



**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck
at the state banquet hosted by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe
in Tokyo/Japan
on 14 November 2016**

I have only been in Tokyo for a few hours, but I am delighted by this city, its way of life and architecture, and the way tradition and modernity live side by side. Thank you very much indeed for this warm welcome.

Although this is my first visit to Japan, I know that I am among friends. With regard to the relations between our countries, how wonderful it is that I can say we are closely united by our commitment to democracy, freedom, the rule of law and international law. Whether in research, science, culture or business, the network formed by our connections is densely interwoven. We are working together to meet global challenges. My country has a more intensive exchange with Japan than with any other country in Asia.

Japan and Germany are among the most productive and innovative economies worldwide. We are pioneers in climate protection. However, both our societies also face major tasks. Demographic change will have a greater impact on Japan and Germany than on almost any other country in the world, and will also affect our labour markets and social security systems. This is the very reason why we should learn from each other and look for solutions together.

We are also united by something else. Both Japan and Germany face the task of defining their own role in the world – and in doing so, of maintaining a balance between growing foreign policy responsibility and the lessons learned from a violent history of war and aggression. I agree with you, Prime Minister, that “we must learn from the lessons of history the wisdom for our future”, as you said on the 70th anniversary of the end of the war. Japan and Germany share this goal. We stand up for peace and an international order that is based on norms and values and does not follow the “law of the strong”. This order must also be defended and developed in uncertain times, as we too are

confronted with new challenges in Europe and East Asia, particularly as democracies.

But despite everything, our two countries can look to the future with optimism. Japan can do so too, although it has not been spared disasters in recent times. After all, we have the necessary knowledge and skills; we remain open and adaptable; and we can achieve a great deal. This is what we want to do, and we want to continue helping each other to do so.

I would now like to ask you to raise your glasses and join me in a toast to the Japanese people and to Japanese-German cooperation and friendship.