

German foreign minister says Europe can no longer rely on U.S.



Berlin, July 17 (RHC)-- Germany says that European countries can no longer fully rely on the United States, calling for a unified front against Washington after U.S. President Donald Trump called the 28-member bloc a "foe" with regard to trade. "We can no longer completely rely on the White House," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told the country's Funke newspaper group on Monday.

"To maintain our partnership with the U.S. we must readjust it. The first clear consequence can only be that we need to align ourselves even more closely in Europe," he added. Reaffirming the same remarks, Maas said in a tweet later that "in order to recalibrate our partnership with the U.S. we need a united, confident and sovereign Europe!"

The top German diplomat's comments came a day after Trump said in an interview with CBS News that the EU was a "foe." While Trump steps up his war of words with the European Union over trade, Germany's European affairs minister, Michael Roth, called for unity among the EU member states and accused the U.S. president of "provoking" a response from Europe.

"He is trying to bring about a split in the EU. He is describing us as enemies. We do not see it like that at

all," Roth said, adding that the EU should not be unsettled by Trump's "in part very aggressive, untruthful and not particularly constructive" comments. The minister noted that "indignation alone will not help," and "the only thing that helps is clear language, and a clear united position."

In response to Trump's remarks, President of the European Council Donald Tusk, however, said the union and Washington were "best friends," and noted that the two sides being foes was "fake news."

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini also said that "for sure, we consider the United States friends, partners -- close friends and partners." "We have very clear in mind who our friends are: the United States for sure," she said. "A change in the administration doesn't change the friendship between countries and peoples."

Trump has been antagonizing longtime U.S. allies like Canada, the EU and the UK over the past months, criticizing them for adopting trade policies that he says are unfair to American businesses. On June 10, the Trump administration imposed 10 percent tariffs on aluminum imports and 25 percent tariffs on steel imports, which mainly affect the EU and Canada.

The EU imposed a range of tariffs on goods worth \$3.3 billion earlier this month in a tit-for-tat response to Trump's decision to apply stiff tariffs on European steel and aluminum exports. The EU tariffs, applied to items ranging from blue jeans to bourbon, appear designed in part to hit industries which are predominantly active in states dominated by Trump's Republican Party.

During the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, Trump repeatedly attacked America's trade deficits, contending they were the result of incompetent U.S. negotiators striking bad deals and abusive practices by its trading partners.

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