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80 years of NUMOV

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German Near and Middle East Gala Event 2014

by Tilmann Hartung & Leonie Hasselberg



H.E. Sigmar Gabriel, Vice Chancellor and Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy

On 8th September 2014, the German Near and Middle East Association celebrated its 80th anniversary in a festive setting with around 500 guests from the world of business, diplomacy and politics. Having established and supported strong economic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Near and

Middle East in recent decades, NUMOV, its friends and guests used the celebratory evening to look back on the association's history as well as to strengthen the commitment to existing and new business ties.

The event commenced with a speech by

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Dr. Rainer Seele, Chairman of NUMOV/ the German Near and Middle East Association and Chairman of the Board of Wintershall Holding GmbH.

He recalled that the founding fathers of NUMOV discussed and planned the establishment of an association to intensify relations between the German business community and the countries in the Orient back in 1922. After the foundation of the German Federal Republic, NUMOV resumed its activities, developing into a success story.

The German Orient-Institute was established in 1960, as fruitful cooperation requires solid, precise and scientific expertise. It was the first non-university research institute and has not lost its significance. The institute's promotion of cultural and academic exchange as well as its advice to companies and ministries are still relevant.

Furthermore, NUMOV's scope of activities has been expanded by institutions such as the Egyptian-German Forum, the Pakistani-German Forum and the Saudi-German Business Dialogue.

In 2006 **H.E. Gerhard Schröder**, Former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, succeeded **Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski**, better known in Germany as Ben Wisch, who had played a crucial role for NUMOV as Honorary Chairman. Dr. Rainer Seele expressed his gratitude to H.E. Gerhard Schröder, who supports continued cooperation with the Near and Middle East and is held in high esteem in the region.

Nowadays, NUMOV / German Near and Middle East Association has more than 600 members and is the largest and oldest organisation representing the German economy in the Near and Middle East. Its commitment to establishing partnerships, encouraging business relations and enhancing cultural ties builds an important basis in challenging times.

That economic success and social stability are closely linked can be seen in the post-Arab Spring countries disen-





chanted by the “failure of the spirit of optimism”. However, the situation is complex and demands differentiation. For instance, Morocco and Algeria are stable markets in offering good possibilities to conduct business in. The Egyptian economy, with which Germany maintains close relations, has a projected growth of 4.7%.

Looking to Iran, Dr. Rainer Seele declared himself optimistic given that the German economy enjoys an outstanding reputation in the country, pleased that NUMOV “did not cut the lines of communication”. The same applies to the Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq, a market for a widening range of German companies.

NUMOV's chairman also stressed the importance of keeping the dialogue in the Gulf region going. With the six countries of the GCC representing the third most important market for German exports outside Europe in 2013, the region is of high relevance to the German economy. Dr. Rainer Seele emphasised that in times of transformation, an intensification of commitment in the region is necessary to secure and maintain existing partnerships.

Subsequently, Honorary Chairman **H.E. Gerhard Schröder** delivered his address, thanking Dr. Rainer Seele, who has contributed considerably to the international profile of NUMOV. He referred to NUMOV as a bridge builder between Orient and Occident which has created trust and formed partnerships, noting that the uprisings in the Arab world have shown the influence the economic situation can have on political stability in the region.

In his speech, he also highlighted that economic exchange and foreign investments are essential in offering career prospects to well-educated people. In this regard, German business can make a vital contribution, since German industry is seen as reliable, even in difficult times, and the German economy is renowned for its long-term, sustainable engagement. He reaffirmed the happy occasion of the 80th anniversary of NUMOV / the German Near and

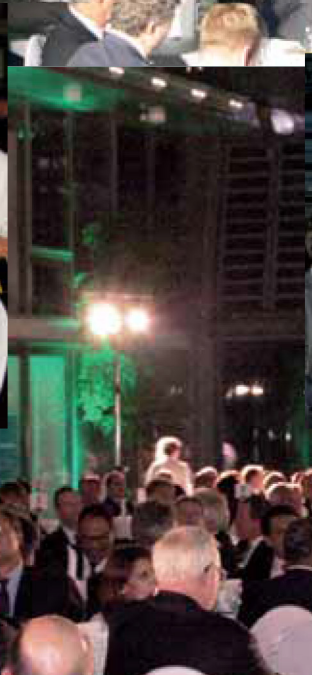
Middle East Association. However, he also reminded the audience that economic prosperity depends upon political stability. H.E. Gerhard Schröder also called to the audience's attention the fact that a stable and prosperous Near and Middle East is favourable for Europe as a whole.

He also called upon all countries of the region to stop the threat posed by the current instability in Iraq and Syria. Building and strengthening the region together can be the only way forward for economic prosperity and political stability. Peace, tolerance and justice are thus the main shared values of Europe and the Near and Middle East.

H.E. Sigmar Gabriel, Vice Chancellor and Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy of the Federal Republic of Germany, followed up by pointing out that NUMOV and the German Orient-Institute, as well as Dr. Rainer Seele and H.E. Gerhard Schröder, have done much to foster the relationships with the Near and Middle East, not only in terms of economic relations but also in terms of building bridges of friendship with the region. While the Orient seemed far away for most Germans in Goethe's "West-Eastern Divan" more than a hundred years ago, it is nowadays closely connected to Germany.

H.E. Sigmar Gabriel explained that Germany wants to help improve competitiveness and modernise the economies of the Near and Middle East by establishing adequate networking and integration in the region. Furthermore, the German government is in favour of negotiations on free trade agreements between the EU and Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan.

He emphasised the importance of creating jobs for young people looking for a stable and prosperous life for themselves and their families. In order to do so, a thriving small- and medium-sized company landscape is needed. Competitiveness and performance can only be furthered in the region if the networks are strong and integration into the regional and global division of labour is guaranteed.





The Vice Chancellor also endorsed such an arrangement between the EU and the GCC, stressing that the "German business community is available to serve as a reliable partner" in order to achieve the Arab countries' goals, such as improved water supplies and economic diversification.

He affirmed that German companies are willing to export and invest, go abroad, transfer expertise, provide training for young people and create jobs in the region, while the German government supports exchanges and partnerships with North Africa and has sent advisory teams to Tunisia and Egypt.

In his concluding remarks, H.E. Sigmar Gabriel thanked NUMOV for its support and its suggestions relating to his planned visit to the Near and Middle East with a German business delegation in spring 2015, emphasising that "building bridges begins at home and with NUMOV as an architect, the bridge stands on solid ground on both sides".

Among the esteemed guests were ambassadors, business leaders and important political figures. Among the international guests, a delegation from Erbil in the Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq attended the event.

The group of business representatives led by **Dara Jalili Al-Khayat**, Chairman of the Erbil Chamber of Commerce and Industry, attended the event among others. Contacts with Erbil and in particular the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry have been excellent over the past years and thus the attendance of business delegations at the Gala Events have become a tradition.

As NUMOV / the German Near and Middle East Association looks towards 2015 and beyond, activities are to be intensified in order to reach the goals and ambitions laid out by the esteemed speakers of the evening. This will be achieved by continually building bridges and furthering economic and cultural exchange. ●