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**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck
at a luncheon hosted by President Tabaré Vázquez
on 15 July 2016
in Montevideo, Uruguay**

I had hoped to visit your country last March. My plans were however disrupted by a tragic plane crash in which many German nationals lost their lives. Your acceptance of my decision to cut short my South American trip is indicative of the long-standing and trusting relations between Uruguay and Germany. I am grateful for your forbearance and am all the more delighted to be your guest today, finally keeping my promise to come.

Our sense of the importance of close ties between countries is particularly strong at the moment as we are all confronted with numerous political crises in many regions of the world. The structures of the global order are being strained. A desire to repatriate powers and put up walls is taking hold in some countries. It is thus all the more important that we practitioners of diplomacy turn to those partners with whom we share democratic values and well-established relations based on trust. For we know that only together, through international cooperation, can we resolve today's crises. For this, all countries must do what they can to assume responsibility and make a concrete contribution.

That is precisely what Uruguay is doing. Your country has for years been an anchor of stability in the region, both economically and politically. Uruguay may be a small country in comparison with its neighbours to the north and south, but measured by its engagement in international affairs, in the United Nations, it is anything but. Your country is a voice of reason and a democratic force in its capacity as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. It is involved in peacekeeping operations and provides a considerable number of peacekeepers to United Nations missions. By doing so, Uruguay serves

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as an example for others – including more populous countries – encouraging them to do even more in aid of peace in the world. This is a role you can be proud of.

Your country and its people also deserve respect for the fact that support for democracy is greater in Uruguay than in any other Latin American country. The commitment to liberal values unites Uruguay and Germany, thus enriching a long-standing and close bond between our countries, which has now spanned 160 years. One example of this traditional connection is the German School in Montevideo, the oldest German school in South America. Today it is a large international Uruguayan-German school. It fosters exchange between Uruguay and Germany and is educating the next generation, which will in due course be responsible for taking our relations forward.

Our countries enjoy close trade relations, too – thanks in part to the Uruguayan-German chamber of commerce, whose centenary we celebrate tomorrow. Germany is the biggest European buyer of Uruguayan goods. Your country's agricultural products in particular enjoy an outstanding reputation in Germany, as well as in other European countries. Germany is moreover an important partner to Uruguay in the field of science and research. I am also pleased that our governments cooperate in the field of education and training, thereby helping improve young people's prospects. Speaking of which, Mr President, I support your plans to advance the social inclusion of young people in your country and to boost equality of opportunity.

In Germany we are closely following the development of renewable energies in Uruguay. Your country has been an exporter of electricity since 2013. Significantly more than 90% of the electricity generated now comes from renewable sources. This is an immense achievement. We are particularly impressed by the new ambitious goals you have set yourselves for the years to 2030.

What makes me mention the year 2030? 2030 is not only a key date for climate policy targets, but also the year in which Uruguay hopes to host the FIFA World Cup, together with Argentina. After one hundred years the tournament would thus return to its birthplace for, as you all know, it was in 1930 that Uruguay's national team won the inaugural World Cup on home turf. I thus wish you all the best for your application to co-host this event with neighbouring Argentina.

May I now ask you to raise your glasses to the health of President Vázquez and his wife, to the close ties between Uruguay and Germany and to many years of continued amicable relations.