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Speaker: David Taylor, New Zealand Ambassador to the European Union and NATO, New Zealand  
Discussant: Nina Hall, Assistant Professor of International Relations, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe, Bologna, Italy  
Chair: Michael Leigh, Academic Director, Master of Arts in European Public Policy, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe, Bologna, Italy

**A Discussion on Global Challenges, European Integration, and International Leadership as Viewed from the Asia-Pacific Region**  
*Part of the International Relations Series*

The growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region in today's world cannot be understated. New Zealand has sought to play a leadership role with international calls to tackle climate change and hate speech. A discussion between Ambassador Taylor, Professor Hall, and Professor Leigh highlighted some of the challenges and hopes for New Zealand on the global stage in the future.

Ambassador Taylor has been New Zealand's representative to the European Union (EU) for the past 4.5 years. When asked about the recently elected EU Commission he noted its ambition: a European Parliament compilation of undertakings made during the confirmation hearings for Commissioners came to 109 pages worth of commitments. Importantly, the new Commission is looking to advance a Green Deal in Europe. While still confronted by challenges (Brexit, the precarious situation in the WTO), the economic situation is better than when the Juncker Commission took office and there is not an immediate crisis to deal with. The European Commission is still a powerful force for stability and economic prosperity, and the Ambassador believes the Commission plays a fundamental role in the EU's international leadership.

New Zealand has an excellent relationship with the EU, reflecting shared values and interests. Both sides seek to modernize their trading relationship and the its sixth round of negotiations on an EU-NZ free trade agreement took place in December. While both sides are receptive to the other's concerns, New Zealand is seeking a more progressive agenda particularly when it comes to climate change, sustainability and indigenous rights. Access to the EU market is immensely important to New Zealand businesses (the EU is New Zealand's second largest trading partner).

Like the EU, New Zealand officials have faced criticism about the way in which trade agreements have been negotiated, including the recently concluded Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has responded by focusing even more on consulting the public, and particularly Maori..

New Zealand is also leading many initiatives on climate change-focused trade and sustainability, such as reducing fossil fuel subsidies. Getting rid of these subsidies which are worth about US\$500 billion per year will have a significant impact on climate change..

Taylor also talked about the New Zealand perspective on Brexit. The UK and EU are both important partners for New Zealand. New Zealand seeks the best possible relationship with both. The EU is now a larger trade

partner than the UK. While the EU trade negotiation is the top priority for New Zealand, it will also negotiate an agreement with the UK when it is able to do so. Given New Zealand's long-standing ties with both the EU and the UK, it would be concerned if negotiations do not go well between these important partners.

Ambassador Taylor is particularly proud of the work New Zealand has done in collaboration with the EU curbing hate speech and violent extremist content online. In May 2019 New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and France President Emmanuel Macron hosted a summit in Paris with other national leaders and representatives of big tech. Attendees supported the "Christchurch Call" a voluntary pledge to address violent and extremist content online. There has been welcome progress already and New Zealand has been invited to engage with the EU Internet Forum as it seeks to push this issue forward, but it is a complex topic heavily debated worldwide and there is still much to be done.

With the Asia-Pacific gaining increasing importance on the global stage, New Zealand sits at a vital point in international relations between the EU, USA, and China. New Zealand seeks to make a positive contribution, as the discussion about international trade, climate change, and hate speech demonstrated.. New Zealand looked to continue to work closely with the EU and other partners in the Asia-Pacific.