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**Federal President Joachim Gauck  
at a dinner with the parliamentary presidents  
of the G7 countries  
in Leipzig  
on 5 September 2015**

I am delighted to be able to welcome you to this beautiful concert hall at the Bach-Archiv where, it is presumed, Johann Sebastian Bach himself once also played his music. In addition to beauty and tradition, this room has another surprise in store. The ceiling painting above our heads conceals a chamber that provides acoustic effects. It is called an echo chamber.

The chamber can create or amplify echoes – a neat trick that I could imagine pulling in certain parliamentary debates. I, for one, wish that some sentences would echo for longer in our age so obsessed with maximum acceleration.

The term “echo chamber” has long since become firmly established in its own right in the context of communication theory, however. It denotes a realm closed off to the outside world in which like-minded people no longer engage in dialogue, but where only the same views reverberate. The people in the chamber are doomed to isolation.

The Group of Seven is sometimes accused of being such an elite club that, closed to the outside world, is only concerned with preserving its own interests. Critics go on to say that G7 Summits are useless, expensive and undemocratic as decisions are made without recourse to the countries’ parliaments.

We know that these accusations are unjustified. But we also know that we must constantly confront them anew. This conference of parliamentary presidents in Leipzig is not least proof of the fact that the parliaments are an indispensable part of the G7. The separation of

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powers, dividing power in order to limit its influence, is the very essence of our democracies.

This democratic political system is the basis on which we are able to interact with each other. We cannot say it often enough: we are a community of shared values. The G7 brings together like-minded nations that are committed to liberal values, because agreements and solutions to problems can be reached more easily on this basis. The combination of democratic and economic strength is what makes our alliance so attractive.

We want to have this at the forefront of our minds when we consider the motto of the latest G7 Summit in Elmau, "Thinking for tomorrow – acting together". Those thinking for tomorrow will have to act together, also and especially within the framework of the G7. How else do we intend to confront the challenges of our age? How, if not together, do we intend to stand up to the threat posed by terrorism, tackle climate change and the consequences of economic and financial crises, or get on top of the influx of refugees?

Thirty-five years ago, Willy Brandt boiled this motto down to a single concept: global domestic policy, by which he meant shared responsibility and fair reconciliation of interests. We use this term rather sparingly nowadays. Perhaps we have – after setbacks in the fight against terror and in preserving our livelihoods – become somewhat unaspiring, possibly a touch too unaspiring.

There is no alternative to joint action. Where there is no spirit of solidarity, we will fail. We can only rise to a challenge such as the recent Ebola epidemic if we act together. Global challenges call for joint efforts. I am therefore most delighted that the G7 Summit in Elmau was able to agree to ambitious climate targets. Reaching these targets is a task that will fall to national parliaments. The example of determination set by the G7 is therefore all the more gratifying.

Working against each other leads us to abysses, the likes of which we are witnessing in eastern Ukraine. The fact that, after decades of understanding in Europe, we are watching the rules that we established for ourselves being broken is a major setback, one that serves to remind us even more clearly just how important it is to agree on a common set of rules. The G7 Summit also made this point abundantly clear.

Together, we intend to continue along this path of striving for peace and justice in our world. May I now invite you to join me in a toast to our cooperation in a spirit of trust.