

Press Release

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The Council of Women World Leaders Kicks Off the Albright Women's Voice Series

EU's Margot Wallström and Sec. Albright Discuss EU-US Relations

[\(CSRwire\)](#) WASHINGTON, DC. - October 8, 2008 – Two of the world's most influential women leaders met on Friday, October 3, 2008, to offer advice to the incoming American President on European Union (EU) - United States (US) relations. The Council of Women World Leaders, a policy program of the Aspen Institute, hosted a panel discussion between former US Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and Margot Wallström, the Vice President of the European Commission. This event was the inaugural program of the *Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series*.

With a rich but complex history of cooperation and shared values, the EU and the US alliance is an essential, though at times challenging, relationship, according to Secretary Albright. In addressing current global environmental concerns, Vice President Wallström emphasized the need to "change the timeline" with respect to climate change in order to modify the approach and emphasize "(the) opportunity" rather than focus solely on the problem.

Turning to gender inequity, both speakers stressed the importance of increasing the number and visibility of women leaders globally. According to both Secretary Albright and Vice President Wallström, security - as a concept - was approached differently by women and men. For example, women often emphasize access to education, clean water, and a stable family structure as part of the solution to global security challenges, whereas their male counterparts tend to focus more on a military-centered approach.

Secretary Albright expressed the need for "dialogue with Iran without preconditions" in partnership with the EU. In reference to US policies on Iraq and the Middle East, Secretary Albright commented that "imposing democracy is an oxymoron." Both speakers suggested that focusing on the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty and marginalization, was more sensible than "bundling terrorists" into one category.

Vice President Wallström outlined an international response to recent actions by Russia: we must not only "engage Russia but make clear statements about problems" and send a financial message. Both speakers agreed that we cannot afford to return to a Cold War-like system.

Regarding the global economy and stable democratic systems of governance, Secretary

Albright noted that you cannot have a traditional democracy without a middle class, and it is not possible to have a middle class without a strong economy. Both leaders highlighted the importance of strengthening the EU-US alliance under the next American president in order to strengthen their respective national economies and international markets. Secretary Albright observed that both candidates understand the importance of working with Europe, but believed that Senator Obama favors the use of soft power and partnerships.

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The Council of Women World Leaders is a network of 36 current and former women presidents and prime ministers. The Council and its Ministerial Initiative, a global Network of Women Ministers grouped into specific portfolios, create a collective voice for women at the highest levels of government. Mary Robinson, President of Ireland (1990-97) is Chair of the Council, and Margot Wallström, First Vice-President of the European Commission (2004-present), is Chair of the Ministerial Initiative. The Council is a policy program of the Aspen Institute.

The Aspen Institute mission is twofold: to foster values-based leadership, encouraging individuals to reflect on the ideals and ideas that define a good society, and to provide a neutral and balanced venue for discussing and acting on critical issues. The Aspen Institute does this primarily in four ways: seminars, young-leader fellowships around the globe, policy programs and public conferences and events. The Institute is based in Washington, DC, Aspen, Colorado, and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore and has an international network of partners.

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