



BUNDESPRÄSIDENTIALAMT

**Speech by Federal President
Christian Wulff
at the state banquet in honour of Their Highnesses
the Emir of the State of Qatar and
Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned
on 29 September 2010 at Schloss Bellevue**

Translation of advance text

Your Highnesses,

Federal Chancellor,

Ladies and gentlemen,

My wife and I bid you a warm welcome to Schloss Bellevue. It is for me a pleasure and a real honour to host Your Highnesses and your delegation during your state visit to Germany. We are thrilled and delighted to have Your Highnesses as our guests. This is a sentiment you, Chancellor, and this whole distinguished company clearly share, which is why you are with us here today.

Your Highness, I have great respect for you and how your country is developing. Earlier this year I was privileged to pay two visits to Doha and Qatar. During these trips to the Gulf I came across the well-known Arab saying, "in the desert only the wise man finds the way." In Doha I saw for myself how absolutely true this is. I found you and your negotiating team in every respect reliable, competent and consistent.

I was and am impressed by the tremendous commitment and good judgement – and evident success – with which you are driving forward your country's political and economic reform agenda. In introducing a new and modern constitution you have initiated an important process. That does you great credit, I believe, and I can only encourage you to pursue this path. In this endeavour you can count on Germany as your partner.

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Your efforts to ensure your country's future prosperity, Your Highness, are wise and far sighted. You are working to broaden Qatar's economic basis. By investing in infrastructure, research and education you are building a solid foundation for your country's future welfare. The view over Doha's skyline from the Museum of Islamic Art is breathtaking and quite amazing, when one considers what it must have looked like twenty years ago.

Education and research are fundamental to prosperity, peace and stable development. In terms of investment in research and education, Qatar is an international pace-setter. Your Highnesses' dedication to national education is exemplary. In giving women greater educational and career opportunities, you have demonstrated great vision. The work of your Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development is internationally recognized.

In the realm of international affairs Qatar makes a major contribution to stability and security. Your active mediation and assistance in Lebanon, Darfur and, most recently, once again in Yemen have earned you high esteem also in the world beyond the Gulf region.

A crucial key to peace in the region is a lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict. I fully support all you are doing to assist the ongoing negotiation process. Our aim must be to ensure Israel's right to exist in secure borders and the creation of a viable Palestinian state. The prospect offered by the Arab peace initiative can be an important element in a successful negotiating process. It deserves our support.

In the area of regional cooperation under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Qatar is one of the drivers of integration. We are following the efforts to develop a common market in the Gulf, cooperate on monetary matters and create a cross-border rail network with interest and good will. Our experience with integration and cooperation here in Europe has – in the light of current challenges, too – been positive and we would be very pleased to share this with you.

Your Highnesses,

The dynamic way your country has developed under your leadership has greatly benefited our bilateral relations, too. Qatar and Germany enjoy a close and amicable partnership in the political, economic and cultural sphere – a partnership of equals, based on common interests and mutual respect.

We have a shared commitment to promoting peace and security in the world beyond our own borders. And we are ready to assume responsibility in this connection. This is something that you, Chancellor, made very clear during your visit to Doha in May.

Our economic relations, too, are shaped by reciprocity. Qatar's long-term investments in key German industries are impressive testimony to its confidence in Germany's economy. The current

upswing that has seen Germany lead the field in Europe reflects the fundamental strength of our economy and its enormous potential. We would be very glad to see Qatar increase its engagement here. I am sure our enterprises that are world leaders despite their modest size offer attractive opportunities, too, for long-term, strategic cooperation. That goes particularly for the advanced technology sector. Many of those present this evening represent companies that are engaged in Qatar. They know and appreciate the wide-ranging investment and business opportunities there and are keen to take still greater advantage of them. So we are very pleased that the Government of Qatar is working to further improve access to its market. We are especially interested in access to the country's natural gas reserves and in renewable energies, too. For we are eager to expand our partnership and cooperation with Qatar in the energy sector as well.

Our companies are offering to help also with other aspects of Qatar's modernization agenda: from the construction and expansion of airports and ports, bridges, road and rail networks to research and education. German businesspeople and researchers can, I firmly believe, make a major contribution here. Qatar and Germany are both on the way to becoming knowledge societies. Let us build bridges between them!

I am delighted, ladies and gentlemen, that our countries have already laid the foundations for this. The German School in Doha is to become a place where both German and Qatar children learn together. Recently, I am told, also two young members of the Royal Family were enrolled in its preschool. For the German School this means a great honour and of course also a great commitment. As a father myself, I think there can be really no more convincing demonstration of the excellent quality of our relations and the depth of trust between our two countries.

Your Highnesses, ladies and gentlemen, our nations and our regions, too – Europe and the Arab world – have long-standing and multifaceted ties. They complement one another and learn from one another. Nearly two centuries ago this was expressed particularly aptly by the great German poet Goethe in his "Poems of the East and West":

"He who knows himself and others
Here will also see,
That the East and West, like brothers,
Parted ne'er shall be."

So on this note may I now invite you to join me in a toast to the health of Your Highnesses, to the State of Qatar and to the friendship between our two countries.