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Welcoming Speech

**at the 82nd Annual Conference of the Israel Chemical Society
Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between GDCh and ICS**

**13th of February 2017
David Intercontinental Hotel, Tel Aviv**

Dear Bilha, dear Udi, Excellency von Goetze, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thankful to be here in Tel Aviv at the Annual Meeting of the Israel Chemical Society together with a delegation of German scientists and delegates, first of all Wolfram Koch, the CEO of The German Chemical Society, and Peter Göllitz, Editor-in-chief of the GDCh journal *Angewandte Chemie*. When I look into the faces of the assembled community I feel that the room is full of expectation, joy and friendship. Still, let me start with some very serious words.

As a German one cannot stay in Israel without the awareness of the Shoa. We shall not forget the terrible crime committed by Germans during the “Third Reich”, when millions of Jewish people were tortured and murdered. It was not only that Jews were considered enemies of the Nazis or second or third class persons. The Nazis did not consider Jews as persons at all. The right of Jews to be human like everybody was denied. This is the most immoral position one can take.

It is an encouraging experience that after morality had sunk 1000 years deep, there were people who made the successful attempt to raise it from its sunken position and re-establish dignity and mutual relations between Germany and the Jewish people. Science has paved the way to dialogue and has laid the ground for national as well as personal trust, collaboration and friendship. I take great pride in this role of science and of scientific interactions and I believe that science, certainly chemistry!, shall always continue to tell her story: Science does not stop at borders, research brings colleagues together from all over the world and progress needs diversity and understanding. Honest and serious cooperation guides our way into a better future.

After the second world war, the Max Planck Society has started the collaboration between scientists from Germany and Israel. Around 25 Minerva Centers have been founded since then. Many additional pillars of collaboration have been built between our two countries in the 52 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1965, involving programmes of the German Ministry of Education and Research, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the DFG. In the Middle East Collaboration programme the DFG supports German-Israeli collaborative projects, also involving additional partners from Palestine or from Israel's neighbouring countries in “Trilateral Projects”. This is quite remarkable and should be used more.

Of course the German Chemical Society, the GDCh, has also funded the German-Israel connection in chemistry. A special issue of *Angewandte Chemie*, -the GDCh flagship journal-, has appeared in 2015 to celebrate chemistry from Germany and Israel. In two days, a prestigious *Angewandte Chemie* symposium will be held here in Tel Aviv which you must not miss. Joint meetings have been organized by the ICS and GDCh and I am glad that for the 82nd Annual Meeting again many scientists from both countries have gathered. This reflects a strong and lasting friendship.

The German and the Israel Chemical Society for many years are committed together in EuCheMS, the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences and both Ehud Keinan and Wolfram Koch served as Members of the Executive Board. Ehud Keinan was one of the first to sign the Seville International Chemistry Declaration 2016, which was set up at the 6th EuCheMS Symposium in September last year. In this declaration chemists and chemical societies commit themselves to the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, to protect the planet and all human beings. GDCh also strongly supports the idea to establish an equivalent to the Hippocratic oath for chemists.

Let me tell you a little bit more about the ethical guidelines of the German Chemical Society. GDCh as the largest chemical society in continental Europe is committed to the ethical responsibility of its members. Nearly twenty years ago, in 1998, the "GDCh Code of Honor" was drawn up. All members of GDCh pledge to act in a responsible way and to oppose strictly any misuse of chemical weapons and illegal drugs. In 2015, 100 years after the first use of chemical weapons in warfare, the former GDCh president Thomas Geelhaar and other representatives of chemistry organizations gathered in Ypres in Belgium to commemorate those who have died from chlorine gas used by the German military. Today on the other hand, GDCh is a member of the Advisory Board of Education and Outreach within OPCW, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical weapons. Also in 2015, GDCh published a book with Wiley-VCH, covering the role of German chemists during 1933-1945. The historian Helmut Maier is the author of this more than 700 page survey entitled "Chemiker im Dritten Reich". With this extensive and detailed study, GDCh accepts the responsibility of its predecessor organizations being part of the Nazi system.

At the same time, we are proud to be the successor organization of the traditional chemical societies in Germany. This year, in 2017, GDCh is celebrating its 150th anniversary as the successor to the "Deutsche Chemische Gesellschaft" (German Chemical Society), founded in Berlin in 1867 by August Wilhelm von Hofmann. The highlight of the anniversary will be "WiFo", the GDCh Chemistry Scientific Forum, with its significant and far-reaching slogan *Chemistry – A Driving Force*. Please save the date and join us in Berlin from September 10-14, 2017. You are cordially invited! Additionally, there will be another *Angewandte Symposium*, including four Nobel Prize winners, which you should not miss.

As I come to the end of my welcome address, I would like to tell you, last but not least, that responsibility in chemistry is one of the key themes of my GDCh presidency. Chemists certainly have a responsibility for the future, and during the anniversary celebration we will dedicate one symposium day to exactly this: The Grand Challenges and the role of chemistry in: health and disease, global warming, food supply for all, sustainable energy sources, education and peace. We call this one-day symposium on September 14th "Experiment Future – Values Thinking in Chemistry". Values Thinking is kind of a weak translation

for what I call "Wertedenken". *Wertedenken* means that we have to use our ability to deeply *think* about the world to identify immutable, inviolable values which form the platform for our further actions as well as the values we are creating.

My commitment is explicitly dedicated to awareness about immutable values of humanity. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". This has been written up after the second world war by the United Nations and it is not easy to live up to this truth. But it is necessary. Chemists should know this better than many others. We are all composed of the same molecules, DNA, proteins, carbohydrates, the citric acid cycle works the same in all human beings and clean water means the same to all of us as well as too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Therefore it is necessary that we overcome gaps and that we continue our cooperation across borders. Our societies, the Israel Chemical Society and the Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker (GDCh), will today sign a Memorandum of Understanding. It's a highlight of my GDCh presidency that I can place my signature under this document. This MoU is not the beginning but it is the result of a fruitful and trusting cooperation between our two organizations and their members.

Finally, I wish you inspiring and productive conference days, during the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Israel Chemical society today and tomorrow - and on Wednesday at the Angewandte Symposium.