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page 1 to 3

**Federal President Joachim Gauck  
at a state banquet on the occasion of  
a state visit to the Republic of Korea  
on 12 October 2015  
in Seoul, Korea**

We are marking significant anniversaries this year. In Europe and Asia, we remember the end of the Second World War, and we also recall the outbreak of the terrible fratricidal and proxy war 65 years ago, which cemented the division of Korea. I have listened to what you have said about Germany and the reunification, and it pains me greatly to see that the ancient civilisation that is Korea is still divided.

Madam President,

During your visit to Germany, which I fondly recall, you described the ongoing period of Korean division as "seventy long years". Our sincerest wish is that you will not have to wait again for so long, but that your intense wish to see your country reunified may be fulfilled in the foreseeable future. You have rightly said that the experience of division binds us, and so it was an outstanding expression of this affinity that you gave your speech, which came to be known as the Dresden Declaration, precisely in the city that is considered in Germany today to be an important symbol of European reconciliation. You quite rightly reminded us Germans of the great fortune that was bestowed on us with the prospect of reunification. Germany will therefore wholeheartedly – and with recourse to all of our experience – support Korea's path to a possible reunification and reconciliation with its neighbours.

Like you, Madam President, I am delighted that relations between our countries have developed so magnificently. This state visit aims to underscore this point once again. We are united by shared values and by our commitment to democracy and to human rights. And if we take a look at the world around us, we sense that we as stable and vibrant democracies are facing great and common challenges. We must preserve and promote peace in the world. But peace is threatened by wars of various kinds and by terror. Together, we want to offer

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protection to those forced to flee violence and persecution. During our talks today, we also called to mind our special responsibility for protecting the environment as highly industrialised countries. But our societies face new challenges also on the domestic stage – for example, we must ask ourselves how we intend to respond to demographic change.

In view of these great challenges and others, I am especially delighted about the numerous bilateral contacts that are helping to make our network of relations ever more closely knit – to our two countries' mutual benefit. Around one year ago, the German Foreign Minister came here on a visit, and his Korean counterpart not only attended this year's Munich Security Conference, but also visited Berlin in June. And then there is the German-Korean Forum, which has offered us an exceptional platform for dialogue since 2002. I still vividly recall attending the 12th forum, which was in Goslar – not far from the former inner German border. The meetings there also awakened my passion for Korea.

For over 150 years, the relations between our countries have been driven by trade. In Germany, we have the greatest respect for Korea's economic success story. After a difficult post war period, Korea has, within the space of just a few decades, progressed from an agrarian country to become an Asian Tiger, playing a leading role around the world in ship-building and the production of electronics, semiconductors and cars. For many years, Korea has been one of the most attractive and important markets in Asia for German business. Bilateral trade has even increased five fold in the past 25 years – what a remarkable development! The free trade agreement between Korea and the European Union, which received significant support from Germany, has injected fresh impetus into our economic dialogue. We should constantly remind ourselves that open markets, fair competition and investment security are vital for a further intensification also of Korean-German business relations. We should both work together, Madam President, to ensure that there are no setbacks in this area and that we can remain ahead of the curve in East Asia.

By the way, Korea also shows just how important the cultural appeal of a society is. The Korean Wave has not only reached East Asia, but also large parts of the world – including Germany – in recent years. And in Korea itself, classical music and literature from Germany are still immensely popular.

The tremendous importance attributed to education is part of Korea's cultural legacy. I would like to mention here how often I am thrilled by the devoted and enthusiastic students at our music colleges coming to Germany from your country. Allow me to mention a further important bridge between Korea and Germany as education and science are of decisive importance especially for our countries. We

consider these to be building blocks for the future of our two countries, and this is why the Korean-German cooperation is so important to us especially in these areas. Around 350 university partnerships and more than 60 German lecturers at Korean universities are breathing life into our academic contacts, and I very much welcome the fact that German universities are expanding their presence in Korea. This academic exchange is giving rise to valuable links that often last a lifetime. The same is also true of Koreans who join the Alumni Network Germany-Korea after a course of studies in Germany.

And I am delighted that important, leading representatives are accompanying me on this state visit. Together, we want to ensure that our level of dialogue and networks can continue to be developed and expanded. We believe this to be an essential area where we can cooperate intensively. At the end of the day, it is not only our memories of the process of reunification, but also our efforts to safeguard the social state and to develop these aforementioned elements of education, research and advanced technology that draw our countries to each other.

Let me now invite you, ladies and gentlemen, to join me in a toast to the health of President Park, to the excellent relations between our countries, and to a bright future for this long-standing, close friendship between Korea and Germany!