



**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck
to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela
on 6 December 2013
at Schloss Bellevue**

Our world has lost a towering figure. Bidding him farewell leaves us deeply moved and saddened. We take our leave of Nelson Mandela. Everyone working for the cause of freedom, human rights and human dignity will find encouragement and inspiration in his life's work.

We look back on a most remarkable life. What an extraordinary man he was! Nelson Mandela combined relentless drive with absolute integrity, a love of freedom with respect for the law and the quest for peaceful compromise with an insistence that historical truth must be made known.

His fight against the inhumanity of apartheid will remain unforgotten. A free South Africa – that was his dream! He was the architect of today's rainbow nation.

Equally unforgotten is the role he played in the process of national reconciliation. Despite the humiliating experience of 27 years in prison on Robben Island, he found the courage and strength to reject the path of hatred. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission founded on his initiative helped people realise that it is not revenge but truth, law and the willingness to forgive that bring inner peace and open doors to the future.

Nelson Mandela recognised that the oppressors, too, needed to be liberated. "Anyone who deprives others of their freedom becomes a prisoner of hatred himself", he explained. He firmly believed that "if people can learn to hate, they can also be taught to love, for love comes to human hearts much more naturally than its opposite".

His legacy encourages people everywhere never to abandon the struggle for democracy, freedom and the rule of law.

Like countless others in Germany, I am grateful for all that Nelson Mandela has given the world.