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**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
at the evening reception on the occasion of the 27th  
Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
Schlosspark Bellevue  
8 July 2018**

Let me bid you all a very warm welcome to Schlosspark Bellevue! Bellevue means "pleasant view". The outlook is not so pleasant when one considers the state of the world today, the large number of crises and violent conflicts, the erosion of multilateralism. Only from here is the view in Bellevue truly pleasant! For I see many familiar faces from my many years of service in foreign policy and, in particular, from my stint as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. And I'm delighted to have this opportunity today to make the acquaintance of as many of you as possible. Since yesterday, you've been gathered here in Berlin for the 27th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – and as Federal President it is an honour for me to welcome you this evening!

Schloss Bellevue, which you see before you, was built by Prince August Ferdinand of Prussia, the youngest brother of King Frederick II. The central wing was completed in 1786 – and the monarch died that same year. The death of Frederick the Great marked the end of an almost fifty-year era in Europe. Despite his "enlightened absolutism", "Old Fritz" always remained a warlord. From the Silesian Wars to the Seven Years War and then the War of the Bavarian Succession, as well as during the first partition of Poland: peace was never more than a brief respite in Frederick's Central Europe. Schloss Bellevue was thus built at the heart of a turbulent continent.

If Frederick and Prince Ferdinand were with us here today, they would probably be most surprised. For the declared will of the international community since the entry into force of the UN Charter and of the OSCE participating States, especially since the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and what your annual session here in Berlin epitomises,

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would have sounded like a far-off utopia back then: the condemnation of force as a political instrument. The readiness to work together, especially where there are tensions. The capacity to enter into compromises, especially when there is a danger that conflicts will escalate. And dialogue in times of crisis – the only way to prevent violence breaking out, to build new trust and to lay the foundations for peaceful conflict resolution.

Yes, it's true that today's world still does not live up to these ideals. Even now there are – not least in Europe – again places where talk of the peaceful settlement of disputes sounds like a distant utopia. As much as the OSCE is committed to these ideals today – via dialogue, via its missions, via its work on peace and security, the economy and the environment, on the human dimension – we must keep on working together to ensure that this organisation continues to stand up for peace! We should all uphold the spirit of Helsinki and put it to good use in future. I will say, however, that it runs counter to this spirit when individual states use the consensus principle to further their own agenda, or when the actions of individual members jeopardise the OSCE's fundamental principle, namely the inviolability of borders and thus peace in Europe!

You especially – as parliamentarians – are linchpins between the multilateral level and national politics in your own countries. When the value of dialogue, understanding and the search for a peaceful balancing of interests is openly called into question on the international stage today, indeed when doubt is being cast on the very value of multilateral diplomacy per se, and at the same time confrontation, unwillingness to compromise and "everyone against everyone" is becoming fashionable, I think you as parliamentarians are called upon to reaffirm and defend the OSCE's achievements time and again!

Well, that's all your host has to say. I'm delighted to have you all here this evening – and I hope you will have a good time.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening, as well as a stimulating and fruitful time in Berlin. And I wish the OSCE every conceivable success with your important mission for our continent!

Thank you.