
BACK HOME AFTER ICY TRUMP MEETING, MERKEL CALLS FOR OPEN MARKETS

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe issued a staunch joint defence of free trade yesterday (19 March), as the United States pushes towards greater protectionism.

We want free and open markets, Merkel said in a speech in Hanover, a day before the worlds biggest computer trade fair, CeBIT, kicks off in the central German city. The event is partnered with Japan this year.

Germany to press G20 to sign off on free trade amid worries about US stance

Germany will press G20 members to sign off on a set of principles including free trade at this weeks meeting of the groups financial leaders, in what the Trump Administration may perceive as a challenge to its more protectionist stance.

In these times of inter-connectedness, we want to link together our societies and work together in an equitable way. Thats what free trade is about, she said.

She made no direct reference to US President Donald Trump, elected on a protectionist America First platform promising to slash trade deficits, but noted that the European Union and Japan are negotiating a free trade deal that may be reached this year.

At a time when we are arguing a lot over free trade, open borders and democratic values, its a good sign that Japan and Germany are not arguing over trade, she said.

Abe, who is in Hanover as part of a European tour, said that Japan wants to be the champion upholding open systems alongside Germany.

He said it was through connectedness that economies would grow, and called for a swift conclusion to the EU-Japan trade deal.

But he added: We must not create conditions by which wealth becomes concentrated among only some people.

At a fraught G20 meeting in the German spa town of Baden-Baden on Saturday (18 March), the US challenged long-standing global principles surrounding free trade, refusing to renew past anti-protectionist pledges and threatening to reopen negotiations on World Trade Organisation deals.

Since taking office, Trump has withdrawn the US from a trans-Pacific free trade pact and attacked

export giants China and Germany over their massive trade surpluses.

Europe moves to pick up free trade scraps as Trump ditches TPP

President Donald Trump signed an executive order formally withdrawing the United States from the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal yesterday (23 January) as Europe sniffed a chance to pick up the free trade the US is turning its back on.

Icy meeting

Merkels meeting on Friday (16 March) with Trump in the White House was widely described as icy.

Merkel and Trump clash over refugees in first meeting

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and US President Donald Trump found little common ground on Friday (16 March) on the management of the refugee crisis, but promised to work out compromises to overcome the dispute over the trade relations.

During the press conference, Merkel said its much, much better to talk to one another and not about one another, and I think our conversation proved this.

But even the lighter moments were tinged with tension.

Trump insisted he was not isolationist, saying: Im a free trader but also a fair trader.

Merkel rejected Trumps suggestion that individual European countries should negotiate free trade deals with the United States, rather than under existing EU-US negotiations.

I hope we can come back to the table and talk about the agreement between the EU and US, she said.

Kaynak/Source: