

Greetings by German Consul General Rolf Schütte
on the occasion of the celebration to
honor Romania's Accession to the European Union
San Francisco, February 20, 2007-02-19

**Dear Dana,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

January 1, 2007 was a very special day

- for Romania**
- for Germany**
- and for the European Union as a whole.**

As has been mentioned already, the beginning of this year also marked the accession of Romania and Bulgaria as new members to the European Union. After the so-called "big bang" of 2004 when 10 new members were admitted to the EU and with the two new members joining this year the EU now encompasses 27 Member States and 500 million people.

To welcome Romania and Bulgaria into the fold of the European Union nations, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier traveled to Bucharest and Sofia at the start of the New Year. He did so as the representative of the country that on the same day took over the Presidency of the European Union.

Germany, as one of the six founding members of what is called the European Union now, has assumed the role of Presidency for the 12th time. For the first time, Germany is working with Portugal and Slovenia, the two subsequent Presidencies, as a so-called "team Presidency".

The German EU Presidency and the EU as a whole face many challenges. Some of them are specific to the EU - like the future of the constitutional process and the clear definition of the respective areas of competence of the EU and of its Member States. Other challenges are of equal concern to partners like the U.S. - for example the consequences of globalization, the ongoing terrorist threat and the explosive situation in the Middle East.

When looking at what is of greatest interest here on the American West Coast, I would like to add that the German EU Presidency has decided to focus a particular attention on energy, environmental and climate protection. Germany – with its well-known global technological leadership in renewable energies like solar and wind power and in energy efficiency – also sees the United States as a most important and indispensable

cooperation partner of the EU in the fields of energy and climate policy. Furthermore, the German EU Presidency intends to discuss the intensification of the transatlantic economic partnership with the U.S.. We should not forget the facts: The United States is the European Union's most important trading partner. The EU and the U.S. are each other's key investment partners. Corporate Europe accounted for 75 % of total foreign direct investment inflows into the U.S. in recent years.

However, 2007 is not only a very special year for Romania and Germany, but also for the European Union as a whole. On March 24 and 25 the leaders of the EU Member States will convene for an informal summit to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome which laid the foundation for the European Economic Community and later the European Union. When we look back at this half-century Europe has become a unique success story. Despite its open questions and challenges today it is clear that there is ample reason to celebrate. Who would have thought at the the end of World War II that only 60 years later Europe would be the continent of peace, prosperity and stability, where freedom, justice and democracy are things the citizens of Europe take for granted?

Thus, let me conclude by underlining that there are many reasons to celebrate today: for Romania, for Germany and for the European Union, but also in view of a European-American cooperation and partnership which may have changed in substance and focus over the years, but remains as important as it has always been in postwar history.

Thank you for your attention.