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Full Solidarity with the United States (September 12, 2001)

A day after the terrorist attacks on the United States, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder assured U.S. President George W. Bush of Germany's full solidarity. Schröder called the attacks as a "declaration of war against the entire civilized world."

Government Declaration on the Attacks in the United States of America, by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on September 12, 2001, before the German Bundestag in Berlin

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yesterday, the 11th of September 2001, will go down in history as a black day. Today we are still horror-struck by an unprecedented terrorist attack on the principles that hold our world together.

We still don't know what was behind this declaration of war on the civilized nations of the world. We still don't even know how many thousand innocent persons fell victim to these cowardly attacks. What we do know and feel is that what is needed now is to show our solidarity and our condolences. Solidarity with the people of the United States and solidarity with all those who support peace and freedom, in Germany, in Europe, and everywhere in the world.

Some 2000 people came together spontaneously last night for a church service and expression of condolences at the Berlin Cathedral. Right after this session of the Bundestag there will be an ecumenical commemorative church service at St. Hedwig's Cathedral.

The German Trade Union Federation and the Confederation of German Employers' Associations have called for five minutes of commemorative silence in the workplace on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. The government will heed this call.

I have expressed to the American president the deeply felt condolences of the entire German people. I also assured him of Germany's full – I repeat: full – solidarity. I am sure that all of our thoughts are with the victims and their families. They have our sympathy, our heartfelt condolences.

I would like to state here once again, in the presence of the new American ambassador, Dan Coats, that the people of Germany stand firmly at the side of the United States of America in this difficult hour.

It goes without saying that we will offer the citizens and government authorities of the United States every type of desired assistance – also in connection with investigating and tracking down the perpetrators and planners of these insidious attacks.

At my meeting with party and parliamentary group leaders last night there was absolute unanimity that this extraordinary situation requires all democrats to stand together. Yesterday's attacks in New York and in Washington are a declaration of war against the entire civilized world. This kind of terrorist violence – the arbitrary annihilation of the lives of innocent human beings – calls into question the fundamental rules of any civilization. It poses an immediate threat to the principles of human coexistence in freedom and security, everything that has been built up over generations. We will not allow these values to be destroyed, be it in America, in Europe, or anywhere else in the world.

In reality we are already one world. For this reason the attacks in New York, the seat of the United Nations, and in Washington were directed against us all. Yesterday's terrorist attack demonstrated once again that security in our world is not divisible. It can only be achieved by standing together more closely for our values and by working together to implement them.

We now need to act rapidly to take more effective measures to eliminate the breeding grounds of terrorism. Those who help or harbor terrorists violate all the fundamental values on which international coexistence is based. Last night I spoke with President Chirac and Premier Jospin of France, with Prime Minister Blair of Great Britain, and with President Putin of Russia. We are all agreed in our assessment that these terrorist attacks constitute a declaration of war against the free world.

The foreign ministers of the European Union will hold a special meeting today. After that the European Union will need to express its solidarity at the highest level. I have asked the current President of the Council of the European Union, Belgian Prime Minister Verhofstadt, to undertake a corresponding initiative.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Many people will be asking themselves what these attacks mean for us in Germany. Last night I called an emergency meeting of our national security council. We analyzed the situation in detail on the basis of the information available to us. At the present time there are no indications of any security threat in our country. However, we have taken additional measures to ensure that the people of our country will be protected. This has to do in particular with the security of our air space and air traffic as well as the protection of American and other endangered facilities.

In addition, we will have to work together in considering what long-term consequences need to be drawn from these horrifying attacks. Our national security council will meet again this morning. It goes without saying that we will keep the parliamentary groups, the political parties, and the general public informed with regard to further developments. The next briefing of party and parliamentary group leaders will take place this afternoon in the Chancellery as agreed.

I am convinced that by standing together we will be able to deal with this criminal challenge. Freedom and democracy, the values of peaceful coexistence among people and nations will pass this test.

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