

**Speech by Ambassador Hans-Dieter Lucas on the occasion of the  
25<sup>th</sup> Day of German Unity at the Palais des Colonies (Tervuren), 5 October 2015**

Excellencies,  
Colleagues and friends,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

My wife Eve and I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you. Thank you for joining us for the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Day of German Unity. As newcomers to NATO, we feel privileged to host such a party at this early stage and to introduce ourselves to the wider NATO family here at the Palais des Colonies. Next year we will be happy to welcome you at our renovated residence. This year's celebrat

ion of the Day of German Unity is very special. We are commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Germany's reunification. We will not forget what made this momentous change possible: it was above all the courage of many brave men and women in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the GDR who stood up for freedom and democracy. It was this peaceful revolution championing democracy, human rights and dignity which paved the way for ending the Cold War and opened up a new chapter in European history.

Germany's reunification on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1990 was also the result of a major diplomatic effort, culminating in the 2+4 Treaty, signed on September 12 in Moscow, between the two German states as well as France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States. However, it was by no means self-evident that Germany's main opponents during World War II – and finally all European states – would endorse Germany unity.

In the end, it was essentially about trust. Trust that a united Germany would not abuse the historic opportunity provided by reunification. Trust that had been built in the preceding decades through Germany's integration into NATO and the European Communities, as they were known in those days.

That is why we are also commemorating another milestone in Germany's postwar history: In May 1955, 60 years ago, Germany joined NATO. 10 years after the end of World War II, our

European partners, the US and Canada had welcomed Germany back into the fold, as a member of the international community.

Joining NATO meant security for the Federal Republic of Germany during the difficult times of the Cold War. But NATO was not only about providing security through deterrence. It also supported the goal of German reunification. In the Harmel report of 1967, NATO set as its key objective the creation of an enduring and just peace order for the whole of Europe. And it wisely defined security as a combination of deterrence and détente through dialogue. Some years later the CSCE Helsinki Final Act, signed in 1975, almost exactly 40 years ago, provided an important framework for developing such a dialogue between East and West – based upon agreed principles, such as respect for human rights, undivided security and – hugely important for Germany – the option of peaceful change.

It was this concept, as well as the unwavering support of our allies, that ultimately laid the groundwork for Germany's peaceful reunification as a free and sovereign country within the family of nations.

25 years of German unity is a reason to rejoice. So much has been achieved. The gap between East and West Germany has narrowed considerably; today Germany has become much more diverse and more open than it was 25 years ago. It is surrounded by friends.

With German unity, a key goal of NATO during the Cold War has been reached. However, a just and stable peace order for the whole of Europe is still unfinished business. 1989/90 was not the end of history, as was demonstrated again by the dramatic events that have unfolded in Ukraine and in our Southern neighbourhood. NATO has reacted vigorously to these developments through the decisions taken at the Wales Summit. However, we are far from having implemented the noble vision laid down in the Paris Charter for a United Europe, signed only a few weeks after German reunification in November 1990.

This vision is not a utopia – even though it may seem so, given the enormous challenges and threats that we face both to the East and to the South of NATO and the EU. What seems like a utopia can sometimes turn into political reality. The history of German reunification is a case in point. My generation grew up in a divided Germany, confronted with the bipolarity of the

Cold War. Many Germans had more or less come to terms with the status quo. When I joined the Foreign Service in 1985, no serious politician or diplomat would have dared to say openly that the Cold War might end soon and that Germany may be reunited. Only 4 years later, the Berlin Wall came down, and one year after that, Germany was actually reunited.

So there is something to be learned from 1989/90: there is almost nothing in international relations which cannot be changed for the better. And this is why my country, the reunited Germany, will continue to work with its partners and neighbours, as well as within NATO, for peace, security and stability in wider Europe. The Day of German Unity, in particular its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is a great occasion to reemphasize this commitment and obligation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends – again many thanks for joining us for this celebration. We wish you all a great evening – and now enjoy ! Thank you very much !