

REMARKS BY

HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II

AT

MATTHIAE-MAHLZEIT DINNER BANQUET

HAMBURG TOWN HALL, GERMANY

25 FEBRUARY 2005

**Mayor von Beust,
Dr. Blobel,
Honored Guests –**

Vielen Dank. And thank you all. It is an honour to be with you; an honour to share this wonderful tradition.

Tonight we celebrate your city's enduring freedoms. But when you open your doors to guests like myself, you celebrate something more; you celebrate Hamburg's historic role as a city of the world.

When this Feast was first held, back in medieval times, most people on earth never went farther than they could walk in a day. Yet Hamburg was already sending merchants and travelers to every corner of the globe. And Hamburg is still a center of international vision and business, admired around the world.

Let me say, your city's cosmopolitan spirit seems very familiar to me. From the earliest days, the Arab World also sent merchants and travelers and scholars around the world. The Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon Him, is said to have called merchants "couriers to the horizons." And I believe that the more we work together; the more we reach out and communicate – by that much, we expand the horizons for all humanity.

Hamburg has indeed expanded human horizons. You have reached out to the world as true partners – indeed, as neighbours, as you did very recently, in all your help for tsunami victims.

So, again, thank you for allowing me to share this evening with you. I am delighted, as always, to be back in Germany. Fifteen years ago, your country helped bring about a peaceful transformation on this continent. And today, you have immense influence in another, global transformation: the creation of a new international system of cooperation and peace.

But my friends, we cannot celebrate tonight, without being aware that there are groups which have a very different vision. Extremists, who thrive on conflict; who do not tolerate diversity; who seek power through division and destruction. The global system they hope to create is one of new walls and new isolation, and radically smaller horizons. It is an anti-democratic, anti-economic-growth, and anti-progress agenda.

There is only one defense, and that is to stand together. To keep the global gateways open. To enlarge the sphere of dialogue and cooperation. To bring the opportunities of the 21st Century to those who are alienated, who are vulnerable to extremist recruiting. And to use our utmost efforts to achieve peace in critical conflict zones.

No where is this more important than in my region, the Middle East. In Iraq, the success of recent elections must encourage voter participation to continue. The people need our help as they build security and democracy, and rebuild their historic country.

The Arab-Israeli conflict remains a central concern. I do not need to tell you about its damaging global impact.

For the parties and the region, the occupation, violence and suffering have been a disaster.

My friends, there must be a new partnership for change. We know the path forward. It is outlined in the Roadmap process. For the Palestinians, a sovereign, viable state – offering dignity and a positive future. For Israel, security guarantees and an end to conflict. And a process that leads to a comprehensive settlement – one that addresses the Syrian and Lebanese tracks – bringing the entire region together, in a healing process of reconciliation.

This is the promise made by the Arab states at the Beirut Summit in 2002. It has been endorsed by the Quartet and the G-8. At Aqaba, Jordan, in 2003, it was agreed by the Palestinians and Israelis. Just a few weeks ago, I co-hosted the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit. At that meeting, Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Sharon re-committed to a partnership for peace.

The next step is not words, but deeds – hard work and the courage to make history. The friends of peace need our support. There will be an important opportunity at the London Conference next week. It will focus on assisting Palestinian efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and provide security. There will also be economic discussions, to bring together development resources, and give the Palestinians a new future of hope.

Indeed, hope is key to the future for our entire region. For too long, regional conflict has delayed development and reform. No more. Today, there is widespread

agreement in the Arab World on the need to give people the opportunities they deserve.

Jordan has already made the commitment. For good governance, human rights, and gender equality. For innovation and partnership with the private sector. For an open, modern civil society rooted in true Arab-Islamic values: peace, tolerance, the rule of law, and the pursuit of excellence.

Our country has already made structural changes to build democratic political life at every level of society. In January, we instituted administrative reforms to increase regional self-government – a form of the federalism that has benefited Germany. We are also committed to creating world-class education and health care. As a result of these and other efforts, Jordan consistently ranks high in international measures of human development.

In this interconnected world, we cannot succeed alone. Jordan is determined to be a full participant in the global marketplace. We were honoured to be the first Mashrek country to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union. And we have worked to create a welcoming trade and investment climate. Allow me to say, we are tremendously grateful to our German friends and trading partners for their involvement and support.

Jordan's approach – its spirit; its effectiveness; its home-grown roots – can serve as a relevant model for the entire region. Indeed, our passion for results is shared by many. As some of you know, Jordan has been honoured to host the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea. At the meeting this May, leaders from business and civil society

throughout the Arab World will launch a new action plan, for sustainable, regional development and reform.

We do not seek leadership from our friends in the industrial nations. We seek partnership. And no country has shown its commitment to that partnership more than Germany. Your experience in overcoming the conflicts of centuries, in bridging divides and creating a new dialogue of nations, has never been more relevant.

Today, together, we have the power to create an era of peace and progress that will benefit us all – East and West, North and South. After all, we know what's required to succeed. We have the strategies, we have the knowledge, we have the economic tools. Now we need the commitment and the passion – to expand our horizons.

Let us not delay. If I may quote the great German poet, friend of mankind, Goethe:

“What makes us succeed? Decision with speed!”

Thank you very much.

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