



***INTER ACTION COUNCIL***

*Established in 1983*

## **InterAction Council**

**20<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session**

### **Opening Speech**

**by Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder  
at the Opening Ceremony**

**8 June 2002  
Berlin, Germany**

(Translation of advance text)

Dear Helmut Schmidt,

Dear Mr Fraser,

Dear Mr Miyazawa,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to cordially welcome you to Berlin for the opening of the InterAction Council's annual conference.

For the first time in its almost twenty-year history, the InterAction Council is holding its conference in Germany. I regard this as a mark of recognition for Germany.

For our country, and for Berlin in particular, the fall of the Wall, the decision in favour of our capital Berlin and the move of the Government and Parliament heralded the start of a new era.

On the threshold of the new millennium, the erstwhile "frontline city of the Cold War" has developed into a metropolis which today boasts peace, democracy, modernity, cultural diversity, solidarity and tolerance.

Twelve years after reunification and the end of the Cold War, Germany's role and responsibility in Europe and the world have grown.

The measure of this change can be gauged, if not solely, from the participation of German soldiers in peacekeeping measures or in the fight against terrorism.

Fortunately, the phase in Germany's post-war history in which our country was not fully sovereign and was thus neither fully able nor obliged to demonstrate its solidarity is over once and for all.

Today, our leitmotif is the policy of peace conducted by a nation which is a good neighbour to its partners – with equal rights and obligations.

In order to achieve this objective, the German Government is pursuing an integrative policy oriented towards cooperation.

Our strong commitment to European unification is thus one of the key elements of Germany's foreign policy.

Following the horrors of the bloody 20<sup>th</sup> century, an area of peace, freedom and economic prosperity has finally been established in many parts of Europe. Without the accession of the Central and Eastern European states, this area of peace would remain incomplete.

The enlargement of the European Union is therefore one of the most important tasks of this decade.

We expect to have concluded the accession negotiations with up to ten candidate countries by the end of this year. Europe, this continent which has been devastated so often in its history, will thus truly grow together.

People in Eastern Europe are not only seeking the advantages which are mentioned time and again in connection with enlargement: more peace, security and prosperity in the whole of Europe.

They want to become a part of that community of values which is our "European way of life", that is to say, by our form of civilization and society which is characterized by the fact that broad sections of the population share the values they have worked for so hard and participate in the decisions made by society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The demands on an enlarged Europe will increase dramatically.

Particularly the experiences of 11 September, the existence of dangerous and persisting regional conflicts, the momentum of the refugee and migration movements and new global risks such as organized crime or the threat to the world climate show that we must find new and, above all European, answers.

The constraints of a world ever more networked in economic terms, in which we want to develop Europe into the most dynamic and competitive economic area before the end of the decade, require even greater economic and social cooperation in Europe.

With this in mind, it is clear that we must expect the candidate countries to be in a position to fully and wholeheartedly adopt and apply European legislation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The forthcoming enlargement will only be successful if the Convention on the Future of Europe under the chairmanship of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing takes bold reform steps to ensure the European Union's ability to shape policy as well as its manageability.

This is no longer merely about efficiency. Europe also has considerable shortcomings with regard to democratic legitimacy and the transparency of political decisions.

It is unclear to many citizens who is responsible for which decisions in Europe.

In view of the far-reaching consequences which decisions at European level have for citizens' daily lives, we must not neglect to solve this problem.

It is no coincidence that right-wing populists such as Le Pen in France or Haider in Austria use the fact that many citizens quite literally cannot grasp Europe's institutions as a pretext for their anti-democratic and anti-European agitation.

We must strengthen both the democratic idea and the idea of efficiency in order to shape a Europe of popular participation in the institutional sphere.

We need a clearer division of competences between the member states and the European Union.

We do not want a catalogue of competences. Rather, it is important that we sift through European policy in a pragmatic manner in order to see what, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, could be better dealt with by the member states.

Conversely, there will be spheres in which we need more Europe. In particular, these include protection against internal and external threats.

We need a European separation of powers which citizens can more easily understand.

This includes a Commission transformed into a strong executive which in future, just like any other "normal" government, must be accountable to citizens for its political decisions.

We need a European Parliament with greater democratic rights which also elects the "European Head of Government", i.e. the President of the Commission.

Finally, the Council should be developed into a chamber of states with a largely legislative function.

We must think about how the current indirect financing of the European Union can best be reorganized into a partly direct, or at least more transparent, mode of financing which citizens can better understand.

Finally, we need a European constitution. The name we give it is not important. Rather, what matters is that the institutional content is right and the necessary transparency guaranteed.

In particular, the Charter of Fundamental Rights must be incorporated into the treaties.

This Charter contains everything which a Western-style constitution requires in terms of fundamental rights.

I believe that these elements make up the essential features of the institutional setup for a European Union geared to master the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This is the task facing the Convention on the Future of Europe. And I am particularly pleased that we were able to win an experienced and convinced European of the stature of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing for this huge task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European nation-states will not be able to master the great challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century on their own, neither politically nor economically.

In the age of globalization, even the largest European states will only be able to assert their interests if they join forces.

The need for joint European action is particularly apparent in the field of foreign and security policy. This was demonstrated in inexorable clarity by the events of 11 September.

The common threat posed by international terrorism has also made NATO and Russia move closer together.

Last week, the Heads of State and Government of NATO signed the Rome Declaration together with President Putin.

Russia will now be included as an equal partner in the work of the Alliance on a series of important issues, such as the fight against terrorism, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control.

This is a historic step which adds a new dimension to the relationship between NATO and Russia.

At the NATO summit to be held in Prague this November, we will resolutely continue to adapt NATO to the new challenges and threats posed by international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Moreover, we will admit new members and thus give more states an opportunity to contribute to stability and security in Europe from within the Alliance.

International alliances and multilateral action will become an increasingly important part of the changing security policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The horrendous attacks in the US showed that no country is invulnerable in our world which is growing ever closer together.

Today, internal and external security can no longer be separated from each other.

Reacting to the new, global risks is one of the central challenges facing the international community.

As is demonstrated by what we have achieved to date in the fight against terrorism, we have already made good progress.

With its commitment to Afghanistan and its participation in Operation Enduring Freedom, Germany has shown that it takes its duty to render assistance seriously.

In Afghanistan, I witnessed first-hand the exemplary peace commitment of the multinational ISAF troops.

However, military actions can always only be the "ultima ratio" in a more comprehensive security policy.

Such a policy must be based on a broad international coalition and give equal consideration to diplomatic, security, economic, humanitarian and development measures.

One focus of a such a policy must be the prevention of terrorism.

We will therefore continue to work together with our European partners and the US towards ending violence and terror in the Middle East.

Our objective remains a negotiated peace settlement which, on the one hand, recognizes Israel's right to exist and security and, on the other, envisages the creation of a viable Palestinian state.

I am also deeply concerned over the conflict between India and Pakistan.

Civil war, human rights violations and extreme poverty were, after all, also the breeding ground for the sinister symbiosis between global terrorism and the Taliban regime.

As a result of the concerted and resolute action taken by the international coalition against terrorism, Afghanistan has been able to make a fresh start.

However, the stabilization and reconstruction of the country continue to require an intensive long-term commitment by the international community.

During my visit to Kabul last month, I emphasized Germany's readiness to fully support Afghanistan's return to the international community and its reconstruction.

And during my visit to a girls' school I saw for myself how rewarding our commitment is if it gives people who were barred from all hope for many years a chance and prospect once more of decent development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must also take further steps in the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and G 7/G 8 to prevent the emergence of and energetically combat international terrorism.

We have already made tangible progress in drying up the sources of finance for terrorism, as well as in endeavouring to block terrorists' access to weapons of mass destruction.

The German Government believes that it is particularly important for all counter-terrorism measures to enhance and support international and regional alliances and security cooperation.

It is of the utmost importance that we further strengthen the United Nations.

The United Nations is the central pillar for the further development of international law. There can be no global peace policy without a strong United Nations.

In a world which is becoming ever more and ever faster interlinked, in which political decisions are producing an increasing amount of regional and global interaction, the demands on the United Nations are rising. However, the immediate significance of multilateral action is also growing for each individual member state.

With the implementation of the Brahimi Report, the capacities of the United Nations are being considerably strengthened across the board – from crisis prevention to post-conflict peace-building.

In future, the United Nations will also benefit from the envisaged further development and expansion of the European Union's crisis prevention and management capabilities within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy.

The United Nations can only do justice to its increased importance if it can act on a solid financial basis.

However, the United Nations' efficiency and the capability to take action must also be resolutely strengthened by way of internal reforms. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has provided important impetus for this.

The German Government's central objective is, within the framework of a strong and efficient world organization, to step up its efforts to help disadvantaged regions of the world and to help ensure that all countries have a share in social and economic achievements, in order to promote a fair international system of security, prosperity and development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This weekend you will be examining topical issues in world politics, as well as the future development of the European Union.

I look forward to your suggestions and wish you a successful conference.

And I hope that, despite your work load, you will find the time and leisure to get to know the city and its people a little.

Thank you very much.



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