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Rede anlässlich der IFA Eröffnungsgala 2019

Sehr geehrter Herr Regierender Bürgermeister Müller,
seine Exzellenz Yoshihiro Seki,
meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren,
liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen,

ein herzliches Willkommen zur IFA 2019 in Berlin!

Sehr gerne hätten wir heute Abend auch die Bundeskanzlerin begrüßt,
aber die heutige Abreise zum Staatsbesuch in China hat dies leider
verhindert.

Die Bedeutung der IFA haben Sie, verehrter Herr Müller, ja bereits
hervorgehoben. Ich kann Ihre Ausführungen nur unterstreichen. Auch
wenn die IFA eine stetig wiederkehrende Erfolgsgeschichte ist, möchte
ich dann an dieser Stelle nicht wiederholen, was ich in den vergangenen
Jahren schon oft gesagt habe. Nur so viel: Wir alle sind stolz auf dieses
Flaggschiff der internationalen Messelandschaft, die weltweit größte
Messe für Consumer Electronics und Home Appliances. Eine Leitmesse,
die sich ständig weiterentwickelt.

Die IFA wurde im Laufe der Jahre immer internationaler und heute ist sie so international wie nie zuvor. Daher möchte ich – auch als Referenz an unsere internationalen Gäste – in Englisch fortfahren.

The power of innovation and the ability of the industries involved to respond quickly and flexibly to the demands of the market are still shaping the success story of IFA. However, I dare to predict: The big global tasks of the years ahead will challenge us even more.

Today the young generation in particular is very actively involved in climate protection and sustainability around the globe and signals to the world: we need to act faster and more resolutely than ever before. This applies to the industry as well as to the government.

We have already achieved great successes in our sphere of influence: The consumption of energy, water and detergent is decreasing with every generation of household appliances. Since the days of the color ray tube, we have been able to reduce the power consumption of TV sets considerably.

For the recycling of E-Waste, the manufacturers have established an exemplary system with the foundation “Elektro Altgeräte-Register” in Germany. At the end of their lifetime electronic devices are valuable secondary sources of raw materials. However, in order to be able to use

these sources, significantly more such devices have to get into the official collection channels faster and better than currently.

Another urgent challenge is the freedom of the internet. Especially young people care about this issue. We stand by their side when it comes to protecting the internet from censorship and autocratic interference. Nevertheless, we also understand the need to keep protecting copyrights. And we demand decisive intervention from the platform operators to prevent incitement and calls for violence. This results in conflicting goals which cannot always be solved easily. Clever and far-sighted regulations are required – and, where necessary, also much more courage to be consistent.

Creativity is also needed in another area of conflict. When the first cells of the new mobile network 5G will arise this year, also components from the Chinese network supplier Huawei will be implemented. As we know, the US government suspects the company of opening doors for espionage. This is just one facet of a trade conflict of which the end is not yet foreseeable. However, it is already clear today that conflicts like this have a direct impact on consumer sentiment and buying behavior. This effects the economic development worldwide, in Europe and of course especially in an export-oriented nation like Germany.

There is no doubt that nations and communities need to effectively protect their security interests. However, in the conflict situation

described at the outset, it is important to question the driving force behind: Is it indeed a security concern or is it part of a complex trade war?

The economy – and therefore also our industries – relies on free and open trade, on the exchange of ideas and on cooperation in the further development of technologies. That's also what IFA stands for. Any attempt to change it will lead to a situation with losers on all sides.

Just to be clear, there is no reason on always blaming politics for wrong turns – I see enough reasons for self-criticism as well. Especially in the field of the consumer electronics industry we recognize a dangerous and continuing trend: Industry and trade are trying to increase market share by stopping to aim for profitability. Accordingly, prices in the market are decreasing and further decreasing. Our gfu-data shows this clearly for Germany: For example we discovered a considerable gap between willingness to spend and the actual investment for a new TV set. In recent years our annual gfu-survey has shown continuously that buyers of a new TV set would have been willing to invest significantly more money for their favorite device than they actually spent. This difference can reach up to forty percent – an enormous market potential which is given away. You can call this phenomenon destruction of values and I think we should not afford this anymore.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today we do not want to talk just about problems, because we have every reason to look forward to an exciting IFA 2019.

We are pleased to see so many highly attractive new products again this year. IFA knows no standstill – innovation is part of its DNA. A perfect example is the innovation hub IFA NEXT, which provides an exciting look into the future with countless exhibits, lectures, panel discussions, keynote speeches and conferences.

As a Global Innovation Partner, we would like to cordially welcome the high-tech nation Japan this year: a high-ranking delegation ranging from politics to business, research institutes and young companies will demonstrate the country's innovative strength at IFA NEXT.

At this point, I sincerely want to thank all those who have helped to develop IFA into a continuous success story: Our great partner Messe Berlin chaired by Dr. Christian Göke and Jens Heithecker. Also the entire IFA team, which has worked tirelessly all year long for this mega-event.

Furthermore I would like to thank our partners from the industry and especially our partners of the retail sector: they contribute enormously to the economic success of our industries at this unique order fair.

Concluding my speech I wish you all a wonderful IFA-Gala and six exciting, entertaining and productive days at IFA!