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Berlin, 11 June 2014  
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## **Speech**

**by Federal President Joachim Gauck  
to introduce a panel discussion  
at the Nobel Institute  
on 11 June 2014 in Oslo**

At the end of 1969 there were rumours going around in Germany that Norway had had quite an unexpected Christmas present that year. On Christmas Eve, large oil and gas deposits had been discovered off the coast of Norway. Since that day, we continental Europeans have got to know, and value, a new side to the Norwegians. Not only did we get to know you as a reliable energy supplier and one of the most affluent countries in the world. We now also began to value Norway for the responsible manner in which it dealt with its newly won wealth. The revenues from the oil industry – the majority at least – were and are saved year after year and invested in the future, a future in which oil reserves one day will no longer be so abundant. Moreover, Norway with its new riches has by no means become self-satisfied, or “self-sufficient”. Isolationism has not become a Norwegian characteristic.

The Norwegians have always cast their sights out onto the world. It is remarkable to note how many of the important explorers and pioneers of modern history came from Norway. Their names have a certain ring to them in Germany too: Roald Amundsen, Thor Heyerdahl and Fridtjof Nansen. And the fact that for more than one hundred years now, the most important prize in the world – the Nobel Peace Prize – is awarded here in Oslo is testament to Norway’s keen interest in global affairs.

Norway was later able to build on this tradition by becoming a mediator for peace and reconciliation, development and human rights.

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What began with the first mediation role in Guatemala led Norway in the 1990s via the “Oslo Process” – on which so many hopes were pinned for a solution to the Middle East conflict – to its current commitments in Sri Lanka, Colombia and the Sudan, to name just a few examples.

Peace mediation has thus become one of the “trademarks” of Norway. And Germany, too, is grateful in benefiting from Norway’s core political identity as we have four Nobel Peace Prize laureates: Gustav Stresemann and Ludwig Quidde – whose grave I was able to visit in Geneva –, Carl von Ossietzky and Willy Brandt.

There is no doubt that Norway has particularly good credentials for the role of peace mediator – it was never a colonial power and it maintains good relations with all the important actors in the international arena, from the United States of America to the United Nations.

Ever since 2002 there has been a Department for UN, Peace and Humanitarian Affairs at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The creation of this department was an innovation in foreign policy. And the Norwegians have succeeded in developing their own peace policy profile, perhaps one could even say a model. Because there is close cooperation between politics and Norwegian civil society. This cooperation opens further channels and places mediation endeavours on a broader foundation.

It is of course clear that anyone wanting to work for peace must face reality. When it really comes down to it, freedom, democracy and human rights can’t be defended by words alone. Germany values Norway’s contribution to the OSCE and NATO, its contributions to international crisis management and its commitment to issues concerning cooperative security, above all disarmament and arms control. When Jens Stoltenberg takes up his position as NATO Secretary General in October this year, he will be the first Norwegian to hold the post.

In the current crisis in and around Ukraine, Norway is one of the exposed alliance partners with its joint border with Russia. In these weeks and months, we are all getting a real sense of the meaning of our common values and the peace that has so far been guaranteed by our policies and by NATO. We are noticing that we are all called upon to cooperate even more intensely to safeguard our freedom, our security and our democratic values – in the OSCE, in NATO, in the European Union and in the United Nations; in other words, in all of the institutions available to us.

In this very room, Fridtjof Nansen, himself a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, delivered the speech in 1926 honouring Gustav Stresemann and Aristide Briand, who were awarded this distinguished prize as the

foreign ministers of Germany and France. In his capacity as League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Nansen had witnessed terrible misery in Russia, Greece and Turkey. In his speech, he lamented that people at the time, just eight years after the end of the First World War, had already forgotten the suffering and the victims, without learning the lessons.

In doing so, Nansen addressed a necessary and crucial prerequisite for reconciliation: facing up to history and learning lessons from it. It has taken my country a great deal of effort to go through this process after inflicting immeasurable suffering on Europe. Nazi Germany also brought war to Norway and occupied the country for five years. The German air force attacked the major cities. The German military's "scorched earth" strategy also left a trail of destruction, especially in northern Norway. Almost the entire Jewish population was deported to the concentration camps by the occupying power.

After such horrendous events, it was hardly surprising that Norway retained for a long time its reserved attitude towards the young Federal Republic of Germany. Perhaps the first step towards closer ties later on was the stationing of Norway's Germany Brigade, initially as occupying troops and then as allies and friends. Because the Norwegian troops took something valuable back home with them – personal impressions of Germany.

People are mediators between states and societies. They determine whether reconciliation can succeed. Such mediators were present early on between Norway and Germany. Among them were the young, German volunteers who from 1959 onwards set off in the spirit of idealism for northern Norway to take part in building projects as part of the "Action Reconciliation – Service for Peace". And there were individuals who fled to Norway to escape the ideological mania of National Socialism – including people such as Willy Brandt and the author Max Tau, who now lends his name to the German school in Oslo and who founded a Norwegian-German association here in 1960.

But the war also tore open wounds within Norwegian society. After 1945, there were 50,000 people who were held to account for treason and membership of Quisling's Nasjonal Samling.

The "war children", as they were known, who were unfortunate enough to have been born during the war to a German father and a Norwegian mother, were discriminated for decades. Prime Minister Bondevik offered them an apology in his New Year's speech in 2000 for the injustices they had suffered. Norwegian society has overcome all of these difficulties – because it was prepared to endure the pain that sometimes accompanies a new encounter with the past.

I am very pleased that we are able to have a discussion in this very place about securing peace. To end, I would like to mention a few questions that occur to me in the context of your discussion:

What are the fundamental prerequisites for peace and reconciliation?

How should diplomacy be designed so as to have a preventive effect?

What have been the experiences of those of you who have taken part in peace missions? What should we do differently and better in future?

How do we succeed in controlling clashes in such a way that they do not escalate into armed conflicts?

How can victims be given back their dignity, how can they be given recognition and how can they be offered redress?

And finally: how can perpetrators, hangers-on, innocent bystanders and victims succeed in coming together to make a fresh start in a democratic society?

Before you begin your discussion, I would like to sum up by quoting Henrik Ibsen: "As long as there's life there's hope." This sentence reminds us that reconciliation can only succeed in a spirit of truth and humanity, and that we must never cease – be it for our own sake or for the sake of others – to seek new paths, beyond conflict, suffering and fear, that lead to a better future.