

President of National Assembly of Armenia Mr. Abrahamyan, Vice-president of German Bundestag Mr. Tierse, Distinguished members of Bundestag, Your Excellencies, Reverend clergy, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear compatriots and guests:

Let me heartily welcome you today on this memorable occasion – 20th anniversary of Armenia’s independence. I want to begin this inaugural statement by quoting the 18th century British cleric Charles Colton: “Liberty does not descend to people. The people must raise themselves to liberty. It is a blessing that must be earned before it can be enjoyed.” As an ancient nation deprived of statehood centuries ago, Armenians in the best way possible comprehend the meaning and the value of these words. The rebirth of Armenian state 20 years ago was a glorious moment, and it remains so despite many hardships along the way. This innermost dream of many generations of Armenians has come true with tremendous cost, and today all Armenians around the world render their tribute to the memory of our brothers and sisters who have paid an ultimate sacrifice to our young state.

Grievous attempt by Azerbaijan to resolve in the early 90s the historical dispute over the Nagorno Karabagh militarily took away lives of thousands Armenians. Thus, the recent history only sharpened our security conscience and obliged us to strengthen country’s defense capacities through national, bilateral and multilateral arrangements. Having taken them in full conformity with our international obligations, Armenia meanwhile is committed to the peaceful resolution of NK conflict based on fundamental principles of international law.

The history has always been the stumbling block in Turkish-Armenian relations, and the contemporary experiences supplied new and additional frictions. Despite the fact that Armenia has more weighty arguments to resort to the policy of conditionality, however for the sake of regional interests we've refrained from it. For this very reason Armenia is still ready to finalize the process of

normalization of its relations with Turkey provided that this country stops its pernicious practices of putting forward a list of preconditions and withstands pressures to the normalization of our bilateral relations from the third country.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Although building the infrastructure of freedom and the rule of law is easier-said-than-done endeavor, nevertheless it is the only acceptable and the most profound path and we have taken it to build a safe and competitive state. The liberty offered by democracy and supplied by markets is winning hearts and minds of my fellow Armenians. We are building new and strengthening existing institutions required for a modern state. Not only we have stopped the decline in our economy resulting from the recent world financial crisis, but have managed to ignite and sustain a positive economic growth in 2011.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Since the very inception of independent Armenia, millions of our compatriots, who due to their destiny happen to live far away from their historical homeland, have brought their invaluable contribution to the restoration of the Armenian statehood. Their unbending will, moral strength, competent skills and dedication to Armenia have helped them to successfully take part in building a modern state.

In the meantime we, Armenians, are aware that by no means is this a time for celebration only. For us this is a time to roll up our sleeves and to work hard to the benefit of our young state, a state which is in charge of our venerable history, today's interests and utmost goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Choosing Berlin as a venue for this solemn event was not accidental. Germany has played an important role in the process of formation of Armenia since 1991. Two core elements of German foreign policy – multilateralism combined with the culture of restraint, and balance between interest-based and value-oriented policies have allowed Germany to become an honest international actor in both global and regional politics. The involvement of Germany in the South Caucasus, in particular, is the best manifestation of this paradigm of German foreign policy.

After the United States, Germany today is the second official donor country for Armenia. Various programs of technical and financial assistance help us to reform and develop such fields as energy production and judicial, local governance and banking, healthcare and education. After Russia and China, Germany is the third trade partner of Armenia. The major German political stiftungs and non-governmental organizations, through the implementation of their diversified international programs, assist us to promote democracy and to strengthen Armenian civil society. Using this opportunity in the person of all German guests I'd like to express my gratitude to the people of Germany and its government for continued support. In particular, I want to extend my special words of appreciation to my colleagues, the former and currently serving German Ambassadors to Armenia, for their personal contribution to the establishment and development of our bilateral relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Armenia has many high caliber orchestras and performers who were willing to demonstrate their skills today. However, recognition as a criterion for the selection of musicians for this special event was not a primary one. We gave preference to this orchestra because **these** young performers represent generation

grown in independent country. **They** embody new Armenia; **they** are the hope and the future of our ancient land and diligent people.

My young friends,

We will applaud today your performance because, while you owe your teachers and parents much for your achievements, you have reached this point through your own sweat and toil. For that, we salute you today.

Meanwhile, on behalf of the orchestra and myself I want to express my gratitude to the President of Armenian National Assembly Mr. Abrahamyan and his German colleague, the President of German Bundestag Dr. Lammert for rendering their joint patronage to this event.

This concert has become possible due to the support of company Cronimet from Baden Wurttemberg chaired by company's President and Honorary Consul of Armenia Mr. Gunter Pilarsky. Dear Joyce and Gunter, I want to thank you both for your generosity and continued support to Armenian arts and music.

Last but not least: Young Euro classics project initiated by Gabriela Minz, in 2009 displayed this talented orchestra to the demanding musical audience of Berlin. I want to thank Mrs. Minz and her team who together with my assistant Lilit Mamikonyan gave a hand in preparing this memorable concert.

Berlin, 27.09.11