

**DAAD Seminar  
Auckland , 20 March 2010**

May I extend my warm thanks to the organisers for the invitation to be present today. I have been asked to give a perspective on the current state of German and New Zealand relations.

I do so against the background of one who was a DAAD recipient in 1975/76 and then, after a career which took me in other directions, came back to Germany as NZ Ambassador from 2002 to 2006.

The early stages of the NZ and German relationship in the post war years owed much to dedicated and active individuals, academic as well as business leaders who could see the potential and benefits for closer collaboration between the two countries.

By the mid 70's, when I spend a formative year at the University of Wuerzburg, NZ was facing the chill winds of British entry into the common market, which forced us to diversify our economy and to look for new friends around the world.

In Germany, we spent much time knocking on the doors of German foreign and economics Ministers to make the case for our continued access to the EU market, supplementing our efforts in Brussels. We had a small Embassy in Bonn, which has a succession of active and dedicated diplomats working hard. Germany's interest and strong support for building a broadly based bilateral relationship with NZ has always been greatly valued in NZ.

The first major development in the relationship happened with the first State visit of Bundespresident, Walter Scheel, in 1978, and the signature of our bilateral STC agreement. In both events I was fortunate to have been closely involved.

Since then, two other German Presidents have visited, mostly recently the late Johannes Rau in 2001, to whom I presented my credentials as NZ Ambassador in early 2003. Let's hope President Koehler might see his diary clear to visiting us during his second term in office!

A highlight of my own time in Berlin was the State Visit to Germany of the then Governor-General, Dame Silvia Cartwright.

Since the late 1790's New Zealand and Germany have worked hard to expand and augment their bilateral engagement.

The signature of the bilateral Working Holiday Scheme has had a positive impact, and is responsible for the fact that, when you hear German spoken all around NZ these days, it is likely to be a German WHS holder.

The steady growth in tourism numbers from Germany has been another point of contact and means hundreds of thousands of Germans have visited our shores, and not a few have returned as permanent migrants.

The STC agreement signed in 1978 has blossomed into one of our most important bilateral science relationships.

There is much that still can be done to further German – NZ relations. The advent of the Lisbon Treaty brings both challenges and opportunities.

NZ would like to enhance its trade and economic interaction with Germany and we have ambitions to do this working with Germany as a leading Member State of the EU.

Given my own involvement in the German relationship at various times over 35 years, it is in that context that I want to pay special tribute to the German Government and the staff who over the years have made the DAAD such a success.

In the difficult years of the post war and cold war era, the DAAD stood out as an excellent example of a generous government policy that has had a major positive impact in promoting German relationships with its foreign partners.

New Zealanders like myself in their hundreds have been huge beneficiaries of the DAAD awards which have made possible

academic exchanges in an increasing array of disciplines. This is a unique and exceptionally good way to increase contacts between the two countries.

Over the years, I know the focus of DAAD scholarships has broadened and is no longer just about learning German language and culture, which was the focus when I was a recipient in the 1975.

We thought the world was a complex place in 1975, with the division of Germany, the cold war and problems like acid rain. Helmut Schmidt and Franz Josef Strauss!

Today we know the world has become only more complex and despite the ending of the cold war, the challenges we face are just as great, from climate change, depleted resources, terrorism and security issues, transgressions by national governments of human rights.

But the EU itself has made impressive strides in its consolidation since those days, and we find ourselves on the same page as Germany and the EU on the key global issues.

I can well imagine the conversations that occur from time to time in internal debates on whether the expenditure on the DAAD represents value for money for the German taxpayer. I have been involved in enough conversations in my own Ministry on such topics to have some inkling of the arguments for and against.

It is certainly not my place to make suggestions as to how the German taxpayers should spend their hard earned Euros.

I would, however, say that my own perception is that over the years the DAAD has had a critical role in fostering good will between our two countries and contributing materially to academic exchanges, and research excellence and outcomes. For that Germany is to be congratulated.

In this part of the world as we forge new relationships within Asia and the Pacific, as foreign languages besides German and French

increasingly compete for the interest of students at school and university, there will continue to be an important place for academic and cultural interchanges with Europe and with Germany.

It is in my view in NZ's interests that Germany maintains and develops its links with this part of the world. I would like to see an even greater flow of two way exchanges, not less.

In an age of the internet, 'facebook', blogs, and rapid developing IT, we would make a serious mistake if we thought that that could be a substitute for personal interactions between different peoples and cultures, getting to know and understand each other from first hand, living and studying in each others' countries.

The WHS, and the Goethe Institute, all play a crucial part. But in this context, I want to acknowledge the especial role and contribution made by the DAAD.

Its focus and participation may have evolved over time, but there is no doubting the contribution it has made and can continue to make to better understanding between our two countries.

Those academic and business pioneers who saw the need in the post war period to rebuilding German and NZ links, and there were many – here I pay special tribute to my own Professor, the late John Asher of the University of Auckland, would no doubt be pleased and impressed by what has been achieved.

But they would also tell us that this is a 'never ending story' and that much remains to be done involving new generations as they come forward. I am looking forward to this seminar and further discussion on just that topic.

Thank you.