

## Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony in Stralsund, Germany July 13, 2006

*Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.* Mr. President, Mrs. Bush, Minister President, Lord Mayor, ladies and gentlemen, citizens of Stralsund, let me say that I am delighted to be able to welcome you on behalf of the representatives of the land and also of the city. I'm delighted to welcome most warmly the President of the United States of America. Mr. President, a very, very warm welcome to you.

Mr. President, I'm delighted to be able to welcome you here in this part of our country that I can truly call my political home, the Hanseatic City of Stralsund. Stralsund was part of the League of Hanseatic Cities; that is to say, it is imbued with a spirit of openness to the rest of the world. And in 1989, it was also one of the many cities where, on Monday, demonstrations took place, where people went out into the streets to demand freedom, to demonstrate for freedom. And we're happy to say in these days it is part of the land of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and also part of the Federal Republic of Germany.

And I think that this is a very good opportunity, indeed, to say a word of thanks. Thank you for the contribution, for the support that we have enjoyed throughout from the people of the United States of America, from the American Government, to help us along the way towards German unification. I think we owe you a big debt of gratitude for being able to finally live within one country in peace and freedom, one country, Germany.

I think one can safely say that ever since we were able to achieve German unity, a lot has happened and, indeed, Stralsund is a case in point. If you look at the fact that when the GDR finally collapsed, you had about 600 monuments here of historic importance in the city itself that were slowly decaying, that were slowly in ruins, and

part of them have been restored over time. But there are still quite a lot of problems that remain to be solved. One of them, obviously, is the fairly high unemployment in this particular part of the country. They urgently need economic progress, an economic upturn. And this is why I am also delighted to have you here, to show you here in my constituency what it means when people try to take their own fate, their own future into their own hands and try to turn it to something positive; they are willing to work for the future of the city, for the future of this region.

And I think it also clearly illustrates what we can do together in order to confront the international dangers, the threats at the international level that are common to us all, and that we can do in order to, together, work for peace and freedom for our two countries.

Yet again, a very, very warm welcome to you, Mr. President.

*President Bush.* Thank you all. Thank you, Chancellor Merkel. Thank you all for coming. Laura and I feel welcome here in Stralsund. To the mayor and Minister President and the people of this beautiful town, we say, *guten morgen*.

For decades, the German people were separated by an ugly wall. Here in the East, millions of you lived in darkness and tyranny. Today, your nation is whole again. The German people are at the center of Europe that is united and free and peaceful.

You've given Germany a fine Chancellor in Angela Merkel, who I'm proud to call friend. The American people and the German people see the same qualities of character in your nation's leader. We see a bold vision and a humble heart. We see that she's willing to make hard decisions and eager to build strong partnerships. And like

many others in the international community, I respect her judgment and I value her opinion.

It's such an honor to be in her constituency. When I met with her in the Oval Office, she said, "When you come to Germany, you need to come to one of the best parts of Germany." She didn't predict the weather. [*Laughter*] But I want to thank the mayor for delivering such a beautiful day. And she forgot to tell me I was going to get some herring, and I thank you for that gift.

I bring a message from the American people: We're honored to call the German people friends and allies. We share common values and common interests. We want to work together to keep the peace.

We want to work together to promote freedom. There's so much that we can do, working together, and that's part of my visit today, is to pledge to you and the Chancellor, America and Germany stand side by side.

Thank you for your warm welcome. May God bless you all. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:55 a.m. in Stralsund Market Square. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Harald Lastovka of Stralsund, Germany; and Minister President Harald Ringstorff of the Federal State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany. Chancellor Merkel spoke in German, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

## The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Stralsund July 13, 2006

*Chancellor Merkel.* Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be able to welcome the President of the United States here to Stralsund yet again. We had a lengthy conversation just now in the office of the mayor. We felt very much at home here in this beautiful city hall. We talked about all of the different issues on the global agenda.

We shall later on see a little bit more of the countryside here, of the city itself. I am really pleased to be able to show to the President of the United States how matters have developed here, with some problems still existing but also what sort of problems we've coped with quite successfully. And it's such a great thing to have this lovely weather for our visits.

Just now in our talks, we talked at great length about international issues. Unfortunately, there are quite a lot of problems that we need to deal with and for whose solution we feel responsible. The first and

foremost on top of the agenda is certainly Iran. The international community actually submitted a very substantial, very fundamental offer to Iran, starting from the firm view that Iran should not be in possession of a nuclear weapon, but that, on the other hand, Iran should have—should know good development. So far we have not received any sort of reaction from the Iranian leadership as to how their position is on this offer.

And this is why it was only consistent that yesterday the foreign ministers decided yet again to show clearly, also through a resolution in the U.N. Security Council, that should Iran not in any way reply to this offer and accept this offer, we unfortunately have to embark on a new course. The door has not been closed, but Iran must know that those who have submitted this offer are willing—and this is the success of yesterday's meeting—Russia, China, the E-3, and the United States of America,