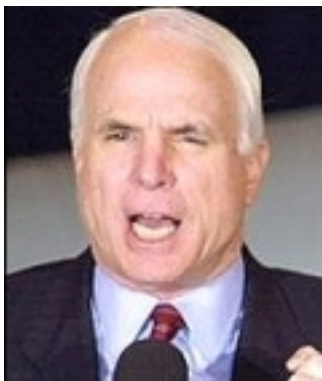


MCCAIN REINFORCES EPP-IRI TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION



The European People's Party (EPP) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) held today in Brussels a joint event with United States Senator John McCain as the featured guest.

In the framework of the cooperation between the EPP and the IRI, which was launched in July 2005, the two organizations made a new breakthrough in their relationship by hosting an event with John McCain and discussing the current state of transatlantic relations. In the event, a number of prominent figures from the EPP family participated, including the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso.

EPP President Wilfried Martens expressed his "delight" for this successful event: "I am delighted that the EPP and the IRI had the honor to host such a prominent political figure of the United States. John McCain is a strong supporter of the transatlantic partnership and a good friend of Europe."

US Senator and IRI Chairman John McCain stressed in his speech that "transatlantic relations are always critical for dealing with world challenges. There are reasons for optimism because we are forging new relations with Europe's center-right and our relationship with the EPP is just beginning." Senator McCain also pointed to "an explosion of democracy-promotion in Brussels," referring to a series of efforts currently underway by the European Union.

The President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso stressed "the need to develop the relationship between the US and the European Union, and not just with our member-states."

Finally, this event has also functioned as a prelude to an EPP visit to Washington next week. The four-member delegation, headed by President Martens, will have meetings with high-level representatives from the White House, Capitol Hill, State Department, as well as with US think-tanks.