



Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,
ter gelegenheid van de viering van de Dag van de Duitse Eenheid (3 oktober)

datum 1 oktober 2019

*Sehr verehrte Herr Botschafter,
Sehr verehrte Herr Minister-Präsident Laschet,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Es ist eine grosse Ehre für mich heute anlässlich des Tag der
Deutschen Einheit eine Rede halten zu können.
Ich habe mich überlegt meine Rede auf Deutsch zu halten, aber
wegen die viele ausländische Gäste scheint es mir besser für meine
Rede die Englische Sprache zu benützen.*

It is with great honour that I speak to you today during this celebration of the Day of German Unity. Coming Thursday, on the 3rd of October, it will be 29 years ago the so-called process of reunification – or in German ‘*Wiedereinigung*’ – that started with the fall of the Berlin Wall, came to an official end.

On that day the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* joined the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* to form one nation: Germany, *Deutschland*.

On that day a difficult period of cold war, and of both physical and pshychological walls between countries and people came to an end. On that day Richard von Weizsäcker, Bundespräsident during the *Wiedereinigung*, also former mayor of West-Berlin, said, and I quote: “In free self-determination we want to complete Germany's unity and freedom; for our task, we are aware of our responsibility before God and the people; in a united Europe, we want to serve the peace of the world.” Unquote.

Today, 29 years after Richard von Weizsäcker spoke those famous words, we look back upon a reunification that is still progressing. It did not stop on that day. On the contrary, it was the start of an ungoing process. It has not always been easy, there are still differences and divides. But gradually they are getting smaller.

Today, the relationship between our two countries, Germany and the Netherlands, is excellent for many reasons. On many topics and issues Germany and the Netherlands share the same opinions. We work closely together in general, but around our borders especially.



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Cross-border cooperation is of the utmost importance to the Netherlands and the Bundesländer bordering our country: Niedersachsen and, Herr Laschet, your Bundesland; Nordrhein-Westfalen.

And today, Germany is our largest trading partner, and your *Bundeskanzlerin* has a good relationship with our prime minister Rutte. In the nearby future – if all goes well in Brussels –, the President and Vice-President of the European Commission will be from our two countries.

Historically we have a lot in common as well. To highlight one man: Dutch statesman William of Orange, Count of Nassau-Dillenburg, was born in Germany in 1533. Our national anthem even sings of these origins. And last but not least, the Dutch Royal Family has German connections as well!

Sehr verehrte Herr Botschafter, sehr verehrte Herr Minister-Präsident,

I congratulate Germany and all Germans with this Day of German Unity. Especially in this particular year of the 30th celebration of the *Berliner Mauerfall* in November.

In the Netherlands we cherish the excellent bond between Germany and the Netherlands, both bilaterally and within the European Union. We do hope and trust that this bond will remain tight for many years to come.

It is an honour to celebrate this important day with you.

I'd like to conclude with two lines from the German National Anthem, since it holds a universal truth:

*Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit
sind des Glückes Unterpfand*

Unity and justice and freedom
Are the safeguards of fortune.

Congratulations,
Herzlichen Glückwunsch.