



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
during the information and contact-building visit with the
Diplomatic Corps
to the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen
on 27 June 2018**

Mayor Sieling, without wishing to pre-empt the Doyen's speech, I think I can truly speak for everyone here in this room when I start by saying thank you very much indeed for your warm hospitality here in the magnificent Bremen Town Hall and in particular for the time you are giving the Diplomatic Corps and me today by accompanying us for the whole day in Bremen and Bremerhaven. We very much appreciate this. Thank you!

Excellencies and esteemed members of the Diplomatic Corps, our annual trip to a German Land is a long-standing tradition for the German Federal President. I am certain that many of you remember our first trip together last year, when we visited the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz and travelled through Land Saxony-Anhalt. And now we are here, in the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, a venerable republic of merchants and seafarers.

Since 2016 at the very latest, I have known how special Bremen is. At the time, when I was still Foreign Minister, I gave a speech at the Schaffermahlzeit, an annual meal to celebrate the close ties between merchants and seafarers – a tradition that dates back centuries. And it was here in this very room, the Upper Hall, beneath these four magnificent model ships we see above us today, that I gave this speech. However, I was wearing a tailcoat and a white bow tie at the time!

In holding this fraternal meal every year, Bremen pays tribute to how well these two professions work together and to the fact that the harmony and dialogue between them underpinned the city's security and prosperity for centuries. Talking with one another, listening to one another and taking the other side's arguments seriously are republican

virtues that have been upheld in Bremen in particular for a very long time.

I believe that when the value of dialogue, understanding and seeking a peaceful balancing of interests is openly being called into question on the international stage today, indeed when aspersions are being cast on the very role of multilateral diplomacy per se, and at the same time a new logic of confrontation, unwillingness to compromise and "everyone against everyone" is becoming fashionable, then Bremen is exactly the right place for diplomats to reaffirm these great virtues!

By the way, the four model ships above us do not only stand for Bremen's prosperity, but also for its inhabitants' spirit of discovery. Thanks to courageous seafarers and merchants in particular, this city was a prosperous centre of the Hanseatic League as far back as over 750 years ago. Let me just add that the swamps still had to be drained on the Spree at the time.

For their part, seafarers and Hanseatics from Bremen were already sailing across the North Sea during the Middle Ages, to England and Scandinavia, to France and the Baltic region, and indeed far beyond. Later on, during the 19th century, Bremen became a stepping stone for a completely different group of discoverers – for emigrants from all over Central and Eastern Europe who had to seek their fortune in the New World, mainly due to the poverty in Germany. At certain times, 40 percent of the Europeans arriving in the United States had set sail from Bremen. And for those fleeing violence and persecution during the darkest years of German history, Bremen was often the last sight of home before the saving grace of life in a new country. We will certainly be able to learn a great deal about all this when we visit the German Emigration Centre this afternoon. And at times, we will be uncomfortably reminded of the current situation in the world.

Next weekend, the European Council will discuss migration, and thus one of the greatest challenges of our time. All of you know that this topic is on people's minds all over Europe. It decides the outcome of elections and the fate of governments, but most importantly, the question of whether we achieve a European solution will also decide on future cohesion in Europe. That is why I expect all Heads of State and Government at this Council to be very serious about finding a solution. And I hope they will find one that ultimately respects the important principles of European cooperation that have been our foundations in the past. On the one hand, we need to manage migration properly and to monitor our external borders together. On the other hand, we must uphold our shared and agreed fundamental values and the principle of shouldering Europe's burdens together in a spirit of European solidarity. I am confident that a European compromise is possible here.

Moreover, I believe that we must reach a compromise – at any rate if everyone is of the shared opinion that the future of Europe means something to us!

But let us return to the River Weser, where the gateway to the world was always open in both directions, thus enabling others to make their own discoveries. For example, the area around the Weser Estuary was the first place in Europe that many thousands of US soldiers were able to experience for themselves after the Second World War. And the royal visit in 1958, when the King, Elvis Presley, first set foot in the Old World, was certainly rather unusual for a Hanseatic town.

And now? We had a small taste this morning. In the 21st century, Ariane and Galileo no longer stand for Greek mythology or the Italian Renaissance. They also stand for a very modern spirit of discovery that takes us all the way into outer space. And Bremen plays a leading role in this. But aerospace also stands for Europe and successful international cooperation. As you know, German astronaut Alexander Gerst, who is representing Europe, is working with a US astronaut and a Russian cosmonaut in the International Space Station ISS on the peaceful discovery and use of outer space. I see this as an important sign of successful collaboration in what is anything but an easy time.

The fact that such signs are so important today and that the multilateral post-war order based on rules and agreements is under greater pressure than ever before is certainly not something we here in Germany wished to see. But we must take note of these developments and draw conclusions from them. And my hope is that we will mainly see them as a motivation and mission to remain open. The Free Hanseatic City of Bremen is a role model for this type of open-minded Germany. Germany is willing and able to take on responsibility in Europe and beyond.

In the last two years, Germany held the chairmanship and presidency of the OSCE and G20 respectively. And from 2019, we will take on an important role in the world once again as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. We Germans take this responsibility very seriously. And I firmly believe that this great earnestness is needed at the moment, as much is at stake. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Diplomatic Corps for its overwhelming support and the trust shown by the international community in electing our country to the Security Council.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the spirit of discovery can have unexpected consequences. Everything can go well, and of course that is what one counts on happening. But one has to face up to the fact that one might not like a discovery quite as much as expected. With this in mind, my dear Ambassador Jong, both of us are simply

going to have to see what happens this afternoon. For my part, I would be delighted if many of you would lend emotional support to Ambassador Jong and me during today's football match. And otherwise, I know that a boat trip in Bremerhaven is a pleasure in any weather!

Esteemed Nuncio, on behalf of us all, please allow me to thank Mayor Sieling once again. I will be brief, just like Elvis 60 years ago, and say "we are very happy to be here!"

Thank you very much.