

Words of Welcome
By Dr Lothar Dittmer,
Member of the Executive Board of the Körber Foundation

*on the occasion of the speech of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Finland, H.E. Dr. Alexander Stubb
within the framework of his visit to the Federal Republic of Germany*

Humboldt Carré, Berlin, 29 September 2014

- Check against delivery -

Dear Prime Minister,
Ambassador Luostarinen,
Your Excellencies,
Members of the German Bundestag,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and gives me great pleasure to greet you, Prime Minister Stubb, on behalf of the Körber Foundation on the occasion of your visit to Berlin.

For more than 50 years, the Körber Foundation has encouraged and promoted international dialogue. We cherish the tradition of our founder Kurt Körber, who started by improving understanding between East and West. The oldest of our projects is the Bergedorf Round Table, which was established in 1961. In no other country the Bergedorf Round Table has met more often than in the Soviet Union, respectively Russia. And after the Cold War, in no other country more often than Ukraine: in Kiev, Lviv and Odessa.

Kurt Körber's idea of talking to each other – and not about each other – is still at the heart of our activities. As a foundation we deeply believe in the value of dialogue and in supporting understanding in international relations. But we know also the limits. For example, if dialogue is used to demonstrate to the rest of the world that you are not isolated. Or if one

side claims to be talking in good faith while acting completely different on the ground. Then dialogue can become meaningless, or in the worst case even harmful.

In many ways Europe's policy towards Russia, the topic of your speech today, dear Prime Minister, faces a similar dilemma. Relations between the European Union and its member states on the one side, and Russia on the other, have downgraded in the wake of Russian activities in Ukraine. Borders are being changed by force. The post-Cold War order in Europe itself is being called into question. And first and foremost: War has returned to Europe. When you, Prime Minister, opened our Berlin Foreign Policy Forum with Guido Westerwelle and William Hague in 2012 the topic was how the EU could emerge from the debt crisis stronger rather than weaker. Who would have thought that only two years later Europe would experience another major crisis? Perhaps an even more fundamental one, because this time it is a question of war and peace and people are dying.

Ladies and Gentlemen, next year in August we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. This act was made to improve relations between the then communist bloc and the West. At that time it was an important step towards reducing tensions between both sides. The treaty states committed themselves to the stability of national borders, to territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of conflicts, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states and respect for human rights and basic freedoms. The Final Act stated that borders in Europe should not be changed by force but only in a peaceful manner. The fact that those principles have been violated in such a strongly manner in the past months will change the European landscape for a very long time to come.

We all know that the European Union is not just a supranational organization. The union is composed of 28 Member States of which each has an individual relationship with Russia. Your country, Prime Minister, is one of only three EU countries bordering Russia, and with a length of more than 1,000 kilometers you have the longest border of the three. Your joint history with Russia dates back to the 18th century with long phases of occupation as well as two wars in the 20th century. Today the two economies are strongly linked, including vital areas of the economy such as the energy sector.

Finland, the country you represent as Prime Minister, is therefore an important voice when it comes to shaping Europe`s position towards Russia. The European Union decided to impose sanctions against Russia. Maybe they will not change present policies, but they will have certainly a long-term impact on the development of both sides. NATO is increasing its presence in Eastern Europe and will guarantee the security of its member states.

However, we still lack a good answer to the question of how we can help other states, like Ukraine, to uphold their right of self-determination. And when we think about a feasible European security architecture, we are right at the start again. It is even not clear whether there is at the moment sufficient ground for a constructive dialogue.

We are very pleased, your Excellency, that we have the opportunity to discuss these urgent questions concerning Europe`s policy toward Russia with you today. We are very much looking forward to your thoughts and we are grateful for your readiness to engage in a discussion with us after your speech.

And, of course, I would like to thank all of you in the audience who have taken the time to be here today and warmly welcome you as our guests.

Now, Prime Minister Stubb, the floor is yours.