

# OPENING REMARKS

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

## BERLIN

DEIDRE BERGER  
DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN JEW-  
ISH COMMITTEE BERLIN

8. Dezember 2008

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## Change in the White House?

*Check against delivery!*

Dear Beate Neuss, Dear John Koenig,

Good evening honored members of the diplomatic corps, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The American Jewish Committee is honored to co-sponsor a conference on transatlantic affairs, together with valued partners at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the U.S. Embassy, at the historic venue of Rathaus Schoeneberg. Thanks to the memorable speech held here by U.S. President John Kennedy, this city hall is an immortal symbol of the courage and determination on both sides of the Atlantic that helped overcome Europe's deep divide during the Cold War. On another front, equally determined representatives of the American Jewish Committee and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation worked together in those years to create a German-American Jewish dialogue, establishing an annual leadership exchange program in 1980 that helps Germans and American Jews reflect on the Holocaust, while finding new avenues for discussion. How appropriate, then, that our two institutions, together with the U.S. embassy, have joined together for a conference that reflects a common commitment and passion to the promotion of democracy and transatlantic relations.

Indeed, AJC is proud to have been the foremost voice in the American Jewish community advocating an active engagement with the Federal Republic of Germany, both post-WWII and post fall of the Berlin Wall. We have a long history sponsoring initiatives aimed at the strengthening of democratic institutions and the promotion of transatlantic dialogue. In 1960, AJC estab-

lished a program to bring German pedagogues and educators to the U.S. for in-depth observations of reform educational practices in the U.S. The program was organized by Max Horkheimer, who launched AJC's research unit while in exile in the U.S. and included such prominent participants as educators Hartmut von Henting and Wolfgang Edelstein, philosopher Jurgen Habermas, and sociologist Dieter Senghass, intellectuals who helped shape democratic thinking in the Federal Republic. More recent initiatives, such as the German adaptation of AJC's core value curriculum "Hands Across the Campus" are done in cooperation with German partner institutions, creating transatlantic partnerships to promote democracy and civic education. Other such initiatives include AJC's now 15-year old special relationship with the Bundeswehr, a citizens' army that is a critical pillar of modern German democracy.

Today, in difficult financial times, with the post-Cold War security architecture shifting in new directions and global challenges increasing, it is more urgent than ever to build on that spirit of transatlantic cooperation and trust. Afghanistan is in urgent need of more troops and stabilization with a resurgent Taliban. The growing terrorist threat in Pakistan is destabilizing the region, as we saw from the recent attacks in Mumbai. Terror attacks have gone down considerably in Iraq but the situation remains unstable with long-term assistance necessary. Israel continues to face a difficult security horizon with the relative undiminished strength of Hamas and Hezbollah, actively supported by the Iranian regime. Iran itself continues on its path towards nuclear capability, evidently determined to ignore the will of the international community in its bid

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for power. The killing and maiming in the Darfur region continues sadly unabated, despite global appeals and diplomacy.

These challenges and others demand urgent attention from the transatlantic community, which shares a sense of common purpose, as well as values and ideals concerning democracy, conflict resolution, human rights and human dignity. After the sometimes bitter conflicts of past years, it is time to craft a new transatlantic consensus that can deal even more effectively with 21st century challenges to freedom, security and basic rights.

In order to redefine and strengthen our transatlantic consensus, we must be careful to retain the spirit of shared commitment and common purpose that has distinguished the work for decades of politicians, business leaders, educators, academics, soldiers, clergy, non-governmental representatives and many others who work on a daily basis to nurture the sense of common good essential to transatlantic understanding.

Can we do it? In the words of the President elect---Yes we can.

In closing I would like to thank The Center for Transatlantic Studies in Brussels, whose support made this conference possible, as well as our partners at the U.S. Embassy, particularly Helena Kane Finn, our partners at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Sabina Woelkner and Patrick Keller, as well as a special thanks to Jan Fahlbusch and Ezra Tzfadya from the AJC Berlin team.

Thank you all for coming.