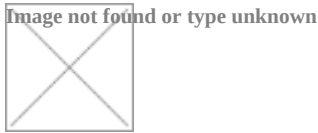


Discours

21 Septembre 2016

Speech to the Belgian-American Chamber of Commerce in New-York



Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank you for your kind invitation.

I am a modest man ;-)

but when I started out, two years ago, as prime minister I was committed to make Belgium ? great again.

No, just joking?

I wanted to make Belgium the best place in the world to start and grow a business.

Two years ago some did not believe me.

But standing here today.

Our reforms are showing results.

- In two years? time companies have created seventy thousand jobs.
- Salaries have increased.
- And unemployment has decreased to the lowest level in 25 years.
- Never before in the last 10 years did so many companies set up business in Belgium.
- And according to the latest report of the American Chamber of Commerce in Brussels, confidence of American investors in Belgium has grown.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I keep forgetting his name.

But there is a candidate who is running for president.

He called Brussels a hellhole.

He wanted to be with us tonight.

But we cancelled his invitation.

Now Brussels is many things.

But it is foremost an international hub of the third most globalized economy in the world.

Commerce and trade in Belgium represent more than 80 percent of our Gross Domestic Product.

Our productivity index is among the highest in the world.

Like our education system and innovation.

But we want more investors.

That's why we have taken important steps to reform our economy and our tax system.

We have substantially lowered the taxes on labor.

And we are changing our labor market.

We are launching an important investment program for the next fifteen years in order to improve infrastructure, the digital agenda and mobility.

In one word : we support jobs and prosperity.

But like many others we know successes and ? setbacks.

Just a few weeks ago Caterpillar announced its intention to close the site in Charleroi.

The news has come as a brutal shock!

Especially because this site is one of the most productive.

So we are deeply saddened. But our priority is to maintain industrial activity on the site.

We are prepared to fight for every job and will not give in.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have told you about our many strengths.

Our location, our culture, our multilingual people, our creativity, our fries, our chocolate. Our beers?

But as you know.

This has been a very momentous year for Belgium.

In March we were hit by terrorists.

But we uphold our responsibility to guarantee safety to our citizens and our many visitors.

We have taken many concrete measures to improve security.

And we have provided more means and stronger intelligence.

Exactly fifteen years ago New York lost many lives when it was attacked by Al Qaeda.

But like every nation America drew lessons from what happened.

If there is one thing that makes us really proud of our countries? it's the resilience and the dignity our citizens have shown in the face of terrorism.

This is a common fight.

Our struggle is not over.

But we have adapted as quickly as possible.

And remain vigilant and proactive.

Tonight I ask you to look over the horizon.

How can we make our partnership even greater?

How can we defend our values even better?

Freedom, innovation and entrepreneurship are key to more prosperity.

Let's join forces and work together.

We are with you every step of the way.

Once again, welcome to Belgium.

And long live the United States!

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