

Joint EU-U.S. statement following the EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting

On 9 November 2018, the EU-U.S. Ministerial Meeting on Justice and Home Affairs took place in Washington DC. The United States of America hosted the meeting and was represented by the U.S. Acting Attorney General Matthew G. Whitaker and Secretary for Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen.

The European Union was represented by the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos, as well as by the Austrian Federal Minister for the Interior Herbert Kickl, the Austrian Federal Minister for Constitutional Affairs, Reforms, Deregulation and Justice Josef Moser, the Romanian Minister of the Interior Carmen Daniela Dan and the Romanian Secretary of State for Justice Sebastian Costea on behalf of the current and incoming Presidencies of the Council of the European Union.

The United States and the European Union reaffirmed their commitment to jointly address common challenges in the areas of justice and home affairs and praised the excellent level of exchanges and operational cooperation, for the benefit of the security of citizens on both sides of the Atlantic.

The United States and the European Union underlined the importance of effective information sharing for their shared efforts to combat terrorism, focusing on battlefield information, Passenger Name Records (PNR) and aviation security. Participants emphasised the importance of PNR information sharing as a tool for the prevention of terrorist travel and agreed to prepare for a joint evaluation in 2019, in compliance with the provisions of the EU-US PNR Agreement. The United States and the European Union recognised the need to enhance their efforts to address the challenge of terrorists' use of the internet to direct and inspire attacks, while respecting individual rights, including freedom of speech. Both sides shared information on their respective initiatives, including efforts to better engage and partner with service providers.

The United States and the European Union recognised that electoral systems in democratic states face unprecedented challenges that require innovative and comprehensive solutions, as well as cooperation and best practice exchanges between like-minded countries. On that topic, participants briefed each other on current actions to build more resilient electoral systems. In order to promote exchanges between relevant experts from both sides on current challenges to elections, including such challenges as disinformation campaigns and other forms of online and offline interference, the United States and the European Union agreed to set up a regular dialogue on these matters, the details of which should be developed at the next Senior Officials meeting in 2019.

The United States and the European Union reiterated the priority they attach

to fighting cybercrime and enhancing cybersecurity. They recognised the need to maintain a global, open, stable and secure cyberspace for the promotion of economic and social development and, in this context, stressed the valuable contribution of joint work conducted by U.S. and EU law enforcement agencies to combat, deter and prevent cybercrime and called for the expansion of such cooperation, as appropriate. Participants also acknowledged the challenge in obtaining timely and lawful access to encrypted data, in accordance with individual rights and civil liberties, by those investigating and solving criminal offenses and exchanged views on their respective practices to counter such challenges. Participants took note of the dialogue that took place in Brussels between the cybersecurity experts at DHS and the EU and agreed to continue to collaborate to strengthen the cybersecurity posture on both sides of the Atlantic.

The United States and the European Union agreed on the importance for both law enforcement and judicial authorities of swift cross-border direct access to electronic evidence, as demonstrated by recent legislation approved or under examination in the United States and the EU. Participants further recognised the benefit of exploring, and agreed to discuss, the possibility of an EU-US agreement to facilitate access to electronic evidence.

The United States and the European Union exchanged information on developments in the area of migration and border management, with a particular focus on efforts to prevent and combat migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings. The United States and the European Union agreed on the importance of advancing towards reciprocal visa free travel under their respective legal frameworks and, following the most recent tripartite meeting on visa reciprocity, welcomed the progress of the five concerned Member States towards meeting the statutory requirements of the Visa Waiver Program, in order to be considered for designation in the programme.

The United States and the European Union underscored their shared concerns about the major international drug-control threats posed by illicit synthetic opioids, including fentanyl and its derivatives. Both sides took note of the U.S.-EU Political Dialogue on Drugs held on October 18, 2018.

Reiterating the progress made and the need to face global challenges together, the European Union and the United States remain committed to reinforce their partnership and meet again in the first half of 2019 in Bucharest, Romania.