

Speech by Commission President Juncker at the European Ceremony of Honour for former Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl and Honorary Citizen of Europe

Mr President of the European Parliament,

Your Majesties,

Presidents,

Prime Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

and, for many of you here in the hall, dear friends:

Today we are saying goodbye to the German and European Statesman, Helmut Kohl. And I am saying goodbye to a true friend who guided me with affection over the years and the decades. I am not speaking now as President of the Commission, but as a friend who became President of the Commission.

In Helmut Kohl, a giant of the post-war era leaves us; He made it into the history books even while he was still alive – and in those history books he will forever remain. He was someone who became the continental monument before which German and European wreaths are laid, and indeed must be laid. It was his wish to say goodbye here in Strasbourg, this Franco-German, European border city that was close to his heart. This wish had to be granted. Today's memorial service is not 'not-German', it is European, and thus it is also German. We begin this day in Strasbourg and conclude it this evening in Speyer, in Speyer cathedral, with which he had a life-long connection.

Helmut Kohl was a German patriot. But he was also a European patriot. He was someone who brought together and reconciled things and people. A German and European Patriot, because for him there was no contradiction between that which is German, and the European, that has to be. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal said that he liked things that go together: *J'aime les choses qui vont ensemble*. For Helmut Kohl, German and European unity went together. Two sides of the same coin, as he, and Adenauer before him, always used to say.

He made Adenauer's maxim his own. And he put it into practice again and again through his thoughts and actions.

There are many examples of this.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was greeted with joy throughout Europe and the world. But German reunification – in which he always uncompromisingly believed – encountered resistance in parts of Europe, and indeed sometimes outright rejection.

Helmut Kohl promoted German reunification in many patient conversations. He was able to do so successfully because his reputation, which had grown over many years, allowed him to give credible assurances that he was striving for a European Germany and not a German Europe. He wanted German reunification with all his might, and outside Germany he was able to convince others of the historically correct path.

He was able to seize the mantle of God as it drifted through history for a brief moment. Not everyone in Germany and sadly not everyone in Europe sensed this movement of the mantle of God immediately. But he did. He sensed that German unity was within reach. He rightly judged and used the opportunity. Others would have failed in this epoch-making task. You could sense that this was a man of vision.

Helmut Kohl, with the German in view and thinking ahead to the European, always also looked towards eastern and central Europe. Not only towards Poland, but particularly towards Poland. He was not responsible for the crimes of the Nazis in Poland. But he was very much conscious of the historical responsibility that weighed very heavily on Germany. Just like Willy Brandt, with whom he became very close at the end of Brandt's life. Helmut Kohl and Willy Brandt: Two great men of our times.

For Kohl, enlargement to the east and the centre of the continent without Poland was simply inconceivable. This should certainly not be forgotten.

Helmut Kohl was not only the architect of German unity. He contributed fundamentally – more than others – to reconciling European history and European geography.

He was one of those who brought an end to the separation of East and West decreed at Yalta. Eastern and central Europe – and southern Europe incidentally – have much to thank Helmut Kohl for. Today we have to remember that.

On top of that, he was able to develop relations with Israel with intelligence and passion. He was a great friend of Israel. He also directed his attention wisely towards relations with the former Soviet Union and present-day Russia. The historian and Chancellor knew about the breadth and depth of Russia. But at the same time he was a committed and active supporter of transatlantic relations. Following in the footsteps of Helmut Schmidt, he implemented the NATO twin-track decision, against the spirit of the times.

Maike, my friends, I am probably the only person in this room who saw Helmut Kohl cry during a meeting. It was on 13 December 1997. On that day, the European Council, under my chairmanship in Luxembourg, decided to enlarge the European Union to eastern and central Europe and to Cyprus and Malta. During lunch, Helmut Kohl asked for permission to speak – which was unusual, because

he usually just took the floor. He asked to speak during lunch and said, choking back the tears, that that day, on which accession negotiations began, was one of the finest moments of his life. That he, as German Federal Chancellor, was able to witness that historic integration of Europe – after all the harm, as he said, that Germany had inflicted on Europe. Then he went quiet, internally at peace, and cried for many minutes. He was not the only one. No one was ashamed of their tears. Europe at its best!

He was also the main driving force, together with my friend, Theo Waigel, when it came to the euro. True: He understood how to represent German interests ferociously. He pushed through the independence of the European Central Bank, to be enshrined in the Treaty, in a friendly and then increasingly insistent way, against all resistance. He made it a condition of his agreement to the euro. Without Helmut Kohl there would be no euro. In his eyes, monetary union made European unification irreversible. For him, the euro was always European peace policy by other means.

And another thing that Helmut Kohl stood for: He respected all the Member States of the European Union equally. Large and above all smaller Member States felt that he understood them and with him they knew that their interests were in good hands.

One last thing. When negotiations were close to collapsing – as often happens in Europe – he led us on to the European path and did not let us get lost in our exclusively national side streets.

Mr President,

Lastly, Helmut Kohl was the man who continued the work of Franco-German reconciliation, ardently carrying on the work of de Gaulle and Adenauer. Although he did not speak French, he knew all about France, its history, its heartland, its regions, in particular Alsace, which he visited often and loved with all his heart. And he also knew by heart the establishments serving good Alsatian cuisine, of which there are many. History will preserve an image that says everything about Kohl and his intimate relationship with France. The day in Verdun when Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand held hands, they sealed the fraternal bond between France and Germany forever. The fact that we are saying goodbye to him here in Strasbourg, the seat of the European Parliament, of which he was a constant friend, a few hundred metres from the Rhine, is a dramatic, but also symbolic gesture of Europe. This beautiful city of Strasbourg, for him THE capital of Europe, as the seat of the parliament representing the peoples of Europe, is today honouring the memory of Helmut Kohl, the European.

Yes, Helmut was a German and a European patriot. For him, patriotism was never one patriotism versus another, but rather a patriotism experienced with others.

Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany and Europe pay tribute to the impressive life's work of Helmut Kohl. We do so in gratitude, indeed in awe. He has had an extremely full life. Some of the things that befell him, he will have forgotten by now. But many of them he will now still fondly recall. He knows

– as we too know – that he made Europe a better place.

My dear Helmut,

I think you are now in heaven. We would rather you were here. Promise me that in heaven you will not immediately found a local branch of the CDU. You have done enough for your party, your country and for our common Europe.

Many thanks, Helmut. Merci, obrigado, спасибо, dank u wel, dziękuję, mille grazie, muchas gracias, thank you.

Rest in peace, Federal Chancellor and dear friend. After a rich and full life, you have earned your rest. Eternal rest.

US urged to stop Taiwan arms sales

China lashed out at the United States over the Trump administration's approval of a Taiwan arms deal, with the authorities demanding the US stop the sales.

The Trump administration had notified the US Congress of "seven proposed defense sales for Taiwan" worth about \$1.42 billion, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters on Thursday, adding that there is no change to Washington's one-China policy.

The arms sales, the first such deal with Taiwan since Donald Trump took office as US president, will go forward unless the US Congress formally objects in the next 30 days, according to the Associated Press.

China, having lodged solemn representations to the US in both Beijing and Washington, "strongly urges" the country to revoke the arms sales and cut military contacts with Taiwan to avoid further damaging China-US ties and cooperation in important fields, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said on Friday.

The arms sales would be a grave violation of the principles of the three joint communiques between China and the US and damage China's sovereignty and security interests, Lu said.

They also run counter to the spirit of the important consensus that the two countries' heads of state reached in their meeting in Florida in April, and are not in line with the general trend of the development of bilateral ties or the US's own interests, Lu pointed out.

Ren Guoqiang, spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, said: "China is resolutely opposed to arms sales to Taiwan by the government of any foreign country."

“The position of the Chinese military over safeguarding China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity is firm and clear,” Ren said.

The revelation of the arms deal came one day after a US Senate committee completed a markup of a bill, allowing the US Navy to make regular port calls in Taiwan. This drew an immediate protest from China.

Ma Xiaoguang, spokesman of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, warned on Friday: “Any behavior of relying on foreign forces to magnify oneself and damage peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits will surely backfire.”

Cui Tiankai, Chinese ambassador to the US, told reporters on the sidelines of a reception at the Chinese embassy on Thursday the arms deal “will certainly undermine the mutual confidence between the two sides”.

3 dead, 5 missing in C China mudslide

A mudslide in central China’s Hunan Province Saturday afternoon killed three people, leaving another 19 injured and five missing, according to local government.

The mudslide happened at about 4 p.m. in Zuta Village of Ningxiang County after heavy rain for a long time since Friday. Search and rescue were underway overnight.

China’s summer railway transport peak period begins

China’s summer transport peak period began Saturday, with a record-high number of passenger trips expected to be made by train this year.

The period runs from July 1 to August 31, when students on summer vacation have time to travel or return home.

A total of 598 million passenger trips are expected to be made by train during the 62-day period, rising by 49.7 million year on year, according to China Railway Corporation.

Railway authorities have put a new transport route plan into operation, which adds more trains at transport hubs and elevates average passenger capacity.

Under the new route plan, Beijing and the Yangtze River Delta cities Shanghai and Hangzhou, as well as Xuzhou, will open high-speed trains to the northwestern city of Lanzhou, capital of Gansu Province during the summer peak period.

The Yangtze River Delta railway network is estimated to have 116 million passenger trips during the period, an increase of 9.2 percent from the same period last year.

Beijing will increase 32 pairs of trains to serve students and tourists during the travel peak, according to the Beijing Railway Bureau.

“Today is the first day of the summer transport period. We estimate the Beijing Railway Station will handle 210,000 outbound passenger trips on Saturday,” said Wang Fan, an official in charge of passenger transport at the station.

Passengers can take bullet trains for the first time from Beijing to Xiongan New Area in neighboring Hebei Province next week, according to the China Railway Corporation.

High-speed trains become a popular choice for tourists.

“My children have begun their summer holidays. We will make a visit to Nanjing,” said a woman surnamed Lu at the south railway station in Hefei, capital of east China’s Anhui Province. It was the first time for Lu to board a high-speed train.

In the southwestern Yunnan Province, high-speed trains are applied for this year’s summer transport for the first time. In December, Yunnan opened high-speed trains bound for the eastern metropolis Shanghai and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region respectively.

Passengers who take high-speed trains to Yunnan will increase a lot this summer, according to the Kunming Railway Station.

[China to launch 2nd heavy-lift carrier rocket](#)

China is scheduled to launch the Long March-5 Y2, the country’s second heavy-lift carrier rocket, from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in southern China’s Hainan Province Sunday, the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence said Saturday.

Propellant for the rocket, which will send the Shijian-18 communication satellite into orbit, began to be pumped in on Saturday afternoon, it said.

After arriving at the launch base in early May, the rocket has been assembled and tested there.

The launch will be the last drill for the Long March-5 series before it carries the Chang'e-5 lunar probe into space in the latter half of this year, according to the administration.

Media are allowed to live broadcast the launch, the administration said.

The Long March-5 made its maiden flight in November 2016 in Wenchang. It can carry a payload of 25 tonnes into low Earth orbit and 14 tonnes in geostationary orbit, over two times the capacity of current carrier rockets.

China has scheduled eight launches of Long March-5 in the coming years for the nation's lunar probe, manned space station and Mars probe missions.