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**WELCOMING REMARKS BY MR. JOHANNES RAU,
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,
TO THE DINNER GUESTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE OSCE
CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE PRESENCE OF
PRESIDENT KATSAV OF ISRAEL, AT SCHLOSS BELLEVUE**

Berlin, 28 April 2004

Distinguished President Katsav,
Distinguished Chairman Passy,
Distinguished Federal Minister Fischer,
Distinguished Delegates,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Schloss Bellevue. I should like to extend a special welcome to the many representatives of the non-governmental organizations. I regard your participation in the Conference as extremely important. The fact is that the combating of anti-Semitism is as important a task for societies as it is for governments.

Jewish artists, musicians, writers and scholars have made incalculable contributions to European culture and science. But despite this, over the centuries, for many people, indeed for all too many people, the Jews were always the others, strangers; indeed what is more, they were often the evil ones and the scapegoats who could be held responsible for all the misfortune in the world. The great German thinker, Theodor Adorno, once described this as follows: "Anti-Semitism is the rumour about the Jews."

Even today, anti-Semitic attitudes are again and again triggered, in a kind of automatic reflex, whenever there seems to be some reason for it. Anti-Semitism remains one of the most shameful and darkest chapters of European history.

That the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has decided to deal with this subject is right and proper. In this way, anti-Semitism is placed in the proper context, the context of human rights. Human rights, minority rights and the rule of law — these are the most important tasks of the OSCE. The Organization can point to many successes, but there is still enough work to be done if the standards to which the participating States have themselves subscribed are everywhere to be met.

I am particularly pleased that the partner States from the Mediterranean region are participating in this Conference. So early a document as the Helsinki Final Act dedicated a

special chapter to “Questions relating to Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean”. In 1975, the then Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe set itself the goal of promoting security and stability in the entire Mediterranean region in co-operation with the Mediterranean countries.

We are still a long way from achieving that goal. It is with much pain and sadness that I make that statement at this particular time. Finding a solution to the decades-old Middle East conflict still remains the most important task. There is agreement that Israelis and Palestinians can live peacefully side by side with one another in two States. The two parties to the conflict must themselves travel along the path to this goal. The goal can be achieved only through peaceful means; both sides must be prepared to make painful compromises. Much could be gained if on the path to that goal nothing were to be done to make the way even stonier than it already is. Terror against people in Israel must finally cease. Everyone must observe the rules of international law; no one must arrogate to himself the right to act simultaneously as prosecutor, judge and enforcer.

Direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians are indispensable. Third parties can, however, help the Israelis and Palestinians to find peace and security. Only a few days ago, I spoke about this with President Mubarak. Egypt and Jordan support the peace process and continue to do so despite many, often incomprehensible, setbacks. For that reason, I wish to express to them our gratitude and our respect.

I am pleased that in a few days the so-called Quartet will meet again to discuss the way forward and how people can be brought to no longer shoot at one another but to talk together about the way to peace. The Israelis and Palestinians should know that they have reliable friends who will accompany them along this path.