



**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck
at the concert by Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra
in Berlin on 11 December 2016
to mark the 25th anniversary of the German Polish Treaty
on Good Neighbourliness**

This is a wonderful evening for me, and as proof of how particularly well I am feeling, I would like to address you first, Mr President, as you have been so very open and friendly towards me and underlined this here today. I am moved by that. Thank you.

When I look at you today, Mr President, and think about the words you just said, I realise – and I would like to state this publicly here – that a bond has developed between us, something neither of us perhaps anticipated.

I worked very intensively and amicably with your predecessor, President Komorowski. And I know many people who were active in the previous government. This meant I was very eager to see if we would succeed in upholding the long-standing friendship under the new government. I cannot speak for the other German and Polish interlocutors who meet at governmental or cultural level, but the atmosphere between us is very good. The friendship that has grown between Germans and Poles continues to exist between us.

And it is not the case, Mr President, that I would not expect there to still be heated debates between our governments and between our countries' civil societies. That is the way things are when differences of opinion are expressed in democracies. I certainly expect this. However, I am very confident that the level of friendship and empathy we have built up between us will continue when you work with my successor.

We Germans and Poles continue to meet on the basis of our shared values. And after celebrating the 25th anniversary of our Treaty on Good Neighbourliness this year, we have further reason to move into the coming decade feeling well-disposed and optimistic.

I will therefore do as you ask and continue to be an advocate for German-Polish understanding and friendship, even after I leave office.

I do not know yet how I will do this and whom I will meet, but I am certain that there will be opportunities.

And hopefully I will not be invited as often to resolve political disputes between other people, but rather more frequently to wonderful events like the one this evening, with the Philharmonic Orchestra and other people who work to foster culture and understanding.

I would like to end my speech now because we want to listen to the music together. But I need to say one more thing before I finish, that is, to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who work on behalf of German-Polish relations. No matter how the times were, whether they were marked by conflict or happiness, we politicians did not shape relations between Germans and Poles on our own. Before politicians drew up treaties, it was people from the community, civil society, churches, associations and societies who established contacts – contacts on which politicians were subsequently able to build. In closing I would like to express my profound gratitude to all those who are active in the cultural sphere, academia, the Polish Institute and everywhere else.