), terrorism financing issues, cargo screening and inspection procedures under the Container Security Initiative and others, measures concerning the protection of critical infrastructure, etc.

- Energy is an increasing global concern. The Green Paper published in March 2006, by the European Commission, sets three fundamental goals: sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply. The EU and the US face similar challenges. Together they represent 43% of the oil, 44% of the electricity and 41% of the natural gas world consumption. Their external dependence is rapidly increasing. A strong partnership on energy policy has been set during the EU-US Summit in Vienna in 2006, with important and shared objectives.

- On global warming and climate change the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme is the flagship that will enable the EU to comply, cost-effectively, with its commitments within the Kyoto Protocol. In putting in place the scheme, the EU has broken new ground establishing the first truly international trading scheme and the biggest ever implemented. The EU hopes for a closer partnership with the US on environmental issues. If the US and the EU cannot get to act coherently together, it is difficult to see how emerging countries like India and China could ever be convinced to participate in a global effort necessary to deal with these huge global challenges of the modern era.

- The EU and the US are at the center of the global effort to better prepare the world to face the future crisis related to the avian flu or any other potential animal or human pandemic.

- The EU and the US are also the main global partners providing crisis management, humanitarian assistance and development aid. Very often the EU and the US complement each other in specific operations around the world.

None of these challenges, or many others, can be dealt with, without a sufficient cooperation between the US and the EU. The two bigger economic partners bear also the biggest responsibility. They need to provide together, coordinated and appropriate policy responses, develop the responsible policies required and inspire and lead others by example in order to generate the really global responses that the above and other global challenges of

humanity require. In no other group of issues does the EU-US relationship appear so strongly what it really is: "the indispensable relationship" for the 21st century.

V. Communicating the Indispensable Relationship to US Audiences

In Europe, the EU has become a directly relevant issue for almost all European citizens simply because of the wide range of initiatives and decisions taken at the EU level, which have a significant impact on the everyday life of most of its citizens. In a somehow similar way, the EU-US relation has expanded so much that it affects significantly a huge number of economic operators on both sides of the Atlantic and is directly relevant to any European or American who has an even limited or specific interest to international policies and issues.

In an increasingly globalized world, policy makers, as well as individual citizens, need more of a global view and a sufficient understanding of the global context. Even for local issues that require local action, our democracies need better informed citizens.

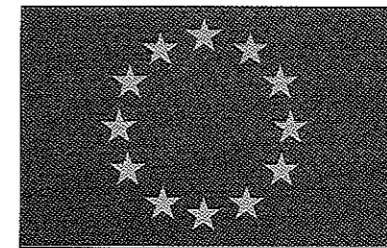
The EU Delegation in Washington endeavors to communicate and provide information about the EU and the EU-US relationship to European and American audiences in the US. In the context of this communication effort, organized communities and associations like AHEPA, having as members citizens of one or more EU Member States or American citizens of European origin, interested in the development and preservation of their European

heritage, present an obvious interest. They can only be seen as natural and privileged bridges between the two sides of the Atlantic and as a priori, more receptive audiences to the message of the fundamental and increasing importance of the EU-US relationship.

VI. The Greek and Greek-American perspective

Within the EU, Greece no longer feels like a small country, often different from the EU mainstream, as it happened occasionally at the beginning of its EU membership. It is now a relatively prosperous European State well established within the EU with quality contributions on all EU issues. Its per capita growth has been constantly higher during these last years than the EU average. Greece is also a country with important contributions, directly or through the EU, to policies and initiatives, not only related directly to its own domestic or even regional concerns, but also to issues of global interest. For instance, related to global challenges: it would be very easy to compile a quite impressive list of concrete Greek contributions to the fight against terrorism, to energy security initiatives, and to every single global challenge mentioned above. Overall, Greece has a voice within the EU that is widely heard and respected, even beyond its strictly institutional role and voting rights. Thus, Greek citizens are important participants and are strongly represented within the wider democratic decision making processes of the EU.

The EU-US bilateral economic and cooperation agenda is directly relevant to all EU Member States (MS). It includes key future oriented initiatives such as educa-



tion cooperation, science and technology cooperation, development of key future technologies, such as nanotechnologies and others, promotion of innovation and trade and investment liberalization and facilitation. Greece is certainly among the more involved and more active MS on most of these issues. Furthermore, the size and quality of the Greek-American community is adding a whole new dimension to this relationship and represents an opportunity for the US, Greece and the whole transatlantic community. Huge opportunities are opening-up for the wider Hellenism within and beyond the frontiers of Greece. EU's daily efforts to create the best possible conditions for trade and investment in the transatlantic economy are combined with the real progress that Greece is achieving in many key aspects of its global economic performance. Greek companies are internationalizing very effectively, especially in the geographic region around South Eastern Europe, Turkey and the Black Sea region. The Greek government is very committed to increasing and improving the key aspects of efficiency and competitiveness of the Greek economy. The margin of mutually beneficial economic cooperation between Greece and the US is expanding rapidly. Greece has an impressive potential on issues related to education, research, scientific cooperation and innovation. Many points of excellence exist in Universities, research institutes, etc, and

we see a very significant Hellenic participation in EU-US cooperation projects. These points of excellence need to be nurtured and expanded.

Greek-Americans blessed with the privilege of living in the biggest, and in many respects, the most dynamic and innovative economy in the world, have reached worldwide recognition for their achievements in politics, economics, science, etc. The Greek-American community is well positioned to continue to spearhead the way as global Hellenism meets the challenges of our times. We have every reason to be confident that Hellenism, with its strong traditions and its culture of tolerance and openness, to both receive and naturally expand and flourish further in a more globalized world. In this effort, the strong European dimension of modern Greece is a great asset. The EU's motto is "United in Diversity" and I find this particularly relevant for the Hellenes abroad. Europe is a continent with many different traditions and languages, as well as shared values. Many of those originate directly or indirectly, partially or completely in the proud Hellenic heritage. The EU defends these values. It fosters cooperation among the peoples of Europe no matter in which part of the world they are.

I am delighted that AHEPA has seized the opportunity to include an "EU Corner" in this publication, which will present a specific issue or policy of importance in the transatlantic relationship. We are very pleased to be able to establish a communication with the Ahepans around the world and to contribute to an effort that illustrates so well the European will to always promote and further the European cultures.