

between law enforcement and the immigrant community so that all our communities are safe.

A Cuban immigrant who came to the United States at the age of 5, Esther has always sought to advance immigration policies rooted in the American values of fairness and family. Her life experiences as a child led her to a career in immigration law, first helping low-income immigrants in Florida through direct client representation and by cofounding the not-for-profit legal assistance organization Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, and then coming to Washington, DC.

I have no doubt that Esther will continue to be an important adviser, but more importantly a devoted friend to so many who have been fortunate to know her. She is an exemplary public servant. I commend Esther for her years of service and wish her and her family the best in their future endeavors.

STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN UNION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to speak about the European Union, to both recognize the peace and prosperity that it has brought to Europe for more than 75 years and the unprecedented challenges confronting the union today.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently held a hearing on the threats to the European Union and the implications for U.S. foreign policy. Our committee was also briefed this week by Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland on these issues.

Coming out of these discussions, I am absolutely convinced that the U.S. has an obligation to stand with our friends in Europe during these challenging times in support of the principles that we all share: democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights, economic prosperity, and peace and security.

I would like to lay out how I see these challenges threatening the cohesion and stability of the EU. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but is intended to create a sense of urgency among my colleagues regarding the crises faced by the EU and our transatlantic alliance.

First, I want to reiterate the remarkable trajectory of the democratic process and peace in Europe since the World Wars of the last century. Emerging from the ashes of World War II, what started as the European Coal and Steel Community expanded to become the European Economic Community, which created a single market for the free movement of goods, people, capital, and services. The ideal of a single market guaranteeing freedom of movement for all member citizens still underpins the EU today, as it has grown from 6 to 28 members.

This basis in an economic union was always intended to grow into a polit-

ical union as well. Jean Monnet, often regarded as the father of the European Union, stated that “we are not forming coalitions of states, we are uniting men.” This principle serves as the basis for cooperation amongst member states as they have pooled diplomatic resources to address some of the most pressing issues around the world, usually in concert and in lock-step with the United States. In capitals around the world, the U.S. works with EU representatives to address vexing regional challenges, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and support for values that we hold dear.

The allure of EU membership has served as a powerful incentive, especially for countries in Central and Eastern Europe, to reform and adopt high governance standards in preparation for EU membership. Nowhere else in the world does such an incentive exist; and, while not without its challenges, this accession process has improved the economic circumstances, political rights, and civil liberties of millions across the continent.

Today, however, the EU is confronting its most serious crises, which collectively threaten the future of the European project. These threats to European cohesion are both internal and external, between north and south and east and west, as well as within and outside individual member states.

First, the refugee and migrant crisis today consumes policymakers in Brussels and across Europe. Tensions have grown among member states on the right approach to accepting them, as more than 1 million entered Germany alone in 2015, with the prospect of more in 2016. The heated debate within the Union on how to deal with the crisis has called into question the ability of Brussels to enforce commitments by its member states on borders, Schengen visa-free travel, and quotas associated with resettlement.

In recent months, member states have agreed to resettlement quotas and border protocols, only to see those agreements fall apart in quick succession. Some are now concerned that this trend could extend to other EU member states’ commitments in areas like sanctions on Russia.

Second, the 2008 financial crisis and the possibility of Greece exiting the Eurozone drew attention to the fiscal policy differences between Europe’s industrialized north and less developed south and shook the foundations of the monetary union. The EU has not yet weathered this particular storm, and while perhaps not as prominent in the news due to other challenges, the fiscal situation in Greece remains very precarious. Member states and the IMF remain focused on resolving the crisis, but the natural tension between painful economic reforms and the associated political and humanitarian costs remains.

Third, governments across the EU are contending with the very real threat of domestic terrorism and for-

eign fighters. Horrific attacks have galvanized European leaders to action, but significant challenges remain as the necessity for enhanced counterterrorism and intelligence measures interact with real concerns regarding privacy.

Fourth, an alarming nationalist trend has emerged in several countries across the Union. Although nationalism has, of course, existed for years across the Continent, it has been exacerbated by the migrant crisis. In some countries, governments have embraced a brand of “illiberal democracy” which calls into question the very democratic values of the EU and the four freedoms that make up its core.

Every member state signed up for these values when they joined the Union—many of which had to enact difficult reforms to make them a reality. It is unfortunate and worrying that we have seen an erosion of support for these principles in some corners, a dynamic that deserves increased attention and understanding.

Fifth, Russia continues to place pressure on the EU and poses a threat to the security of EU countries in the east. Ukraine is the clearest example, where Ukrainian aspirations for an association agreement with the EU were met with the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of eastern Ukraine.

We have worked closely with the EU to establish and maintain a sanctions regime on Russia that is having a measurable impact. We must stay united on sanctions until the Minsk II agreement is fully implemented and Crimea is returned to Ukrainian control.

For years, Russia has also sought to erode support for EU institutions though a sustained propaganda campaign across the Union. We understand that Russia works to fund and influence anti-EU political parties, think tanks, NGOs, and media voices within the Union and among aspirant countries.

Russia is using the very strengths of Europe’s democratic societies against it—free press, civil society, and open debate. We should be prepared to push back against these revanchist efforts, not through propaganda, but a clear and forceful debate on facts.

Russia has not been reluctant to use its energy resources as a weapon as it seeks to pursue its ambitions, including by withholding energy exports to Europe in order to extract concessions on other issues. Much of Europe imports a considerable share of its oil and gas supplies from Russia.

The EU plays an important role in negotiating energy deals with Russia and must constantly contend with the threat that the country poses to the energy needs of member states. The collective negotiating power the EU wields with Russia is critical to ensuring the individual energy security of all EU nations.

Finally, UK Prime Minister Cameron is negotiating a new settlement between Britain and the 27 other members of the EU prior to a referendum this summer on the UK's continued participation in the EU. Although the Prime Minister has said that the "best answer" is for the UK to remain part of a reformed EU, it is up to the British citizens to vote to remain within the Union.

All of this matters greatly to the United States. EU member states include some of our oldest and closest allies in the world. Our partnership with the EU has afforded us the possibility of addressing some of the most challenging international issues—this partnership has made us safer and stronger.

We also draw great economic benefit from a stable EU—the Union is our largest trading partner and our economies are intertwined in beneficial ways for citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. This partnership is vital to our interests, but only works if the EU's institutions are vibrant and able to respond to the challenges before it.

While many of these problems will be up to the EU member states to resolve, I strongly believe that we should stand in solidarity with the Union through this difficult period and take tangible action to support our friends.

First, we must continue to make clear our support for the democratic principles that serve as the basis for the EU and should be clear in speaking out against the growing chorus of illiberal voices. The U.S. should reenergize ties with civil society across the continent, especially in Central and Eastern Europe where strong civil society connections established after the Cold War atrophied as attention shifted elsewhere.

We also need to reinvigorate the transatlantic dialogue—among governments, think tanks, NGOs, and civil society organizations—on these issues. The transatlantic relationship always has and always will benefit from enhanced ties among our people.

The U.S. should also work to develop a new generation of foreign policy and security policy leaders and analysts that focus on Europe and the centrality that the continent has for our interests.

Second, we should support European efforts to bolster energy security across the continent in a way that ensures reliability and decreased dependence on Russian supply.

Third, we should continue to work with Europe on strengthening security, its border controls, and the vitality of the Schengen visa-free zone. This means sharing of intelligence and best practices on how to prevent terrorist attacks before they happen. I also want to applaud the administration's intention to invest \$3.4 billion into the European Reassurance Initiative, which will ensure a sustained U.S. military presence in Europe to help deter further Russian aggression.

Fourth, we should continue our robust support for the UN High Commis-

sioner for Refugees, International Organizations for Migration, and several outstanding NGOs which work directly with refugees and migrants across Europe. We should be proud of this commitment and continue to support the most vulnerable populations.

Fifth, we should continue to work closely with the EU and member states on working to ensure that the Minsk II deal is fully implemented. Success to date has been rooted in U.S.-EU solidarity, and we must finish the job—the sanctions regime must remain in place until Minsk II is realized and Crimea is returned to Ukrainian control.

Finally, we should continue our robust support for Ukraine while holding the government accountable to progress in the fight against corruption. I am concerned by the recent departure of Ukraine's Minister of Economy who resigned in protest against the slow pace of reform and anticorruption efforts.

The U.S. Congress passed two pieces of legislation last year supporting Ukraine's economy, Ukrainian civil society, and the government's broad-based reform efforts. Although some progress has been made, we must finish the job.

The success of Ukraine will be the success of Europe and the ideals that have drawn sovereign states to join its ranks for the last 75 years. I call on this body to continue to support Ukraine's reformers throughout civil society and government as they continue to make real strides towards integration with the west and adoption of the democratic ideals that we uphold.

More importantly, I again call upon Ukraine's leaders to prove that they are serious about countering corruption. The international community's patience in this regard exists, but is not limitless. We need to see concrete results soon.

In 2012, the Nobel Peace prize was awarded in recognition of the EU's central role in providing stability in Europe. The chairman of the Nobel committee said the following at the ceremony: "We are not gathered here today in the belief that the EU is perfect. We are gathered in the belief that here in Europe we must solve our problems together. For that purpose we need institutions that can enter into the necessary compromises. We need institutions to ensure that both nation-states and individuals exercise self-control and moderation. In a world of so many dangers, compromise, self-control and moderation are the principal needs of the 21st century."

These words continue to ring true today as pressure on the Union grows. Across the ocean here in the U.S., we should resolutely stand in solidarity with our friends in Europe and the principles they embrace. Never before has the EU been so challenged or our transatlantic alliance so valuable. We must bolster our ties this year and renew our commitment to a robust transatlantic relationship.

GENERIC DRUG USER FEE AMENDMENTS: ACCELERATING PATIENT ACCESS TO GENERIC DRUGS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of my remarks to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

GENERIC DRUG USER FEE AMENDMENTS: ACCELERATING PATIENT ACCESS TO GENERIC DRUGS

In December, the president signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act, a bill to fix No Child Left Behind and proof that this committee can work together to tackle very difficult issues.

But a law not properly implemented isn't worth the paper it's written on, which is why I'm going to be working with Senator Murray to set up a strong oversight process during 2016 to make sure the teachers, governors, chief state school officers, parents and students who counted on us to fix that law see that it's implemented properly.

We're here today for a similar purpose: to conduct oversight of the 2012 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Safety and Innovation Act—specifically the law's Generic Drug User Fee Amendments, which are fees negotiated between the FDA and generic drug makers to give the agency additional resources intended to speed the review of generic drugs.

This is Congress' first oversight hearing since these agreements were passed in 2012, and it comes at a critical time for patients: Despite the FDA receiving nearly \$1 billion in user fees since 2012 as a result of these user fee agreements, performance is not living up to Congress' or patients' expectations, as the number of generic drugs approved per year remains about the same.

The user fee agreements are due to be reauthorized next year, and discussions between the FDA and industry are already underway—making now the appropriate time for us to better understand whether or not these 2012 agreements are working to give Americans better access to generic drugs.

The generic drug program, established by the Hatch-Waxman Amendments over 30 years ago, has had great success increasing competition and lowering drug prices.

The program was created to make it easier for generic drugs to enter the market.

Let me quickly explain how this works: Once a drug is approved by the FDA, for example, Lipitor—which is widely used to help lower cholesterol—no other manufacturer can make that drug for a period of time. When that period of time expires, a manufacturer may make a copy of that drug—and we call that a generic drug.

That generic copy must also have FDA approval.

This generic approval process doesn't include full clinical trials, which often are long and expensive, contributing to higher prices for brand drugs.

As a result, more generic drugs in the market creates competition and lowers prices for consumers.

And today, 88 percent of prescription drugs purchased in the United States are generic drugs.

However, in 2012, 26 years after the law first passed, it became clear the generic drug approval program needed an overhaul.

More generic drugs were coming from overseas. Generic drug companies in China and India were inspected much less frequently than American companies, putting American