



**Arab-Western Summit of Skills
Reception
January 17, 2004**

Minister Fischer, Ambassador Vorwerk, Herr Charlat,

Assistant Secretary Burns, Alina Romanowski (NEA/P), Adrienne O'Neal (EUR/PPD), James Smith (NEA/PPD)

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to Berlin and to the "Arab-Western Summit of Skills."

I would like to thank the sponsors – Deutsch Telecom, Mercedes-Benz Berlin and Partner for Berlin -- for their support of this conference. And I would also like to thank Brandicate Consultants and the AMR Group for their initiative in putting this conference together.

The goal of the "Arab-Western Summit of Skills" is the creation of a network of Arab professionals in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States – a network of people to share ideas and resources for the purpose of developing and sustaining practical projects in Arab countries in fields such as law, governance, health care, and education.

These are projects that encourage the growth of civil society.

It is my firm belief that the development of a concept of civil society toward the end of the 20th century will become the hallmark of the 21st.

Healthy, vital civil society structures provide the foundation for all further developments in a region to the benefit of the individual, the society, the country, and the entire community of nations.

The idea of this conference is to create a platform for developing concrete project ideas to further this goal.

I applaud the commitment of the Arabs, Arab-Europeans, Arab-Americans, NGO representatives, my colleagues here in the Embassy, Assistant Secretary Burns and his colleagues from the State Department in Washington -- and all those who have gathered in Berlin to work toward these important goals.

Thank you.