Sehr geehrter Herr Präsident, lieber Paul,
sehr geehrter Oberbürgermeister Roters,
sehr geehrter Herr Minister Dr. Walter-Borjans,
sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,


America is proud of its alliance with Germany and we respect the commitment the German people bring to our partnership. Along with our other allies in the transatlantic community, we are united by history. But our alliance is based on more than history from a bygone era. We are united by common values. And what better time than now – as we chart the course ahead and attempt to predict the challenges and opportunities that 2012 will most certainly bring with it; what better time than now at the start of a New Year to remember those common values and the strength they lend us.

And as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said at an award ceremony in Berlin last April, Germany is a testament to those values. Germany, she said, is, and I quote, “a living testament to the capacity of communities to emerge from conflict and become forces for peace and progress.” But just as important, Germany is a living rebuke, and again I quote, “a rebuke to those who peddle hate, a rebuke to those who use violence as a shortcut to political process and necessary compromise, and a rebuke to those who believe that they hold the truth, when none of us does.” Zitat ende.

At that ceremony in Berlin last year, Secretary Clinton received the Walter Rathenau Prize for her outstanding contributions to international understanding and cooperation. During the First World War, Walter Rathenau rose to leadership in the German War-Ministry Department; and in
the early days of the Weimar Republic, he was appointed Foreign Minister. He was an exceptional man but one part of his story is unprecedented. He was Jewish; and up until that point, no Jew in Germany had attained such high political rank. His success, however, was marked by tragedy. As Secretary Clinton pointed out in her acceptance speech, Walter Rathenau’s Germany was a nation in transition, a nation struggling to build a stable democracy out of the ashes of conflict. There were those on both the right and the left who advocated violent change but Rathenau – and others like him – strove to focus the national consensus around solving the country’s growing economic, political, and social challenges. His efforts were cut tragically short. He was killed by right-wing extremists; and in the end, the extremism and the intolerance and hatred his assassination represented ripped apart not just Germany, but all of Europe.

Thirty years later, it was up to other visionaries to repair the damage that had been done. In the wake of the Second World War, leaders of victorious and defeated European countries alike faced an inescapable fact: If the nations of Europe could not find a way to cooperate, share resources, and prosper together, they would probably find themselves, sooner or later, in another and most certainly even deadlier war. World War II had left an indelible image in the minds of all who had lived through it, including people like Konrad Adenauer. He and the other founding fathers of modern Europe knew that a new and different continent was not simply a dream; it was a necessity. And with this realization, began the postwar integration of Europe.

The process was jumpstarted by the Marshall Plan – the 65th anniversary of which we celebrate this year – which was made conditional upon the creation of a common authority to distribute the aid for the reconstruction of postwar Europe. This successful collaboration sparked new cooperative initiatives which in turn led to the creation of the Common Market. The founding countries enjoyed economic growth and social progress of unprecedented dimensions and took a giant step forward toward creating the Europe that is today whole and free.

But as we start this New Year, Europe is on everybody’s minds for other reasons. In my own country, with the caucuses in Iowa and New Hampshire primary just behind us, Election 2012 has officially begun. As in most campaigns gone by, the main topic is “the economy, stupid.” As voters consider the economic situation in the United States, it is clear that America’s economic recovery depends not just on what we do but also on a strong world economy and stable international financial markets. The sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone impacts U.S.-European flows and could trigger financial contagion from Europe, which would adversely affect U.S. businesses, slow our recovery, and harm U.S. workers, jobs, and families. The same can be said for the entire global economy. How do we know our economies are so tightly bound? Look at how quickly the U.S. crisis spread to Europe in 2008-2009. It goes both ways.

The December 8 EU summit agreement was an important step forward. Subsequent bilateral meetings also appear to have been useful. Europe’s long-term focus on fiscal soundness and growth-inducing structural reforms is necessary and entirely appropriate. Equally important, immediate-term liquidity, market access and market confidence are vital elements of success, particularly given the large European refinancing programs in the next several months.

Europe is well capable of meeting and managing these challenges through resolve and commitment. Again, going back to an earlier election campaign in the United States, it’s the
“vision thing” and it is a question of political will. Outside observers often underestimate the very strong desire of European leaders to hold the European Union and the Eurozone together. Here in Germany, it is very obvious that this is a lifetime and vital project.

Paul, Tammy und ich erinnern uns gut an den Besuch im Haus Ihres Großvaters im vergangenen Jahr und an den wunderschönen Garten, den er so sehr geliebt hat.

Sein Garten war eine Stätte der Erneuerung. Er beschrieb seinen Garten in Rhöndorf als einen Ort, an dem er nach getaner politischer Arbeit entspannen konnte. Er fand Ruhe und neue Kraft für kommende Aufgaben.

Dort wurde ihm immer wieder bewusst, was die Natur uns zu lehren vermag – nämlich, dass man Geduld haben muss, wenn man etwas erreichen will, in der Natur und in der Politik.

That’s the vision thing; and Chancellor Adenauer had that in abundance. He was also, however, a very savvy politician. Here’s another reference to his garden and the realities of political life in the spotlight:

Ich gehe durch meinen Garten in Rhöndorf und denke über ein schwieriges Problem nach. Was soll ich Ihnen sagen, am nächsten Tag steht das alles in der Zeitung.

Well it is also no secret and “es steht doch alles in der Zeitung” that Germany is in the driver’s seat when it comes to steering a common EU economic policy. The European Union has the financial resources to handle this crisis, especially if nations choose to stand together. Strong action is required but financial markets recognize the capacity of the Eurozone as a whole to find a sustainable solution to the crisis. Certain countries are in more precarious positions, but the zone as a whole represents the world's largest economic block. As individual countries within the zone act to implement critical economic reforms and to strengthen fiscal governance, Europe must continue to mobilize the resources required to put in place strong and credible steps commensurate with the scale of the challenge.

The United States stands with European leaders as they move to put in place the decisive solutions required. Secretary Geithner has traveled to Europe three times in the past four months to engage with his counterparts. We engage with Germany on these issues at all levels and all the time.

On these occasions and many times over the past two years, we have offered our perspective about the dangers that the sovereign debt crisis poses for the global recovery. We have also, of course, shared the lessons from our own financial crisis, including the importance of responding to market challenges decisively. Finally, we talk a lot about the balance between austerity and growth. Tough medicine is in order but renewed economic growth will be the engine on which Europe eventually rides this out.

Why do we care so much? Why is a strong European economy so important to us? To the United States, it is important because the European Union buys nearly 20 percent of U.S. goods exports and over 30 percent of U.S. service exports. The European Union also accounts for over 50 percent of new investment in 2010 in the United States and over 60 percent of the entire stock of foreign direct investment into the United States. We are talking about a sum of over $1.5 trillion. Therefore, when European growth slows, so do U.S. jobs, exports, and investment inflows.
I am often criticized for being overly optimistic. Well, the latest German American Business Outlook, published last December, buoy my confidence. The majority of the surveyed German affiliates in the United States state that neither EU nor U.S. debt crises discussions have impacted their business decisions in 2011 or plans for 2012. Sales volumes actually improved for most firms in 2011. Almost all companies expect “moderate” to “strong” growth for their operations in 2012 and there is an unmistakable focus on growth-oriented measures like product innovation and entering new customer segments. As a result, nearly seven out of 10 German-owned subsidiaries in the U.S. plan to create new jobs next year. That is a good thing – for all of us. And since a third of all German investment in the U.S. comes from firms that are headquartered in NRW, it is especially good for a strong German-American partnership here in this state. Janice and I join the 300,000 Americans who are employed by T-Mobile, Bayer, ThyssenKrupp, ALDI and other German companies in thanking you for your support.

And as you all know, especially in this state, trade and investment is a two way street. As Germany’s #1 investment locale, close to 30 percent of all foreign investment in this country is concentrated right here in NRW.

Just as German investment is good for the United States in terms of creating jobs – the most basic indicator of economic performance – U.S. investment in NRW is also a win-win equation.

As a logistics hub and gateway to Europe, NRW has attracted significant U.S. investment. FedEx moved its Germany hub to Cologne/Bonn Airport in 2010. United Parcel Service is undertaking a US$200 million project to upgrade its European hub operations at Cologne/Bonn Airport. When completed by the end of 2013, it will be the largest UPS facility outside the United States. It already employs 2,300 people; and the extended plant will bring an additional 200 new jobs. Amazon is also in the process of completing a new 110,000 square meter logistics center in Rheinberg. Over the next three years, the center is expected to create 1,000 long-term jobs. The list goes on and on.

Any discussion of successful trade and investment relationships demonstrate one simple truth of the globalized world of the 21st century; namely, that competition and collaboration go hand in hand; and innovation is what drives transatlantic collaboration.

Well, today, in terms of innovation, the field of renewable energy is not the next big thing; it’s already here. Significant progress will not only depend on transatlantic cooperation. The scope must be broader than that. It must indeed be global but strong leadership and the “vision thing” will be essential. That vision can only come from Germany and the United States. Both of our countries are already leaders in renewable energy. As a result of R&D cooperation and cross investment, the U.S., Germany and the rest of Europe, not to mention the rest of the world, stand to benefit both in terms of economic growth and overall energy security.

There are a number of exciting examples of how we are working together. A case in point is e-vehicles. At a Transatlantic Economic Council meeting in Washington last November, the U.S. Department of Energy and the EU’s Joint Research Center signed a Letter of Intent committing both sides to the development of joint testing laboratories that will foster closer regulatory alignment between U.S. and EU research and testing bodies such that regulations and standards are compatible. The private sector has also demonstrated its support. Seven American and German auto manufacturers (Audi, BMW, Daimler, Ford, General Motors, Porsche and
Volkswagen) have agreed to support a harmonized single-port fast charging approach for use on electric vehicles in Europe and the United States. This kind of cooperation is crucial.

And it is exactly the kind of innovation that has made – and will continue to make – transatlantic collaboration so important.

Walter Hallstein, the first president of the European Commission, talked about “the bicycle theory” in relation to the advantages of European integration.

Er sagte „Solange die europäische Integration und Erweiterung nicht wie ein Fahrrad ständig weiter vorangefahren wird, fallen alle vom Fahrrad herunter."

Hallstein was referring to studies done in the 1950s which showed that if European countries pursued individual courses of national economic development, no country would be equal to new challenges in industry. Well, the case for integration is now global; witness the need for an energy revolution. Some economists maintain that the European integration that began in post-World War II year was the beginning of globalization as we know it today. It is obvious that is in the past 55 years, the original Hallstein Fahrrad has gone through some significant changes. It has become global and is most definitely now an E-Fahrrad.

Now that’s enough now though about the Rad der Geschichte. Let’s look at the future. Using again the area of energy and the environment as an example, let’s take a clear-eyed and realistic view of the results of the recent climate conference in Durban. Despite what some may say, as an optimist, I believe that the conference was a success. The most difficult question in climate change negotiations is answering who pays for the past and how to pay for the future without the heaviest burden falling on those most vulnerable to climate change – the least developed countries and small island states. Durban cleared the ground for a future deal covering all emissions whatever their source. It established a transparency regime to monitor efforts by all parties to cut global emissions. The discussions in Durban underline, perhaps never before so succinctly and clearly, how interconnected energy and environmental issues are with the global economy as a whole. The deal that was hammered out is by no means perfect, but for the first time, there is no differentiation between the developed and the developing countries, in terms of what we all have to do to meet the global challenge of climate change. There are challenges ahead but this kind of slow, hard, persistent work is essential.

The financial crises of the past three years have demonstrated the impact of the global economy on the world we live in. By the same token, as we talk about rebalancing the global economy, all countries need to balance their positions on growth with a responsible stakeholder position in terms of emissions.

As business leaders, I know that you understand the broader impact of your decisions. I talked about Walter Rathenau at the beginning of my remarks. He was a scientist, an innovator, a businessman and a statesman. His father, Emil Rathenau, worked with Thomas Edison when he started AEG.

Walther Rathenau knew well what he was talking about when he said, “Ich habe niemals einen wirklich großen Geschäftsmann gesehen, dem das Verdienen die Hauptsache war.”
But how can we – you and I – explain to a young person that the prerequisites for a responsible global marketplace address all the very real challenges we face in a very practical and pragmatic way?

We might start by talking about the spark that started the Arab Spring a little over one year ago. A young Tunisian vegetable vendor set fire to himself in protest after police confiscated the fruit and vegetables he was selling from a street stall. He was frustrated because he was unable to make a good living for himself and his family. He wasn’t protesting his broader civil rights. He was protesting the corruption and the greed of local officials and their interference with his ability to do business in the market.

UN reports on Arab development document that, apart from in the big oil-producing countries, there has not been a lot of innovation in the greater region. In fact, governments were more often than not hostile to those wanting to start new businesses. And so, much of the work both the United States and Germany are now doing to support democratic transitions concerns economic freedom as much as political freedom. The people of the region themselves must be the ones to chart their new course.

There will undoubtedly be setbacks along the way, but there should be no doubt about the outcome we seek and support – strong and stable democracies that are able to give life to the aspirations of their people and play constructive roles on the world stage. If people don’t believe that democracy and free markets deliver, then they will look elsewhere for models that more readily respond to their daily needs.

If we want to see democracy take root in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere, we will need to bring advanced tools to bear to help countries reform economic systems that were designed to keep autocrats and elites in power. Aid alone, no matter how generous, is not enough. A more complex and multi-layered effort to integrate the region’s economies, to promote investment, and to assist in economic modernization is required.

We need the same kind of tools in Afghanistan. Any successful endgame requires a viable economic vision that helps stabilize the country and gives its neighbors a stake in its success through greater regional trade and integration.

We also need to apply the same market-minded creativity and sophistication to security challenges. When Iran threatens global security or Syria threatens its own people, we need to respond with targeted and hard-hitting tools, not only sanctions against leaders and generals but also sophisticated measures to cut these regimes off from insurance, banking and shipping industries, as well as the shell companies that they depend on. In other words, commitment to raising the economic cost of unacceptable behavior and denying the resources that make it possible is essential.

Overall, we will have to find new ways to lead in a changing world. New regional and global centers of influence are quickly emerging. Look at our friends from Brazil. These countries have benefited from the stability and security long provided by transatlantic partners and from the dynamic and open global economy that together we pioneered. Working with these new players in the years ahead, encouraging them to accept the responsibility that comes with influence, and integrating them more fully into the international order is a key test for both the U.S. and Europe.
For the last decade, the foreign policy of the United States and other countries has focused by necessity on the places where we face the greatest dangers.

Responding to threats will always be central to our foreign policy, but, as Secretary of State Clinton says, it cannot be the mainstay of our foreign policy. In the decade ahead, we will need to focus just as intensely on the places where we have the greatest opportunities – for example, in the Asia Pacific region. In Asia and around the world, focusing on opportunities means elevating the role of economics in foreign policy by opening new markets for exports and attracting new investments. It also means engaging with emerging powers, finding areas where our interests align so we can work together. Often these will not be relationships that fit neatly into any category like “friend” or “rival,” but we have much more to gain from cooperation than conflict and confrontation. That is a lesson of history. And, as in the past, we will need to lead with purpose, inspired by the firm conviction that our interests are advanced by widening the circle of peace, prosperity, and opportunity.

Much has happened in the past 12 months. It has been a time of great challenge and change. We have seen revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa. A crippling blow was dealt to al-Qaeda as a result of the death of Usama bin Laden. There are renewed fears of economic crisis. One war has been ended and another is in transition. The world came together to help friends and allies through the tragedy of natural disasters. All of the complexities of these and other events have brought us to a new transatlantic moment – a moment when our global leadership is essential. Seizing this moment will require the same kind of clear-eyed choices and commitment that built the transatlantic partnership, paired with, however, fresh thinking and new strategies that match the circumstances of today.


Während der langen Jahre des Kalten Krieges gehörte der Pariser Platz zum „Niemandsland“, durch das die Mauer verlief, die die beiden deutschen Staaten in Ost und West teilte. Die Tatsache, dass wir heute im Zentrum der Hauptstadt eines geeinten Deutschlands mit unserer Botschaft vertreten sind, erfüllt die Herzen der Amerikaner mit Stolz und Freude über das, was unsere beiden Länder gemeinsam erreicht haben. Wir sind aber auch stolz, wenn wir an das denken, was in Zukunft möglich ist.

Paul, dein Großvater sagte dazu: „Man muss das Gestern kennen, man muss auch an das Gestern denken, wenn man das Morgen wirklich gut und dauerhaft gestalten will.”


Vielen Dank für ihre Aufmerksamkeit.