

## **Session on 'After US Elections: Next Steps in the US-India relationship' with Ambassador Frank Wisner**

New Delhi, 12 September 2008

Though Indo-US bilateral relations have come a long way in the last decade, there are many underlying issues that the two countries need to tackle together, said Ambassador Frank Wisner, Vice-Chairman, American International Group, at a session on 'After US Elections: Next Steps in the US-India relationship', organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Aspen Institute India in New Delhi today.

"There are a lot of hard questions on issues like the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan, that we need to address," Ambassador Wisner said. "We have different perspectives on issues with regards to Pakistan and Iran and we need to be frank with each other, share thoughts and evolve common strategies to arrive at an understanding," he said. He suggested that it was premature to use terms such as natural allies or strategic partners to describe the Indo-US relationship.

"The United States will have to recognize that India will be a key trading partner in future along with the fact that it is a rising force and will play an important role on the world stage," Ambassador Wisner said.

"We can make very bad mistakes. We have made a terrible mistakes in the recent past, for example during the Doha Round," he said adding, "we should realize that the success of Doha Round will be good for the world trading system." He reiterated that though there is "no going back now" and that the "best lies ahead" with regard to Indo-US ties, "we will be very unwise to rest on our laurels."

"There are illusions in the US about India. Not all of us have understood that to be globally competitive we have to invest in India," he said adding, "The consensus is not fully arrived at."

The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) approval of the Indo-US nuclear deal, Ambassador Wisner felt, "tells us that if we put our minds together, we can achieve much." According to Ambassador Wisner, the Pokhran II nuclear test by India led to a fundamental turning point in the ties between the two countries, which "made it imperative for the US to look at the reality."

"The US and India are going for elections soon and it is important for the new governments to underscore the importance of continuing talks at the prime ministerial and ministerial levels," he said while explaining what he thought was the road ahead for the two countries. He opined that India and the US must work together on building democratic institutions around the world, and also evolve a precise common agenda on so that differences on issues such as the Doha Round can be sorted out.

Ambassador Wisner stressed on the importance of public-private partnerships (PPP) to further relations between India and the US. "Such partnerships will go a long way in tackling issues in sectors like education, health, environment, and especially climate change," he pointed out.

Agreeing with Ambassador Wisner, CII's Chief Mentor Tarun Das said "we have to be realistic as well as hopeful while furthering Indo-US ties." He said, "We have differences of opinions and will have differences of opinions, but we should sit together and expand the scope of bilateral ties further." He expressed optimism about the future of the bilateral relationship between the two countries.