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**BDI Gala Dinner - Short Remarks**  
February 20, 2003  
Cologne  
Ambassador Coats

Lord Mayor Schramma,

Minister Clement,

Herr Rogowski,

Herr Hellenkemper, as you can imagine, Marsha and I receive a number of invitations to gala dinners. This is certainly, though, one of the most fascinating locations that we have visited since we arrived in Germany a year and a half ago. Thank you for the opportunity to be here this evening and for the tour.

It is a pleasure to welcome my former colleagues from the US Congress to Germany. Your participation particularly at this time underscores the US commitment to keep bilateral channels of communication open even during difficult circumstances.

These are indeed challenging and difficult times.

Most Americans believe that the United States represents a force for good in the world, that the ideas of democracy and freedom that we share with our European partners are great treasures that need defending.

One doesn't have to look very closely at the history of the twentieth century to discover strong evidence in support of this belief.

We continue to devote our efforts in this direction, using the range of tools of statecraft at our disposal, peacefully if at all possible, less peacefully when necessary. Exerting and managing this effort is a very complex undertaking, and we have a deep desire to have our closest allies join us in partnership to work on it together.

Differences in viewpoints and experiences on these and other issues can divide us - and have divided us. German opposition to the US approach on the issue of Iraq has been harmful to our relationship and yet we must continue a candid exchange of ideas -- as two nations and peoples that have enjoyed a very unique relationship since the end of World War II.

In these politically difficult and economically challenging times, it is important that we maintain an open dialogue, and work to find modes of cooperation that are in tandem with, and not against, our common goals. In the field of business and trade, our economies are closely connected through a complex web of commercial and investment links. US investment in Germany in 2001 was valued at 100 billion EURO, accounted for 800,000 jobs, and represented the biggest concentration of US foreign investment abroad. German investment in the US is equally important to both our countries.

Not surprisingly, this web of close commercial ties means that we share many common economic interests. Our business communities have long recognized this fact.

In recent weeks, many German business leaders have expressed concern that tensions between the US and German governments could damage our commercial ties. We have not confirmed any specific cases in which a business transaction was affected by the political situation. And according to a poll conducted by the German-American Chamber of Commerce in New York, the transatlantic disagreement over Iraq policy has hardly had any negative impact on German companies in the United States, with less than 1 percent complaining about a measurable loss of income. But that said, despite the very deep personal, commercial and cultural ties between our two countries, there are some in the United States that are beginning to question Germany's long term reliability as an ally.

I know that the business community is equally concerned about the role that it can play to improve the relationship. Perhaps the most positive contribution the business community can make is to focus attention on what we can achieve together -- specifically with respect to promoting global economic growth and sustainable development.

In this respect, the single most important objective we can pursue jointly -- both of our governments and our business communities working together -- is to enhance economic growth through liberalizing world trade. The more we expand trading networks with other nations, the more opportunities and better jobs we can create at home and abroad.

Vielen Dank.