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### **A Discussion with the Newly Minted Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Ambassador Dr. Harald Braun**

at the Annual Meeting of the American Council on Germany

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**D**istinguished members of the ACG, ladies and gentlemen, debates about German foreign policy rarely make big headlines in the *New York Times*, or even in German newspapers. Over the past few weeks, however, reports about a new German role in global affairs filled newspapers from Beijing to Berlin and from Warsaw to Washington. Some observers hailed the end of what they labeled as “German exceptionalism.” Others welcomed a belated commitment to match Germany’s economic power with a more decisive engagement in global affairs. And relatively few sounded the alarm over the prospective militarization of German foreign policy.

For someone who has spent more than 30 years accompanying and helping to shape German foreign policy, contributing to this debate is of course too tempting to resist. So Bob and Bill [ACG Chairman Ambassador Robert M. Kimmitt and ACG President William M. Drozdiak] must have read my mind when they invited me to talk to you tonight about Germany, its European and transatlantic partnerships, and its global responsibility.

Ladies and gentlemen, the current debate about Germany’s role in the world focuses on remarks made by German President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen at the recent Munich Security Conference. In front of the global foreign and security policy community, Frank-Walter Steinmeier pledged, and I quote, “earlier, more decisive, and more substantive engagement in the foreign and security policy sphere.”

While possibly remarkable in itself, this statement has to be seen in the broader political and economic context in Europe and beyond.

In the past four years, the European debt crisis has challenged us in unprecedented ways. Between calls for more decisive German leadership and strong rejection of alleged German dictates, staying the course was far from easy for Chancellor Angela Merkel and her team.

While the European debt crisis is not yet over and crucial reforms will have to continue in a number of member states, one of its effects can already be witnessed today. The legitimate expectations of our European and international partners towards Germany as the EU’s most significant economy and most populous country have clearly increased. Germany has assumed responsibility and leadership in the European debt crisis that will also be expected from us in other areas in the future.

The current global environment doesn’t allow us Europeans the luxury to relax. Over the past years and even months, regional conflicts moved closer towards Europe and its allies. Across the Southern Mediterranean and the Arab world, hopes placed in the Arab Spring have given way to uncertainty and disillusionment. The bloody civil war in Syria has already uprooted more than 9 million civilians and killed over 100,000. Immediately challenging our NATO partner Turkey and one of our closest friends and allies, Israel, the conflict threatens to plunge the entire Middle East into turmoil.

Ukraine is another stark reminder that we must not take peace and security in Europe for granted. While the agreement brokered by Foreign Minister Steinmeier and his French and Polish colleagues on February 21 certainly prevented further bloodshed on the streets of Kiev, the overall situation has escalated. As the result of a sham referendum in a clear breach of the Ukrainian constitution, Russia has annexed Crimea. Condemning this as an act of aggression and a violation of international law won’t be sufficient to bring about a solution. In a striking show of unity, the United States, Europe, and other

partners have imposed a set of targeted sanctions against Russian and Ukrainian leaders responsible for the developments in Ukraine. We are prepared to take further steps to defend our common values. It is precisely in that context that Foreign Minister Steinmeier offered additional German support for increased routine operations by NATO in its Eastern member states on Saturday. Let me be clear: These should by no means be misinterpreted as chest-beating which would only lead to further escalation. But in light of Russia's actions we shouldn't leave any doubt that our NATO allies can count on the alliance's unwavering support and solidarity.

In both, Ukraine and the Southern Mediterranean, people turn to Europe for support. We will certainly not be able to meet all the hopes and expectations linked to Europe. But our friends and partners in the world should know that stability in our neighborhood, open markets, the respect for human rights, and democratic principles aren't just abstract goals for us. They are the cornerstones of the open global order that Germany's economic success, peace, and prosperity fundamentally depend upon. Maintaining this global order is what motivates stronger German involvement and justifies the commitment to more international responsibility.

Let me clarify what this means for us by adding three points:

First, our policy will always be guided by the search for diplomatic solutions first. Using military force must remain a last resort. This doesn't equal disengagement from the world's problems. Already today, 6,000 German soldiers, police officers, and civilians serve in UN mandated peace missions – from Afghanistan to Kosovo and from Mali to the Horn of Africa. And we are currently planning with our friends and allies how to enhance this engagement, for example by strengthening our presence in Mali, by providing robust support for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, and by contributing to the EU-led mission to the Central African Republic.

Of course, as Harry Truman once said, if you can't stand the heat, you'd better get out of the kitchen. International engagement inevitably invites criticism – at home and abroad. It risks jolting a German society that has grown accustomed to the peaceful prosperity of the EU out of its comfort zone. It is therefore critical for any German government to build its foreign policy on a strong consensus, to lead the public discussion on its costs and benefits, and to work closely with parliament in maintaining a rational and politically viable balance.

At the same time, we have to make sure that we don't unnecessarily narrow our options to only military solutions. All too often they have failed to deliver lasting stability. Crisis prevention, mediation, and well-targeted economic cooperation can mitigate conflicts even before they run out of hand. (I know that I am treading on thin ice here before a U.S. audience, but public opinion in the U.S. has taken this issue up in recent times as well and is becoming more multifaceted than in the past.) We all know that underdevelopment, resource scarcity, natural degradation, religious or ethnic divides, or the crackdown on fundamental freedoms fuel tensions. This is where we need to take earlier and more decisive action! This is where the world can count on German expertise and commitment, and this is the area where Germany plays a prominent and forward-leaning role in the UN, which it is widely praised for.

Ladies and gentlemen, my second point is that German foreign policy is inconceivable without strong and reliable partnerships. Since the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany, going it alone has not

been and never will be an option for us. Even less so as the character and magnitude of global challenges have changed tremendously in recent years. International terrorism, mass displacement of people, or climate change won't stop at national borders. It is also clear that no country, certainly no European country, can cope with them alone.

Looking beyond the EU, the transatlantic partnership – which I prefer to call “transatlantic friendship” – remains a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy. To speak with Chancellor Merkel's words: “Germany could not wish for a better partner than the United States.”

I am sure that for all of you in this room it is pretty evident that there are no two regions in the world that share as many basic values as the U.S. and Europe. It was good to hear from Vice President Biden and Secretary Kerry this year in Munich that the U.S. still sees it the same way. When democracy, human rights, rule of law, or open markets are increasingly stigmatized and rejected as “Western inventions,” we need to stand together.

Therefore, we cannot be indifferent to irritations in our partnership. Revelations about massive NSA surveillance have undermined trust in the Western community of values. They have also raised the question if Americans and Europeans can still find common ground when balancing legitimate security interests with civil rights. At the same time, the Ukraine crisis has proven once again the value, necessity, and reliability of our transatlantic cooperation in NATO and beyond.

Defusing irritations over NSA spying will also promote what Foreign Minister Steinmeier in his recent speech at the Brookings Institution in D.C. called “our single biggest lever of opportunity.” I am talking of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. We believe that it has the potential to become the second transatlantic anchor besides NATO, reflecting our deep and growing economic integration.

Ladies and gentlemen, my third and last point could easily be interpreted as a personal mission statement. But talking about Germany's global partnership and multilateral engagement wouldn't be complete without mentioning the United Nations.

Despite its known institutional shortcomings and an undeniable lack of reform, the UN remains the most ubiquitous actor in the world's conflicts, the main provider of development and humanitarian aid, and a strong voice for the protection of and against the violation of human rights. The UN feeds 90 million people, deploys 120,000 peacekeepers in 16 operations on four continents, assists over 36 million refugees, and mobilizes \$13 billion per year in humanitarian aid for people affected by conflict and natural disasters. The UN negotiates with warring parties in Syria; spreads hope in refugee camps in Africa; defends civilians in South Sudan, Eastern Congo, or Iraq; and provides the only truly global forum to discuss global problems. In short, the United Nations is indispensable.

Germany therefore remains an active promoter of multilateralism under the umbrella of the United Nations. While the UN's agenda will surely remain crisis-driven, we will make sure that other pressing questions of the 21st century won't be neglected.

- How can we reconcile development and population growth with the planet's limited resources?
- How can we fight climate change and provide cleaner energy to developing countries?
- How can we better ensure that states uphold their human rights obligations?

- And how can we make global institutions like the UN more reflective of the realities of the 21st century without rendering them ineffective?

These will be some of the questions guiding the work of my team and me in the coming years – along with the daily, weekly, and monthly crisis that we all know. Given the wealth of experience assembled in this room, I hope that I can count on your support and input when looking for the right answers.

Ladies and gentlemen, partnerships between nations are ultimately built upon exchange and understanding between their people. This idea lies at the heart of the UN. It also lies at the very heart of the American Council on Germany. It is in that sense that I hope to continue the exchange on questions of mutual importance on both sides of the Atlantic with all of you in the coming years.

It is good to be back in New York.

Thank you for your attention and for inviting me to address you tonight!



**Ambassador Harald Braun** has been the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations in New York since March 2014. Prior to his nomination, Ambassador Braun served as State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office responsible for international trade, economics and sustainable development, legal and cultural affairs as well as overall management of the Foreign Service from July 2011 to January 2014. From 2008 to 2009, Ambassador Braun was Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission at the German Embassy in Paris, then Director-General for Management of the Federal Foreign Office Berlin. His previous career led Ambassador Braun into the private sector: From 2005 to 2008, he served as Corporate Senior Vice President for corporate policy and external relations of Siemens AG in Munich. In March 2008, he was named Research Professor for Global Studies and Diplomacy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. From 2003 to 2005, Ambassador Braun was Deputy Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, after assuming the position of Minister (Political) at the German Embassy in Washington for five years. Previously, Ambassador Braun headed the Foreign Office's Parliament and Cabinet Division from 1994 to 1997, as well as the office of former Federal Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher from 1992 to 1994. Previous posts included Ambassador to Burundi in 1991/92. He also served at the German Embassies in Beirut and London and the human resources division of the Federal Foreign Office in Bonn. Ambassador Braun studied economics and history in Tübingen and New York and completed a doctorate at SUNY Stony Brook before entering the Foreign Service in 1981.

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