

# PRESS CONFERENCE WITH EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT JOSÉ MANUEL BARROSO

European Commission President  
José Manuel Barroso (Left) & EU Ambassador to  
the US John Bruton

PRESS CONFERENCE

WITH

EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT JOSÉ MANUEL BARROSO

European Commission Delegation

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ANTHONY GOOCH (Washington  
Delegation Spokesman & Head, Press & Media Relations Section): Ladies  
and gentlemen, thank you very much for convening here. I'm going to pass the floor  
over to Ambassador Bruton to introduce the President, just to make the point that  
this is the first visit by a European Commission  
President in his own right for sixteen years. He has just come fresh  
from the White House, both the Ambassador and the President to the [European]  
Commission. We're delighted to welcome him back for his first visit here. Ambassador.

JOHN BRUTON: This was an exceptionally warm meeting. I think it was clear  
that President Bush and President Barroso have a very good personal relationship,  
which dates back a long way. And I think it's something that will work to the  
benefit both of the European Union and the United States. And I hand over now  
to President Barroso.

JOSÉ MANUEL BARROSO: Thank you very much. Thank you for coming. I think  
it was really a very good meeting and very grateful for the hospitality of President  
Bush and the First Lady to myself and my wife. We had a very good working meeting,

and afterwards, a very pleasant lunch.

I think what this kind of meeting shows is the importance, the increasing importance of the relations between the United States and the European Union. We understand, both of us, that is in our common interest to develop this kind of relationship, first of all, because we share common values – freedom, democracy, respect for human rights – and we can complement each other's actions, pushing those values in the global situation, but also because of the huge dimension of our economic relations, as I said, \$1 billion a day trade relations. More than 2 trillion (dollars) investment stock both sides of the Atlantic. Together, we account for 40 percent of the world trade. We are the two leading trade partners in the world. And also, because of the proportion, you can add many issues. Just think about with avian flu. Just think what could happen if there was not a European Union. At least now we can take decisions at the twenty-five to try to control and contain this kind of disease.

The meeting was, to a large extent, about the political effort, the way we see the situation building, also about the economic and trade aspects. In trade, on my behalf and behalf of the European Commission leaders, we made it clear how important it is for us to have a successful global trade talks. We believe it is important for the world to open up markets. What we have to gain from that is enormous in terms of the benefits of global economy, for our confidence in the global economy, know that now we need good news in global economy, especially now that we have some problems in terms of the high prices of energy.

And we said, on behalf of the European Union that in order to be an ambitious and balanced result, ambitious and balanced inside agriculture – but apart from agriculture, because there are other sectors important and sometimes I'm a little bit surprised, because very often people are focused on agriculture, but there are a lot of other issues – non-agricultural tariffs, services, the rules, respect for intellectual property. So there are other issues that we want also to see solutions. And it is important to have that balanced result so that we can show to our citizens that they can reap the benefits of liberalization, that they can also have access to the markets and if we have a more open market globally, because we have a great interest on that. As you know, the European Union is the first trade partner in the world to have open markets all over the world. That's why it's important to engage positively. Some emerging economies, they have a lot to bring from successful conclusion of this round. And also, place special attention to the concerns of the least-developed countries in the world, the poorest countries in the world, because they have also to gain something from that, because they have specific necessities and needs that sometimes are not addressed all for by liberalization. That's the Doha Agenda. It's also Development Agenda and this is our position.

So those were the biggest, most important points we have been discussing. We were very friendly, very constructive manner. And it's good that now we have this very easy exchange of views. You know President Bush was some time ago in Brussels. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited us as well. I came here several times, and we are in constant contact not only at the highest level, but for instance, the different Commissioners come and we have a kind of dialogue that is now very fluid and I think it's an interest of both sides of the Atlantic. I will now try to answer your questions.

MR. GOOCH: Just before we come to that, if I can remind you, please could you state your name and your affiliation for the benefit of the president. Michael?

Q: Michael Backfisch, German Business Daily Handelsblatt. A question to agricultural subsidies. EU [Trade] Commissioner

Mandelson offered the other day to cut agricultural subsidies by 70 percent, but the Americans say it's not enough. They demand something like 83 percent. Do you see a chance to match these two positions?

PRESIDENT BARROSO: I'm not going out to replace negotiators. They have to negotiate. Commissioner Mandelson, the offer of the European Union, that's important. [US Trade Representative] Rob Portman was today in the meeting as well with us. And they have to negotiate. Of course, we have a mandate to respect. We received a very clear mandate from our Member States. We'll do it. But besides, I want to make it clear that it's not only about agriculture. Of course we have to move on agriculture. We know that. By the way, we have a situation that is much more open than most people think in terms of opening up our market. Just look at results. Look at what the import of the European Union Member States import more from African countries on agricultural products than all the other G-8 countries plus Australia and New Zealand, so more than America, Canada, Japan, Russia and all the others. We import more from Latin American countries, 40 percent more than the United States. And the American countries, even in the South this year, bought 40 percent more, so we have a very open market compared to what people think.

Again, we have to move. We can move. And we are not close, but we want progress in other fields of negotiation. And we did that, and we moved this. To explain to our citizens in Europe that there also benefits from the world. Europe is not in defense in those matters. We are, I have to remind, the first trade partner in the world. We are a very open system. But we want others to move as well, to open their markets for our citizens, because they are closed, to respect intellectual property rights, because they are violating sometimes those rights, and the products of invention of our artists, our intellectuals, our creators, sometimes it's not respected because it's violating constitutionally the intellectual property rights. So we want the others to move as well, and if the others move, we will move. But we should not put — and we should not give the impression that all this indecision is about agriculture. Yes, it is an important sector. We welcome the good — (inaudible) — put forward by the American side. It was good. It was good and we welcome that as a positive signal. But others have to do something and it's an important thing to do.

By the way, we are also making a special effort for the least developing countries, and I believe that should be matched by our main partners as well. We mention that every day.

Q: (Inaudible, off mike.) Two quick questions. Did you discuss with the President Turkey's EU process? If so, what? And secondly, on October 3rd when there were difficulties about to agree about the membership talks, Secretary Rice had a telephone contact with Turkish and recently new leaders, and the British Foreign Secretary. Eventually, there was a deal. Do you see the secretary's move as an intervention into the EU, because internal methods and — (inaudible)? Thanks.

PRESIDENT BARROSO: Well, I mean we represented the situation overall -- our analysis, our assessment of the situation globally, also in Europe. And in Europe, of course, we made the reference to the start of negotiations with Turkey. But that issue was not specifically a topic of our conversations today. It was not a topic, but we had mentioned it, of course, as an important development. Now, I cannot comment on the other contacts with the Turkish authorities or with the Cypriot authorities. I cannot comment. I don't know exactly the content of those contacts. But I believe it's quite normal that when there is such an important issue that people be in touch, contact each other. I can tell you that I also made my own contacts. I spoke with President Erdogan at least twice during that process -- Prime Minister Erdogan, I'm sorry. I spoke with him twice. And I made also other contacts, but usually I don't make public all the contacts we develop, so about Turkey this is what I can tell you.

Q: Harry Dunfee (sp), AP. Did the Americans ask about the position of France and other recalcitrant nations who feel that Mr. Mandelson may have gone beyond his mandate?

PRESIDENT BARROSO: No, this was not a specific issue, that specific point you are making. Of course, what I said to President Bush is that the Commission negotiates on behalf of the twenty-five Member States, and we have to respect the mandate that is given to us. That is quite obvious. And let me say to you, very frankly, that President Bush also, he has his Congress. So in a way, we are in a very parallel situation. We have to present at the end a result that is acceptable by the respected constituencies. It's not only the Commission that is negotiating. I mean the Commissioner is negotiating, but it is not only on them. We are not the only partner there. We have to have the Member States with us. At the same time, the American administration is negotiating, but it's also important to have the support of the Congress for the agreements afterwards to be implemented. So this is a very complex issue where we need to have the support of our respective publics. And I believe we can do it. It's not easy. It's not easy. But we can do it if there is a clear determination, if we explain to our citizens the concrete benefits of its success.

And why do we need the success of these Doha trade talks? We need it, first of all, because, as I said, it will increase overall business confidence, and confidence also of the consumers in the world economy. And we need good news now for the world economy. We need it, because if we believe, as we do in Europe, in multi-lateral ways of solving issues, that applies not only to United Nations, that applies also to the World Trade Organization, so we should do it. We believe that it's important because the European Union also has some offensive interests in this negotiation. We want to see others open their markets for services, for non-agricultural products, and also others to match our agricultural offer.

We believe that it's important also for the developing countries, and we have a development agenda, and trade very often can do much more than aid when we speak about the least-developed countries. By the way, we have an initiative that is everything but arms initiative that is open, completely on markets -- no tariff, no quotas to the forty-nine least-developed countries in the world. In 2009 it will be fully implemented, this initiative. We would like to see others do the same, other developed countries and developed partners because those specific countries, the poorest countries, the less-developed countries, they need some special attention. If not, they will not get the concrete benefits.

So this is also development for these four reasons: belief that we need a good climate of confidence in the global economy, because we believe in multilateral ways of solving problems, because we also – (unintelligible) – great interest in the negotiation, and fourth, because we are pushing a development agenda we want. And I want to convey to you this message: In the European Union, we very much want the success of these talks, want an ambitious result and we want a balanced result, and we are working for that. At the same time, we are asking others to join us, to join the good moves made now by the Americans because it was a good movement but there are others that also have to join us if we want to succeed.

MR. GOOCH: Doug.

Q: Hi. Doug Palmer with Reuters News Service. I understand what you’re saying, that these negotiations are about more than agriculture, but the point that the United States makes is that the world needs to see Europe move on its agricultural tariffs to set an example for other countries to move in opening sectors like services and industrial goods, you know, which you mentioned are priority areas for the European Union.

So I just wondered, I mean, is the EU willing to significantly cut its agricultural tariffs if other countries provide the market access that you look for on services and on national goods?

PRESIDENT BARROSO: We will be ready to move if there is an ambitious and balanced agreement on all other issues. That is our position. What we don’t accept – and I have to say it very clearly because I’m here defending the European interest – is that to reduce this negotiation to an agricultural negotiation, I cannot accept that. The European Union does not accept that. This is not fair.

So I’m here defending the European interests and I want this to be clear: We are ready to move and we will move – in fact, we are moving. We announced a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy some time ago, and we are making progress. We are decoupling our aid to – direct aid – we are now decoupling the aid from production results. I mean, I could go on discussing the agricultural technical dossier but I don’t think that’s now the important issue because that we can do in the framework of negotiations.

What I’m asking you to understand, and all the other partners – by the way, I spoke recently to President Lula. I met him in Salamanca two days ago and I said the same to him: Look, you have also to persuade the G-20 that if you want an agreement you have to move also and get the seconds. And so I think I’m being very clear. If not, afterwards don’t say that the fault is the European Union because it’s not the fault of the European Union. We want it to succeed but we want some move also in the other dossier.

AMBASSADOR BRUTON: Anything else?

MR. GOOCH: Just one more question.

Q: Lambros Papanтониου, Greek correspondent for the Greek daily newspaper Eletttheros Typos Athens. Mr. President, did you discuss with Mr. Bush the Kosovo crisis issue, and to which extent?

PRESIDENT BARROSO: No, we did not, but we spoke about the Balkans, and I think generally speaking we share the same objectives. I informed President Bush that our goal for the Balkans is that they will become, most countries there if not all, one day members of the European Union. That's very important. We believe that we can bring a lot of stability to that region. In fact, the prospect of accession to the European Union is one of the things that is helping the stabilization of that region. We spoke generally about the Balkans but not specifically about this problem you have mentioned.

MR. GOOCH: Do you have time for one more?

PRESIDENT BARROSO: One more.

MR. GOOCH: One more.

PRESIDENT BARROSO: It's always most difficult, the last one. (Chuckles.)

MR. GOOCH: There you go. The one on the right, from Finland.

Q: (Inaudible) — Finland. Did you discuss any concrete measures as regards the threat of avian flu?

PRESIDENT BARROSO: Yes, we have mentioned it. It was not one of the main topics, but we have discussed this. And as I said before and I can inform you, this shows once again the need of true international cooperation. And let me tell you very frankly that I found President Bush fully sharing this idea, that together the United States and the European Union can do a lot, and that in the interest of both sides to work cooperatively on those global issues and avian flu is one of those global issues. What we should do together is to prevent — to do everything we can do to cooperate to prevent it becoming a human pandemic.

So far, as you know, there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission on that matter, but we have been taking a lot of measures at European-Union level. So the first evidence we received from serious cases that happen in countries that are very close to us — Turkey and Romania — we prevent any kind of exportation of poultry and other avian products toward the European countries. Now there is a suspicion that was signaled or reported by the Greek authorities to us, but the Greek authorities themselves, they took the initiative of impeding the circulation of poultry inside Greece, so they have confined that region where this happens.

We are asking all Member States to make all tests to be absolutely transparent with each other and to make available all information so that we can take all the measures, if necessary. If there is more evidence we will not hesitate to have more drastic measures, and we should now also cooperate, Americans and Europeans, helping those countries that have been already hit by these problems. That's a very serious matter, as you know, but now let me just make the general point to show once again how it is important in Europe not to wait a long &ndash; just imagine &ndash; (unintelligible) &ndash; every twenty-five countries &ndash; every one of the twenty-five countries of the European Union was taking different measures. Now, we have to work to have a common approach. At the same time, this common approach should be developed in close cooperation with government partners. Americans have launched an initiative on this that's good, and we should also help those countries, for instance in Asia, that have been already hit by this avian flu.

MR. GOOCH: On that upbeat note on a challenging issue, thank you very much, Mr. President and Ambassador, to make the time, and thank you to you journalists for coming.

(END)