

Merkel sees broader scope to work with U.S. under Biden



?????German Chancellor Angela Merkel and then U.S. Vice President Joe Biden in Berlin February 1, 2013. (Photo: Tobias Schwarz / Reuters)

Berlin, January 21 (RHC)-- German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said there is a broader scope to work together with Washington now that Joe Biden has replaced Donald Trump in the White House. Merkel said Germany and Europe were ready to do their part to address a range of issues in the transatlantic in-tray including the coronavirus pandemic, climate change and security threats with the new administration.

“There’s just a much broader space of policy agreement with President Biden,” Merkel told a news conference in the German capital, Berlin, on Thursday, citing Biden’s return to the Paris climate accord and the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as his openness to migration as examples.

Merkel cautioned that with Biden in office “we can’t now just count on political agreement” but said there will be “discussions about how we do things well for both countries.” She underlined the need for Germany and Europe to assume a greater share of responsibility militarily, diplomatically and in other areas in its relationship with the U.S. and said “we’re ready for it”, adding that cooperation was “based again on a broader foundation of common conviction.”

Trump was repeatedly critical of Germany’s contributions to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization during his tenure, complaining that it had failed to raise defence spending to 2 percent of economic output as mandated by the military alliance, a pillar of post-war European security. In June of last year, he approved a plan to withdraw 9,500 U.S. troops from Germany, faulting the country for failing to meet the defence spending target and accusing Berlin of taking advantage of Washington on trade.

Merkel on Thursday also spoke about U.S. opposition to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project to bring Russian gas to Germany, saying there was a need for broad talks with the Biden administration about what types of energy cooperation with Russia were “acceptable.” But she criticised “extraterritorial sanctions” from the US against the project as “out of order.”

“My view on Nord Stream 2 has not changed,” she said, despite growing tensions with Russia, most recently over the arrest of leading Kremlin critic Alexey Navalny. Nord Stream 2 is set to double Russian natural-gas shipments to Germany, Europe’s largest economy.

It has long been in the crosshairs of the United States, with Trump in particular openly criticising European countries for their reliance on energy from Russia. Work resumed on the nearly completed pipeline in December after an almost year-long suspension caused by threats of asset freezes and visa restrictions for companies involved.

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