

Words of Welcome

By Dr Klaus Wehmeier,

Deputy Chairman of the Executive Board of the Körber
Foundation

*on the occasion of the speech of the President of the Republic of the
Philippines, H.E. Benigno S. Aquino III
within the framework of his visit to the Federal Republic of Germany*

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Dear Mr President,
Your Excellencies,
Dear members of the Philippine delegation,
Dear Mr Lienhardt,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you, Mr President, on behalf of the Körber Foundation.

It is already 20 years ago that the last Philippine state leader, President Fidel Ramos, visited Germany.

We are therefore delighted that you took the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Philippines and the Federal Republic of Germany as an occasion to travel to Berlin.

It is a great honour for us that you are using your visit to enter into a dialogue with all of us here – about the economic and security policy future of the Philippines and about the opportunities that arise for cooperation with Germany and Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Körber Foundation is able to look back on a long tradition. For more than 50 years, we have been committed to make a contribution to a better international understanding. We seek the open exchange. Talking with each other and not about each other. This was the philosophy of our founder Kurt A. Körber.

It is especially in the exchange between Europe and Asia that this need for dialogue remains high.

A few years ago, we took the strategic decision to shift the focus of our activities in the area of international politics in the direction of Asia.

We also decided that we do not only want to deal with China and its rise to a world power. Rather, we want to address the entire region.

Last year, our Bergedorf Round Table, the oldest project of Körber Foundation, convened in Indonesia and we dealt with the issue of “Peace and Security in the Asia Pacific”.

Another milestone in our work on the subject of Asia was the speech by the Chinese State President Xi Jinping, who addressed the subject of “China’s role in the world” in Berlin just a few months ago, at the invitation of the Körber Foundation. And just a few days ago, we were able to welcome the President of Myanmar, U Thein Sein, as our guest.

One thing has become clear at all of these events:

Often we, meaning Europeans and Asians, are still distant, often the problems and challenges don’t seem to affect the other directly. In times of the Islamic State, the Ukrainian crisis, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the domestic struggle in Libya, it is not easy for us in Europe to cast our eyes even farther towards the East. At the moment, the immediate neighbourhood of Europe demands our full attention.

And still it is essentially important for us to follow the challenges and opportunities in the Asia Pacific closely: it is the most dynamic region of the world economically, with growth rates of which we may only dream in Europe currently.

And it is a region with a complex security policy environment full of tension. The many conflicts in the South China Sea have become a regular feature also in the German and the European press.

These conflicts are of direct interest to us, as they do not only concern questions of the international order and the application of international law but also of the freedom of trade routes and the safety of the world seas.

The Philippines play an important role in South East Asia. A young, motivated and highly efficient population of more than 100 million, good education and the existence of important raw materials are core elements of the current economic success.

At the same time, the Philippine Government is undertaking great efforts to stabilise the domestic political situation through negotiations and autonomy treaties.

Mr. President, we look forward to elaborate on all of these subjects together with you and we would like to express our gratitude for your readiness to engage in a discussion with us following your speech.

I would like to thank the Asia Pacific Committee of German Business and the Philippine Embassy for the excellent cooperation in the organisation of this event.
Madame Ambassador, Dr Lienhardt, thank you very much!

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