

Government declaration by Helmut Kohl on the international dimension of the reunification (Berlin, 4 October 1990)

Caption: On 4 October 1990, in his first government declaration to the Bundestag of the reunified Germany, Chancellor Helmut Kohl dwells on the international dimension of the reunification of the country.

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From the outset, therefore, we have endeavoured to interlink the internal and external aspects of German unification as closely as possible. Our precept continues to be this: Germany is our fatherland, the united Europe our future.

We have always realized that the path to German unity would prompt many people in Europe and elsewhere to ask certain questions and even give rise to uneasiness and anxiety among quite a few of them. We understand and respect these feelings. But we are also able to point to the stable democracy based on the rule of law that has existed in the Federal Republic of Germany for over forty years. The years ahead will show that the united Germany is a gain for the whole of Europe. There is all the more cause for confidence in view of the mutual trust that marked the Two plus Four talks on the external aspects of German unity.

At the beginning of this week we presented the result of those talks, the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, at the meeting of CSCE Foreign Ministers in New York. The first all-German parliament - you, Ladies and Gentlemen - is now called upon to give its approval to this truly historic treaty.

At home and abroad we want to be good neighbours. There will be no separate German paths or isolated nationalistic efforts in the future either. Faithful to the preamble to our Constitution, we want to serve the peace of the world as an equal partner in a united Europe. This mandate embodies our conception of sovereignty. We are willing to share it with others in line with our Constitution, which authorizes us to transfer sovereign powers to intergovernmental institutions and - by consenting to a limitation of our sovereign rights - to enter systems of collective security.

We are irrevocably committed to our Alliance, to solidarity and to the community of values with the free democracies of the West, especially with the United States of America.

We will make every effort to implement the forward-looking decisions of the Atlantic Alliance: the 1989 Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament and the declaration issued after the London summit meeting in July of this year.

We are helping to restructure the Alliance's and revise its strategy. We are considering, within NATO and WEU, how we and our allies can even more effectively counter new threats to our security, especially from crisis regions.

Germany and Europe as a whole will need partnership and friendly cooperation with the USA and Canada in future, too. We want to reaffirm this in a transatlantic declaration that will provide an even broader basis on which to build. The North American democracies must be anchored in Europe in three ways: through the Atlantic Alliance, through ever closer cooperation with the EC and through their participation in the CSCE process.

The agenda for the coming years includes the establishment of a European Union and the creation of a pan-European peaceful order. The accomplishment of German unity is proving to be an opportunity to accelerate the process of European unification.

In Munich a few days ago, President Mitterrand and I reaffirmed that France and Germany will continue to be the engines of European unification and that together we want to help structure the peaceful order in Europe. This cooperation is a further indication of the fundamental importance we attach to the partnership between France and the united Germany.

As a result of our joint initiative, and in close cooperation with the Italian Presidency, the intergovernmental

conferences on economic and monetary union and on political union will be opened before the end of the year. These steps towards integration are imperative if the European Community is to live up to its growing political and economic role and responsibility.

The European Union we seek is to provide a solid foundation for the coalescence of the whole of Europe and to form its core. Together with France, we are resolved to work towards the creation of a European confederation in which all states on our continent work together as equal partners.

But let there be no doubt: We want political union. We do not want a high-class free-trade area but the political union of Europe as stated in the treaties of Rome.

The united Germany is aware of the fact that the process of security and cooperation in Europe, the CSCE, has made an essential contribution to closing the gulfs dividing our continent.

We will do all in our power to support the further expansion of the CSCE. Our aim in doing so is to ensure greater protection for human and civil rights. We also want to advance towards permanent institutions. The focus of our interest at present is a conflict prevention centre. The summit meeting of the heads of state and government of the 34 CSCE countries, due to take place next month, should lay the tracks in all these directions.

Similarly we want the member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact to extend to one another the hand of friendship and new partnership in a joint declaration in Paris. We hope that the remaining CSCE partners will thereafter join us in solemnly reaffirming their rejection of the use of force. We view all these aspects as elements for security and cooperation structures extending throughout Europe. The aim I expressed in my first policy statement just eight years ago - to secure peace with fewer weapons - will continue to be the guiding principle of the new, all-German government. In recent years the disarmament and arms control negotiations have produced unprecedented results, largely with the help of the Federal Government. Nearly all intermediate-range nuclear weapons that were deployed in our country have already been scrapped.

Who does not recall the debate in 1983 when some members of the House spoke of the danger of war in order to scare the people? "Achieving peace with fewer weapons", that is the policy that has proved to be right. A few days ago the last American chemical weapons were removed from German territory, thus disproving all those who for years would have the people believe the Americans would never keep their promise. I thank President Bush for withdrawing those weapons, and I also thank President Ronald Reagan for promising that it would be done.

Ladies and gentlemen, all these experiences encourage us to urge further progress. I wish to mention above all the Vienna negotiations on conventional forces in Europe. A first agreement on conventional disarmament in Europe will be completed very soon and signed at the CSCE summit in November.

The Vienna negotiations will be continued immediately afterwards. Germany has acted as pacesetter in this context: in the Vienna negotiating forum we undertook on 30 August 1990 to cut the forces of the united Germany to 370,000 within three to four years.

We assume that in follow-on negotiations the other participants, too, will make their contribution to consolidating security and stability in Europe, not least through measures to restrict force strengths.

Together with its partners in the Alliance, the Federal Government is also energetically pursuing progress in other areas of disarmament and arms control. This applies particularly to a worldwide ban on chemical weapons, as well as the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons and of the short-range nuclear systems of the Soviet Union and the United States.

I have already expressed grateful recognition of the fact that the sweeping changes which took place in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe considerably eased our path to German unity. From the beginning we did our utmost to encourage and support these reform processes.

The extensive development of German-Soviet relations plays a key role in pan-European responsibility. During our talks in the Caucasus, President Gorbachev and I created the necessary conditions for lending a new quality to German-Soviet relations.

We agree that the Germans and the peoples of the Soviet Union should now close the painful chapters in their history and resume their good traditions. By fostering understanding and reconciliation in this way we also aim to promote European unification.

The Treaty on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Partnership and Cooperation which has already been concluded serves this aim. It is gratifying that President Gorbachev will come to Germany to sign with me this groundbreaking treaty.

The complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from German territory by the end of 1994 should also be seen in this context. They are moving out 50 years after the time when the Soviet army entered the territory of the German Reich. We know what that means to us all. We want the Soviet forces and their families to know that we are willing to help facilitate their repatriation, for instance as regards housing programmes.

We envisage a comparable work for peace of pan-European significance with the Republic of Poland.

We are aware of the heavy burden imposed by the history of this century. But, equally, the history of both nations contains many good chapters on which we can build today. The time is now ripe for lasting reconciliation between the German and Polish people. We aim to place future German-Polish relations on firm foundations :

- Following the resolutions adopted by the German Bundestag and the former East German Volkskammer on 21 June, there can no longer be any doubt as to our willingness to confirm the existing frontier definitively and in internationally binding form. This we have also specifically stated in the Two plus Four Treaty.

- The Joint Declaration which Prime Minister Mazowiecki and I signed last November marks a new beginning towards understanding and reconciliation. It includes an important commitment to respect human rights, to which we attach special value. I shall be taking a personal interest in this.

We will continue to follow the reforms in Hungary with friendly counsel and helpful assistance, as we will those in Czechoslovakia. The Federal Government is resolved to make these countries a focus of its cultural relations.

We have offered all reforming states in Central and South-Eastern Europe the chance of being more closely linked with the European Community through an association tailored to their needs.

Developments in Europe and our obligations on this continent, however, never allow us to forget the conflicts, the anxieties and problems facing people in other parts of the world.

Many peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America suffer poverty, hunger, need and overpopulation. Excessive debts undermine their political, economic and social stability. We will continue to demonstrate solidarity in helping people in need...

We realize that greater responsibility is incumbent on the united Germany in the community of nations, not least for the preservation of world peace. We will shoulder this responsibility in the United Nations, the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance as well as in our relations with individual countries. We intend to create clear constitutional conditions for this.

We most strongly condemn the Iraqi aggression against and subsequent annexation of Kuwait and the abduction of foreign, including German, citizens in violation of international law. This is an affront to the

community of nations and the United Nations; at the same time, it is a test of their resolution... We have made our contribution to international solidarity and will continue to do so.

The Federal Government will also cooperate actively in the solution of the global problems of mankind :

- Humanity's natural resources of life must be preserved for future generations. We are especially concerned to protect the tropical rain forests.
- We want to help break the vicious circle of poverty, population growth and environmental destruction.
- We will step up the fight against drugs, epidemics and international terrorism.
- Endeavours towards greater worldwide protection of human rights - especially the rights of national, ethnic and religious minorities - are and will remain a central concern of our foreign policy. In view of the history of this century, we want to help prevent mass exoduses of refugees throughout the world and to guarantee people a life in their original homeland marked by dignity and secure rights.
- In whatever remains to be done in shaping our policy towards asylum seekers and foreigners we must remember that in a Europe of open borders, in a world which is growing ever closer together, the causes of these refugee flows have to be tackled at their source.

In the first Article of our Basic Law, the "German people acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world". This is the decisive moral force behind the policies of the united Germany.

Today we can say to the young generation in Germany and Europe, to our children and grandchildren: you have every chance to live a life in peace and freedom. You have every chance to shape your life as you wish, and to find personal happiness in your career and family life.

Certainly, this will require some personal effort. But when did a young generation in Germany ever have more reason to view the future with confidence ?

It is more rewarding than ever to play one's part in shaping the future. The all-German Government will make its contribution, too.