

## **Acceptance Speech Honorary Doctorate by Edelgard Bulmahn**

### **I.**

Dear President Dr. Abu Obeid,

Dear Mr. Toucan,

Dear Prof. Khadra,

Dear Prof. Geiger,

Dear Dr. Pleines,

Distinguished guests,

Colleagues and staff of the GJU,

Dear students and friends!

Thank you very much for this warm welcome! It is a great pleasure for me to be back in Jordan.

Eleven years ago my Jordanian colleague Mr. Toucan and I laid down the foundation of the German Jordanian University in the hope for a flourishing future. It was a day of great joy, because we had successfully commenced a magnificent project.

In those days I didn't expect to come back to the GJU for such a wonderful occasion.

It is a great and unexpected honor for me to be awarded with such a distinguished title by the GJU. I am deeply touched by this award. Dear President Natheer, Professors of the GJU, dear Dr. Pleines: Thank you very much for this great honor and the recognition and appreciation of my work you expressed in your honorable distinction.

Eleven years ago my, and I can say our vision was one of a vital, creative university that provided outstanding training, would be a place for excellent research, a lighthouse project in this region and internationally well connected. A new university, which would be closely connected to the requirements of the Jordanian economy, the Jordanian labor market and the needs of the region. I hoped that the German-Jordanian University would be perceived as a regional center of excellence which would attract students as well as scientists from neighboring states and abroad. I expressed my wish that this university should bring together science and application, be at the pulse of the economic development of both Jordan and Germany; and deliberately bring our students together with experts in the field of practice in Jordan and Germany.

A university which in due course would also become an important link for the people of both our countries and strengthen the link between our two countries.

Today I can say, our wishes, my wishes have become true.

Today, I am receiving this special honor, but many partners have contributed to turning this idea into a successful initiative: Dear President Dr. Abu Obeid, it was you, your predecessor, your colleagues and all the staff members who achieved the marvelous success of the GJU. It was you who made this university an attractive, inspiring and well-recognized place for many students, their families and professors. I am very proud that I could make a small contribution to the establishment of this wonderful university.

In Germany, approximately 110 German universities of applied sciences have joined to form a project consortium which cooperate with the German-Jordanian University

of Applied Sciences. The close connection between the economic sector and industry is another characteristic of this university. The large number of persons involved alone demonstrates the remarkable interest on both sides.

Modelled on German universities of applied sciences, the GJU was to open up new paths for the academic training of young people and, furthermore, to become a motor for economic and technological development in Jordan. It offers young students not only excellent study opportunities but also the chance to study and work in Germany and to experience intercultural cooperation in a stimulating environment.

Recently our president Joachim Gauck praised the GJU as a convincing example for a successful bridge between our two countries.

## II.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, education and science are of outstanding importance for the future development of our countries. All over the world we face serious challenges, such as:

- How can we overcome underemployment and youth unemployment?
- How can we fight the effects of climate change?
- How can we achieve methods of production and business operations that no longer threaten our planet's natural resources?
- And maybe most importantly: How can we foster peace and stability in these deeply troubled times?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I genuinely admire Jordan and its people for their approach towards the many Syrian refugees in this country. The solidarity and altruism that guides your policies towards refugees is remarkable.

As a European I say it is our obligation to support your efforts and let me assure you that Germany does this and will continue to do this. We need to develop novel concepts to ensure that all refugee children and young adults get access to primary and higher education. Germany supports this effort.

All these challenges that we are facing cannot be solved without science and excellent qualified people, well-informed citizens.

Education and research create the preconditions for innovation, and they lead to sustainable growth, new employment opportunities and prosperity. It is important to invest in people. Creative engineers, excellent researchers and highly educated professionals constitute the backbone of a productive and competitive economy, of a stable society.

Let me mention another aspect why in our globalized and interconnected world successful education and intercultural exchange is so important. In our international labor market graduates need not only a high professional qualification but also intercultural competences. It enables young people to independently acquire the knowledge they need, to enter into a productive exchange with others. And it promotes a sense of direction and good judgment. Excellent people are the springboard for innovation and growth that benefits all members of society.

### III.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear students,

I strongly believe that international cooperation and intercultural exchange are crucial for our future. In science and research international cooperation and exchange is very lively not only since yesterday. It has a long tradition. The exchange between Europe and the Arab world in particular is nothing new, it is an integral part of our history, our scientific and technological collective memory. Rationalism and Empiricism of modern science are products of a cultural exchange between the ancient world, the Arab world and Europe, as the Arab world preserved and further developed the ancient heritage. Brilliant innovative thinkers such as Ibn Raschid or al-Dschazari still symbolize the potential for this interaction even today.

Science knows no boundaries. It prospers through people's cooperation, exchange and sharing their experience and their knowledge.

The foundation of the German-Jordanian University was such a logical step in the right direction. In the past decade this university has established intensive scientific cooperation and regular exchanges. It has developed as a well recognized place for cultural meetings and mutual understanding. Dear President Natheer, when I visited the faculty of architecture this morning I was deeply impressed. By the works presented to us, but also by the outcome of the intercultural cooperation.

### IV.

Dear students, today also marks your graduation! Congratulations to all of you! This is a very special day for you, just as it is for me. Today you can enjoy the fruits of

your hard work. Graduating from GJU is a big accomplishment. Your certificates will be the basis for your future careers in academia or business. The *graduation certificate* you will receive today is a recognition of your achievements. I can still imagine what this certificate means to you and your families. Whatever path you choose to take from here, I can assure you that the GJU will be an excellent reference. Enjoy this evening and celebrate! You all deserve it.

**V.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know that many passionate and talented people work towards the long-term success of the GJU! I am convinced that the GJU will continue to flourish and stand out as one of the lighthouses of education and research in this region.

Dear President Natheer, members of the GJU,

thank you again for this prestigious award and this wonderful evening. I wish the GJU all the best and hope that you will continue on the road to success. Thank you for your attention.