



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at a luncheon hosted by the President of the Republic of
Korea, Moon Jae-in,
in Seoul, Korea,
on 8 February 2018**

Last year you were our first visitors at Schloss Bellevue in Berlin. So I am delighted to be able to pay you a return visit here in Korea just a few months later on my first trip to East Asia in my new office as Federal President. I am also very happy to see so many familiar faces here today, people who have worked over the past few years to further relations between Korea and Germany in the fields of sport, music and politics.

Yesterday evening my wife and I were in the Furniture Museum. What a wonderful start to our visit to your country. You could not know that we both come from families in which wood and furniture play a big part – because our fathers were and are carpenters – and so we were both very impressed by the pure aesthetics and incredible quality of craftsmanship we saw displayed. These are many great proofs of Korea's great cultural tradition.

This morning, before joining you here in the "Blue House", we visited the restored Gyeongbokgung Palace. There, too, we were reminded once again of your nation's glorious tradition – but also of the particular tragedy of your history last century.

Every time we visit Korea, we are reminded how fortunate we were with German reunification. Remembering our own history, we feel a tremendous solidarity and empathy when we speak about peace and détente on the Korean peninsula. We Germans know what it is like to live in a divided country.

As you work towards a peaceful and reconciled Korea, please rest assured that we Germans will always stand by your side as honest and selfless friends.

We stand by your side when it comes to putting pressure on North Korea. And we expect the international community to stand

united and, for example, to implement the sanctions approved by the Security Council. Obviously, though, we join you in hoping that North Korea's current readiness to send a joint team to the Olympic Games is a sign that talks with you on further lasting détente will be possible even after the Games are over.

Germany's history shows that it is worth remaining hopeful, even if the question of reunification is not on the agenda for tomorrow, or even next week, and that it is worth remembering that there are people in the North who might one day take their fate into their own hands. And, notwithstanding all the differences, there is one conclusion that can be drawn: the Koreans themselves will always have the greatest and most sincere interest in peaceful reunification.

The official opening ceremony of the 23rd Winter Olympics will take place in Pyeongchang tomorrow evening. In keeping with the ancient Greek tradition, the Games have always been linked with the idea of the Olympic Truce. And the ideal of the Olympic Truce can give us new hope, particularly here in Korea. I wish your team and all Koreans taking part in the Games every success. Let us hope for a peaceful Olympiad.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I ask you now to raise your glasses and join me in a toast to President Moon, to Ms Kim and to a bright future for the profound friendship and ties between our two countries.