

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Your Excellency, dear Sue Timken,  
Dear Ambassador Zulfacar,  
Meine Damen und Herren,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we have come together in memory of the victims of 9/11 and to show our solidarity with their families.

Let me share with you on this occasion two messages concerning the relationship between Muslims and Americans and one suggestion of how we can proceed together in future.

Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> happened to me while I was at an international get-together in the far away forests of Michigan. The memories of this terrible event are as present as if it had happened yesterday. However I also remember gestures of brotherhood offered to me as a German Muslim by Americans who were present at that occasion.

When we began slowly to fully understand what had happened I must have looked pale and horrified. An American who saw this walked up to me embraced me and said: "We are in this together, you are not alone!" Later during the day as a true German I felt the need to explain myself and to make sure everybody would understand that Islam is a peaceful religion. One of the leading psychologists of the West Coast cut me short. He said: "You do not have to say anything. We know: Muslims can come in many different ways!"

In this moment of horror and shock this statement had a tremendous effect on me: It made me feel at home and I am still grateful to have been among these Americans who made me understand by their behaviour that they knew that - and this is my first message -

Muslims are not the natural born enemies of Americans.

Let us come to Berlin now: Ambassador Timken and Sue Timken during the past two years have reached out and build bridges to the Berlin and German Muslim community like nobody did before in Germany, in a totally unbiased and open way for which we all are immensely grateful. Among many other activities they have made it possible for kids from underprivileged schools to spend some time in the USA. And there these kids experienced something which I would like to use as my second message. They discovered

Americans are not the natural born enemies of Muslims!

If we put these two messages into the back of our minds I think we have the foundations on which to build peace.

Now I am not suggesting that this world is a world of love and peace. We are no longer living in the San Francisco of 1967. We live in the real world of 2007.

So what can we do?

Let me go back to that event in Michigan again. In the evening we all got together – not to mourn, but to have a celebration of life!

The organisers had set up two tables on either side of the sun deck. On one of them there were sheets of paper, pencils, candles, fruits and flowers. Each of us was asked to take something and bring it to the other table. By doing so we each picked a piece from the past and brought it to the future, making the second table the starting point towards something new and hopefully better. Some said short prayers, we all hugged each other giving each other strength. Above us we saw the brilliant clearness of the stars in the Northern American sky, and

even though at this moment nobody knew what the future would bring, we knew we would do it together.

In this action there lies a great truth for me: We indeed can decide for ourselves which elements we take from the past, is it sorrow, despair, hate and the memory of endless wars? Or is it the memory of love we experienced, of culture and trade which brought our peoples together? We ourselves have to decide which thoughts we choose to be the corner stones for our future.

I know that man can be man's wolf, and I remember well that the first murder happened when one brother killed the other.

But for me there are also clear messages: All men are created equal, and we should all strive in a communal effort to build a home for mankind so that we can live together in peace!