

## **Interview in The Times of India, New Delhi, 22 March 2018**

### **1. With the German government finally coming together, what should we expect from the new government?**

It took an unusually long time to form a government. It is therefore good news that a stable government has now taken office and commenced its work. This is good for our country and for Europe, as well as for our international partners such as India. The new German Government faces major challenges. All around us, liberal democracies are being put to the test. It is our conviction that Germany's success and reputation are based on liberal policies at home and good neighbourly relations with all countries in the international community. Germany will continue to champion these principles in the future. At the same time, we must take steps to make the digital revolution work for our economy and society, whilst protecting our citizens' civil rights and liberties. Germany has a lot to offer up and coming societies like India in terms of technology for sustainable mobility and the supply of energy. Germany will, however, invest above all in strengthening Europe and enhancing its unity and ability to act. That is what our country's future depends on.

### **2. Germany plays a pivotal role in Europe where India is concerned. What would you say would be the priorities India and Germany should pursue in the coming months?**

Our cooperation is conceived for the long term. There are a whole range of contacts between the peoples of our countries. Back in the year 2000, Germany and India launched a strategic partnership. As a result, our Cabinets meet regularly – an engagement we have entered into with very few countries outside Europe. Prime Minister Modi visited Germany twice last year. We want to expand this exchange on both practical matters and strategic issues. My state visit to India will also serve this aim. Germany has a sophisticated, knowledge based economy, our strengths lie in training, innovation and common sense. India's dynamic economic and social development presents excellent opportunities for us to deepen our cooperation to our mutual benefit. An inherent part of this, as I see it, is considering how we want to and how we are able to present a concerted response to the challenges of globalisation. India's responses and India's responsibility for the world of tomorrow will be accorded ever greater weight.

### **3. Maritime security is playing a big part in India's security matrix, but interestingly, Germany appears to be taking an interest in the Indian Ocean as well. What are Germany's aims and how can India and Germany work together?**

As an internationally active trading power, Germany has a paramount interest in peace and stability on the European continent and far beyond its borders. Of course, given the dynamism of the powerful economies in Asia, we have a growing interest in an open and safe Indian Ocean, through which a large part of German trade flows move. As the host country of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Germany has a particular interest in an international order based on binding law, accepted by all states, which reliably

protects these interests. India and Germany's interests in this question are very similar and we would like to enhance our cooperation with India and with all interested states.

**4. What are the coming priorities for India-Germany trade and investment, given that there has been no progress in either the India-EU FTA nor an investment pact?**

Our volume of trade has tripled in the past ten years. 1800 German companies have created over 400,000 jobs in India. German firms have invested 1.2 billion euros in India in the past year alone, above all in areas which are important for India's rise: automotive engineering, energy, infrastructure, smart city projects, the railway sector and air transport. I will be accompanied on my trip to India by German business representatives, drawn above all from small and medium sized enterprises. German SMEs hope to become far more active in India. However, in spite of these positive developments, everyone involved feels they are still being held back. We should therefore work at all levels to bring the India EU trade agreement rapidly to a successful conclusion. Even small steps to enhance predictability, reliability and the rule of law could build up momentum to the advantage of both countries and create additional jobs and training places in India.

**5. Germany has always played an important role in India's transformation. What are the next steps in this regard?**

India has become ever more important to us as a partner, as regards finding answers to global problems, as regards the future of free trade, as regards combating climate change and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals we adopted together in the United Nations. Our partnership will become yet more significant in the future. Worth special mention is our trailblazing cooperation on renewable energies, in particular in the field of solar technology. But I am not interested in closer economic cooperation alone. Our two democracies are called upon to defend their values anew each day. Preserving our pluralism and openness is far from easy, and does not go unchallenged in the present day and age. We want to reawaken Germans' interest in India as a whole, and find out more about India's ideas for the future. India and Germany, and their cultures, have exerted a great fascination on each other for over a hundred years. Now it is time for us to take a fresh look at each other!