



## Federal President Gauck sends his condolences to Marianne Freifrau von Weizsäcker

Federal President Joachim Gauck has sent his condolences to Marianne Freifrau von Weizsäcker on the loss of her husband, Dr Richard Freiherr von Weizsäcker, sixth President of the Federal Republic of Germany. Federal President Gauck's message read as follows:

"This news fills me with profound sorrow. We have lost an excellent human being and an outstanding head of state. The office of Federal President owes much to the lasting influence of Richard von Weizsäcker.

He truly bore witness to the century he lived in. The experience of war and tyranny fuelled his commitment to the aim of a peaceful and united Europe. As President of the *Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag* (German Protestant Convention), Member of the German Bundestag and Governing Mayor of Berlin, he was a builder of bridges. This was also true to a particularly high degree of his work as Federal President. He deepened Germany's friendship with its partners in the West, and he sought mutual understanding with the peoples of the East. He was early in recognising the elimination of division in Europe as the only way to overcome the division of Germany.

All over the world, Richard von Weizsäcker stood for a Germany that had found its way to the heart of the democratic family of nations. He stood for a Federal Republic that faced up to its past. In the major speech he gave to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Germany's capitulation, he, as Federal President, made it unmistakably clear that 8 May 1945 had been 'a day of liberation' from the 'inhuman tyranny of the National Socialist regime'. He held that 8 May could not be seen in isolation from 30 January 1933, a position that has become an unquestionable fundament of how we see ourselves and what we do.

As the first Federal President of the united Germany, he made a great contribution to the coalescence of the eastern and western populations. He was a source of stability and direction for many people during that time. In his role as Federal President, he knew how to draw attention to problems and injustices, spark debates and open up prospects. Most saw him as a moral authority.

Richard von Weizsäcker was a global and a national citizen in the most positive sense. He stayed involved at the national and international levels well into old age. His advice was always valued, for it was founded in impartiality of mind, intellectual foresight and a good sense of what was politically doable.

'A bright future requires a clear memory' – of that he was firmly convinced. Remembering the past and learning the right lessons from it were important concerns for him, especially with regard to the younger generation. For us to accept this legacy from him and honour it as such is doubtless what he would have wanted.

I would like to express my sincere respect and profound gratitude for a man whose thought and work will remain for all of us an inspiration and a lasting reminder of our duty. Richard von Weizsäcker rendered outstanding service to our country. We will not forget him."