

**Ambassador Gerhard Thiedemann, Day of German Unity**

**Wellington, Oct 26, 2017**

Tenakoutou, Tenakoutou, Tenakoutou Katoa  
Excellencies, members of the (European and) New Zealand Parliament,  
Dear Jeff Langley, deputy secretary as representative of the host government;  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Liebe Landsleute !

Schön, dass Sie bei unserer **Feier des Tages der Deutschen Einheit** dabei sind.  
Ich schalte jetzt besser auf Englisch um; das verstehen dann alle hier im Raum.

**Welcome** to our German Unity Day party : 27 years after our divided countrymen could form the Federal Republic of Germany, we know today as a free and responsible member of the family of nations.

I like to express my **gratitude** to all of our distinguished guests that are here today to celebrate this very special day in German history together with us.

Allow me to take a **brief look backwards before we return to the present** : We all know that Germany has been separated in consequence of World War II. Two states evolved : The **communist German Democratic Republic** in the east and the **Federal Republic of Germany**, a **western democracy**, both divided by an iron curtain and in the capital since 1961 by the Berlin Wall. Two decades of the “policy of détente” plus substantial changes in Eastern Europe opened the window of opportunity for the **peaceful revolution** in the former **GDR**. After 28 years, the Wall finally came down on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 1989.

With the Soviet **resistance against** the idea of a **united Germany fading** under Mikhail Gorbatschow, the process picked up some considerable momentum. The 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1990 marked the first and only free parliamentary elections in the GDR, resulting in a landslide win for the party called “Alliance for Germany”. The **reunification** was now **well on its way**.

It was finalized on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1990 when the newly built five East German federal states **joined our constitution, “das Grundgesetz” and our state** as a whole.

However, the formal reunification is not the only thing we celebrate today. The German national day tells a complex story of **companionship, integration and determination**. The unity of Germany also stands for the **success of a civil rights** movement against a totalitarian state – the GDR.

Having become a unified nation once again continues to fill the hearts of **Germans with happiness**, making this day such a joyous occasion. Nevertheless, it also serves as a strong reminder to continue to work hard for the strength of this unity and for the values it stands for – not just at home but also abroad **as Europeans and members of the United Nations**.

The **strong and unconditional commitment to human rights and the democratic order** are core elements of the united German. Moreover, my government is convinced that prosperous international ties can only be established and maintained by **the shared and firm belief in such values**. An outstanding example is readily found in the **close connection** between **Germany and New Zealand**. We are **political value partners** and enjoy a densely knit network of cooperation.

It is every democracy’s obligation to **ensure the rule of law** and the adherence to **human rights** domestically, while simultaneously promoting and fostering the same **internationally**. New Zealand is a trusted and highly valuable ally for Germany regarding the latter, which is underpinned by our joint efforts in the UN. The upcoming visit of the **German president Dr. F.-W. Steinmeier** in November to Wellington and Auckland puts even more emphasis on the sincere and mutual **appreciation between our countries**.

100.000 **German** tourists and 16.000 young work & travelers come to New Zealand annually while 30.000 of my **countrymen** enjoy life here permanently.

Our two countries are firm **trading partners**. The German-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Auckland has 230 member companies. Exchange and business are growing and provide substantial jobs here and there.

2017 we celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> jubilee of our bilateral agreement on technical and **scientific cooperation**. Approximately 200 German scientists work in New Zealand universities and research institutes. These are invaluable connections promoting major scientific advances. There are a number of fascinating **joint projects**, like the creation of a bionic arm or the common endeavor in soft tissue robotics – to give only two examples.

Earlier in October 2017 we celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of **Passchendaele** and mourned the dead at **Pukeahu**. What better time to remind us of the core idea of European integration as a “**philosophy of peace**”. Please rest assured that **Germany will live up to its historic responsibility towards its worldwide partners**.

**Toast on the Queen and the people of New Zealand**