



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at the evening reception on the occasion of the 27th
Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Schlosspark Bellevue
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Let me bid you all a very warm welcome to Schlosspark Bellevue! Bellevue means "pleasant view". However, the outlook is not so pleasant when one considers the state of the world today, the large number of crises and violent conflicts, the erosion of multilateralism and the many other issues which give us cause for concern. Only from here is the view in Bellevue truly pleasant! For I see many familiar faces from my many years of service in foreign policy and, in particular, from Germany's OSCE Chairmanship. And I'm delighted to have this opportunity today to make the acquaintance of many more. Since yesterday, you've been gathered here in Berlin for the 27th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – and as Federal President it is an honour for me to welcome you this evening! Once again, welcome to Schlosspark Bellevue!

Schloss Bellevue, which you see before you, was built by Prince August Ferdinand of Prussia, the youngest brother of King Frederick II. The central wing was completed in 1786 – and the monarch died that same year. The death of Frederick the Great marked the end of an almost fifty-year era in Europe. Despite his "enlightened absolutism", "Old Fritz" always remained a military leader. From the Silesian Wars to the Seven Years War and then the War of the Bavarian Succession, as well as during the first partition of Poland: peace was never more than a brief respite in Frederick's Central Europe. Schloss Bellevue was thus built at the heart of a turbulent continent.

If Frederick the Great and Prince Ferdinand were with us here today, they would probably be most surprised. For the declared will of the international community since the entry into force of the UN Charter and of the OSCE participating States, especially since the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and what your annual session here in Berlin epitomises, would have sounded like a far-off utopia back then: the

condemnation of force as a political instrument. The readiness to work together, especially where there are tensions. The capacity to enter into compromises, especially when there is a danger that conflicts will escalate. And dialogue in times of crisis – the only way to prevent violence breaking out, to build new trust and to lay the foundations for peaceful conflict resolution.

Yes, it's true that today's world still does not live up to these ideals. Even now there are – not least in Europe – again places where talk of the peaceful settlement of disputes sounds like a distant utopia. As much as the OSCE is committed to these ideals today – via dialogue, via its missions, via its work on peace and security, the economy and the environment, on the human dimension – we must keep on working together to ensure that this organisation can continue to stand up for peace! We should all uphold the spirit of Helsinki and invoke it time and again to help build a better future. I will say, however, that it runs counter to this spirit when individual states use the consensus principle to further their own agenda, or when the actions of individual members jeopardise the OSCE's fundamental principle, namely the inviolability of borders and thus peace in Europe!

You especially – as parliamentarians – are linchpins between the multilateral level and national politics in your own countries. When the value of dialogue, understanding and the search for a peaceful balancing of interests is openly called into question on the international stage today, indeed when doubt is being cast on the very value of multilateral diplomacy per se, and at the same time confrontation, unwillingness to compromise and "everyone against everyone" is becoming fashionable, I think you as parliamentarians are called upon to reaffirm and, where necessary, defend the OSCE's achievements time and again!

Distinguished guests, it's a great honour for me to have you here as my guests in Berlin and I'm delighted that you're with us this evening in the wonderful park of Schloss Bellevue. I hope you'll have a good time.

I wish you an enjoyable evening, as well as a stimulating and fruitful stay in Berlin. And I wish the OSCE every conceivable success with your important mission for our continent!

Thank you very much.