



# BUNDESPRÄSIDENTIALAMT

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page 1 of 3

**Federal President Joachim Gauck  
at the New Year Reception for the Diplomatic Corps  
on 8 January 2013  
at Schloss Bellevue**

Thank you very much, Nuncio, for opening the proceedings! Your kind wishes on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps I return with great pleasure. Many of you I met for the first time a few months ago on our trip to Saxony. I have fond memories of our sightseeing programme there, but also of the more relaxed part on the boat enjoying something as typically German as coffee and cake. Today's New Year reception is another enjoyable ritual – one of course that's much more international in flavour.

This world of ours yearns for peace and a good life for everyone. It is a world in which there is war and hunger, a world in which people still far too often lack development opportunities, individual freedom and security. You all know, too, how difficult it is to limit the consequences of climate change. You know how we're struggling to learn the right lessons from the mistakes that caused the current global economic and financial crisis.

But this world also gives us cause for hope. There is good will, there is courage, there is a recognition – growing recognition, I believe – that in the long run the nations which prosper are those that cooperate with other nations and where people have the freedom to make the most of their talents.

Considering what a diverse, perhaps even complex picture we present here today, I'm reminded above all of the many positive ways in which people can interact. We can treat each other with respect, mindful of our differences and diverging interests, yet conscious, too, that dialogue can bring us closer and that individuals can, as we see time and again, make a crucial difference. As diplomats it's your job to serve the state or organization that sent you here. You bring to this service your own convictions, outlook and values – and thereby

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assume personal responsibility for what you do. For someone who's reached adulthood, freedom means making the most of one's talents and opportunities: that's how we assume responsibility for others and this world that is home to us all.

It's my firm belief that every individual can make a difference.

In my first months as President, I met a great many impressive people on my trips abroad. In this connection I'd like to mention two encounters in particular that I had here in Europe. One was with my Polish opposite number Bronisław Komorowski, someone who was once persecuted for his commitment to freedom. I also think back with gratitude to Queen Beatrix and the people of the Netherlands, who – despite what their country suffered at the hands of Nazi Germany – invited the German President to give a speech on the anniversary of their liberation from German occupation.

And most crucially, as I know and have seen for myself time and again, this Europe we're building together is not one that sets nation against nation. Today's Europe is one that unites our nations in a shared respect for human rights. It's one where, extraordinarily enough, we feel not threatened but protected by the arsenals of our European neighbours. One where it's not so much our neighbours' strength as their occasional weaknesses that we fear. Safeguarding and further developing such a European project as well as convincing young people of its importance is a task worth every effort.

Longtime UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whom I met recently, has summed up the challenges ahead for the international community. It's only by working to make each other secure that we can hope to achieve lasting security for ourselves, he points out. And we will remain prosperous in the long term only if we give others the chance to share in our prosperity. We need human dignity to be protected by the rule of law, we need governments to be held accountable for their actions both at home and abroad. And we need fairly and democratically organized multilateral organizations. In short, we have a shared responsibility towards each other.

You, ladies and gentlemen, will have a hand in how much progress is made towards these goals over the year ahead. How successful diplomacy is may not always be immediately obvious, as you're only too aware. A German ambassador once told me that sometimes just drinking tea together counts as a success. As long as people go on talking, there's at least a chance of an agreed, peaceful solution. It's a great thing if your work as diplomats helps to reduce or defuse conflict and also, wherever possible, to enhance understanding and rapprochement.

As the political changes in the Arab world and elsewhere make clear, people want a greater say in how they live their lives. All over

the world the young generation especially are demanding freedom, dignity and a better future. They use the Internet and other media to keep up with what's happening and with each other. So let's take them and their calls for greater political and economic participation seriously! Suppressing such calls won't make them go away!

I've learned from what happened in Central and Eastern Europe that change is indeed possible if large numbers of people decide to exercise their rights as citizens. That's something I wish also for all of us active in the realm of international diplomacy: the courage to change what needs changing and take responsibility for each other!

Ladies and gentlemen, many of you I'll be meeting again in the course of the months ahead. I look forward to our work together as well as the talks I'll be having with you very shortly.

I'm counting, too, on your continued support during my travels abroad. Here in Germany you do very important work which our country values highly.

Working together with the countries and organizations you serve, I and my fellow Germans want to help give life and substance to people's desire to live their lives freely and in peace and for a world in which people treat each other with humanity and respect.

I wish you, your families and all your staff a happy and peaceful New Year 2013!