

State Banquet for the President of Germany

Guildhall

Thursday 4th December 2025

**The Rt Hon The Lady Mayor of London
Alderwoman Dame Susan Langley DBE**

Mr President, Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies, My Lords, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Chief Commoner, Honoured Guests...

On behalf of the City of London Corporation, *Willkommen in London* - a very, warm welcome to the City of London.

Unlike His Majesty the King, I am not fluent in German, so to avoid setting UK-Germany relations back a decade or two, the rest of this speech will be in English.

We are delighted to present you with an Address of Welcome, contained in this case, which I hope you will accept as a sincere token of our friendship.

The City of London Corporation is the world's oldest democratic local government and this majestic hall, has been our historic home for over six centuries. In recent times we have had the honour of welcoming Presidents of Germany such as Theodor Heuss the 1950s, Gustav Heinemann in the 1970s, and Roman Herzog in the 1990s.

Your *presence* here today, is so much more than a formal visit, it's a reminder of the strong friendship our two nations enjoy. A friendship, that is rooted in shared values, mutual respect and a very real commitment to shaping a secure future for both our countries.

Your visit follows on from the highly successful state visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen to Germany two years ago.

Significantly, this was the *first* state visit of His Majesty's reign, a sign of the deep ties between us and the vital importance of our relationship, not only for both our countries, but for Europe.

Because we, the United Kingdom and Germany, stand together as two of Europe's great democracies — nations, that truly believe in the rule of law, in fairness and in the power of peaceful cooperation.

These aren't abstract ideals. They are the foundation upon which our societies are built. A guiding light, that steers us through moments of challenge and uncertainty. Of which, in these times, there are many.

We rely on each other, but equally importantly, others rely on us.

We are of course, connected through trade, culture, science, education, sport, and -most importantly - by people.

The City of London as a leading global financial centre, developed from our enduring history as a trading city.

German merchants were a big part of that development.

Long before this Guildhall was built, there was a German Guildhall, in an area of the City.. run for hundreds of years by the Hanseatic League – a coalition of European guilds and towns.

This placed London at the very heart of a community, sweeping together Hamburg, Cologne, Bruges and many more European cities – an early single market, if you like.

The League reclaimed land from the River Thames and built houses, gardens and even a vineyard – which now lies under the site of Cannon Street Railway Station, not far from us all here tonight.

Some of our street names – like Hanseatic Walk – are still daily reminders of that history.

The positive effects of UK-Germany trade are all around us. So it's no surprise, that today, Germany is the UK's second largest trading partner.

And this strength of partnership, is key for the strength of the City and for both our economies.

In these volatile geopolitical times, friends should work together – for prosperity - yes, for progress - yes, but importantly, because we share common values.

London, as Europe's leading financial centre, can provide access, to global capital markets and bridge the investment gap on both sides of the Channel, strengthening, both our economies.

And we must work with other European financial centres, such as Frankfurt, making sure that we complement each other, that we maximise the flow of capital and investment – financial and human - in both directions.

Our Policy Chairman, Chris Hayward, led a City of London delegation to Berlin this summer, which explored opportunities for cooperation, and I will be travelling to Frankfurt next year.

This co-operation is vital not only for our prosperity but also for our security.

The City welcomes the progress made at the EU-UK leaders' summit earlier this year – including the Security and Defence Partnership - but we must act on this.

We also welcome the Kensington Treaty between Germany and the UK, and the plans for improved defence cooperation – but we must deliver on this.

We are all hoping for peace in Ukraine, but it would appear this week, as though a peace deal is still some distance away.

Our two great countries and the whole of Europe, are fully aware of the potential defence risks, we now all face.

Germany, the UK and many other European countries have made commitments to major increases in defence spending and this City will be an important source of the finance we need. With geopolitical turmoil, we do not have the luxury of time.

Discussion is good. Action is better. Together we can both strengthen our economies and our security, we must find a way that we can all work closely together.

This need to act, transcends political and geographical boundaries and I have always believed that where there is a will, there is a way. Time waits for no man, or woman. And to fail to act, is to fail to prepare.

We *must* avoid any barriers between us, if we are to rise to the challenges we both face.

I believe that the UK and Germany, as two of Europe's leading economies, can step up to lead and be at the forefront to help drive the cooperation that we all need – between our governments, between our businesses, and between our people.

We work best when we understand one another, exchanging ideas, skills and expertise between us. People to people connection, transforms diplomacy to friendship.

Together, as partners, as allies, but more importantly - as friends - we can build a partnership that is deeper, more prosperous, more resilient and more hopeful for our future generations.

We are always, stronger together.

Danke schön.

May I now invite everyone to rise for the toast to the President, and to please remain standing for the National Anthem of Germany.

The toast is:

“The President of the Federal Republic of Germany.”