



European Budget Conference

November 03, 2003

Ambassador Coats

Welcome to Berlin, and thank you for inviting me to speak to you here today. We are very pleased to sponsor the EUR ICASS Conference in Berlin this year. I know Gary and his staff have worked hard to put this all together for you.

I have heard there is much that is new in the financial world this year, and that you have an interesting conference planned. I expect you'll find it informative and productive. The Department needs all of your knowledge, skills, and talents to effectively manage the large sums of money that you deal with, and to help us to get the most out of the funds that we have. (While you are here, can you please balance my checkbook?)

Your conference site is in the historic city center of Berlin, only a short distance from the Chancery, and not far from Pariser Platz, where our new Embassy building is to be built. Plans call for it to be completed in 2007, and we hope to occupy it that year also. The site is adjacent to the historic Brandenburg Gate—the symbol of a unified Germany. Currently there is a Circle of United Buddy Bears from many countries around the world on the site. If you get a chance, please walk over and see it.

Berlin is a city steeped in history. And, it has had a central role in our lifetime, from President Truman's ordering of the Berlin airlift, to President Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" to President Reagan's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." You will find history's footprints are everywhere here. Perhaps you will have the chance to discover some of those footprints—you should have received the Embassy's "Sightseeing Berlin and Potsdam" booklet in your Welcome Kit. The booklet is a good guide for information and points of interest in the area.

Berlin is a great city for this conference - or even a casual visit. It is a lively city and one of the most fascinating capitals in the world. Following reunification, Berlin quickly developed into a cosmopolitan city, and today there is an air of energy and vibrancy about it. The city has been transformed since the fall of the Berlin wall. You will not find many places where art and culture, museums and theaters, entertainment and nightlife are more diverse and exciting than here.

I know you have lots of work to do between now and the close of the conference on Friday, but I hope you will have time to discover some of the historical sights of the city and to enjoy all that the city has to offer. Again, welcome to Berlin.