



**Toast by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
on the occasion of the luncheon with President
Nursultan Nazarbayev
in Astana/Kazakhstan
on 12 July 2017**

I am happy that one of my first trips abroad as Federal President has brought me to Kazakhstan. As you know, I have had close and friendly ties with your country and this region for many years. I have paid many visits here and to your neighbouring countries since my work on a European concept on Central Asia. My visit here today is for a very special reason. We are celebrating the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our countries – a quarter century of great intensity and lively exchange. And so it is very fitting that today is German National Day at the first EXPO to be held in Central Asia. Those who know a bit about Kazakhstan are aware of your people's rich culture!

Your people's great poets, from Abai to Mukhtar Auezov, all write of the pride, strength and self confidence of the Kazakhs. "A strong man can defeat a hundred enemies, but an educated man can defeat a thousand." This saying by Abai is still a good description of your country's goal, ambitious nature and self confidence.

Kazakhstan is not only the largest country in the region – it has also made promising progress in recent years.

Today's Kazakhstan is an independent and self confident country with a thriving economy – a country of which people have great expectations because of its development potential, as well as a country that expects much of itself.

Kazakhstan has ensured its peaceful development by not having nuclear weapons. For the past 25 years, it has successfully applied the primacy of diplomacy and balancing of interests with its neighbours. In this regard, we Germans can understand Kazakhstan's foreign policy particularly well.

Kazakhstan is increasingly putting forward its own ideas and proposals on the international stage. In a world that remains so much less peaceful than we had hoped and expected, we need more of this. We need more political engagement that looks beyond national borders and thinks about the future. Kazakhstan also puts this approach into practice internationally. Your country plays a responsible role in the United Nations Security Council. In hosting the Astana talks on Syria, you took on great responsibility in a particularly difficult question.

That is another reason why Kazakhstan is our most important partner in Central Asia – a partner that must always strive for cooperative relations in its neighbourhood and does so with aplomb and great foreign policy skill, a partner that is a pillar of political and economic stability in a difficult environment.

Kazakhstan's great strength in the region and the world lies in its self confidence and its willingness to take on responsibility. Playing a more responsible role in the international arena means taking on responsibility at home, too. Mr President, you yourself repeatedly say that self confidence and responsibility are mutually dependent, as are external and internal strength.

This internal strength lies in education. Your country's belief in education was expressed as far back as 150 years ago in the sentence by Abai I quoted earlier. You will see that your multi ethnic country's creative strengths can flourish even more the more space you give them. Talking about internal strength also means discussing the rule of law and legal certainty.

Both topics are of importance to the German business people meeting in Astana today to talk about increasing trade and investment, but I am certain that they are also what people in Kazakhstan expect. I trust that Kazakhstan will continue to pursue a path of openness and reform. We are willing to work with Kazakhstan in making the rule of law stronger.

And finally, this internal strength also lies in diversity. A country's creativity and innovative potential derive from diversity, various regional and cultural characteristics, and language. I understand that it is particularly important in your young country to focus on the Kazakh culture and language, which were virtually destroyed for ideological reasons. However, my wish is that multi ethnicity can be preserved as a strength of your country.

This morning I met Kazakh Germans, with whom I spoke about their hopes for the future and their home here in Kazakhstan. Around one percent of our respective populations in Kazakhstan and Germany are Kazakh Germans – they are an important bridge and bind our two countries closely together. We want to continue supporting them together in the future.

Mr President,

Let us join forces and work more closely together in the many areas that unite us. I would now like to raise my glass and propose a toast to Kazakhstan's development, Germany and Kazakh German relations.