

[Es gilt das gesprochene Wort]

**Grußwort der Ersten Vizepräsidentin der Freien Universität Berlin**

**Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ursula Lehmkuhl**

anlässlich des Vortrags des italienischen Außenministers Franco Frattini  
im Italien-Zentrum der Freien Universität: „Afghanistan and Pakistan:  
The Italian G8 Presidency and the Stabilization of the Region“

Montag, 20.04.2009  
Henry-Ford-Bau, Hs. B

Dear Minister Frattini,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues, Students and Friends of Freie Universität,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Minister Frattini, on behalf of the President and the executive board of Freie Universität, it is my sincere pleasure and honor to welcome you on our campus. We are delighted that you decided to include a stop at Freie Universität in your itinerary. As the invitation to this event tells us, it is much more than just a stop. It is a decision to deliver a talk that will take us right into the center of today's geopolitical debates. We are grateful and honored that you will give us the unique opportunity to discuss the issue of future support for Afghanistan and Pakistan with you today.

Minister Frattini, you will deliver this talk at a university whose very origins lie in a time of great political tension, a university, which from the very beginning has been committed to pursuing the ideal of freedom. Freie Universität was born in a time of crisis as a courageous reply to it, and it has been able to rise to the political challenges of the Cold War due to generous international support.

We are now in our seventh decade and have meanwhile seized several opportunities to help other institutions of higher education that were being founded, reformed or re-founded due to radical political change, both in Germany and abroad. One of these institutions is Humboldt University that in the early 1990s after the fall of the Berlin wall received structural and material support from Freie Universität. Our engagement is a way of staying true to our founding legacy and is also a way of strengthening one

of our central assets: the international networks that Freie Universität has developed through the years.

These networks are not simply a product that has emerged from the particular situation of Freie Universität. Rather they are the result of institutional priorities and strategic goals. Freie Universität is currently implementing an institutional strategy that aims at strengthening and further developing the international networks that have emerged over time, so that this university will become a true International Network University. As an International Network University we will contribute to the internationalization of Germany's knowledge society. We hope that this will also have an impact on the European system of higher education.

Our academic network today includes a multitude of ties that span the entire globe. Of course there is a strong transatlantic connection that has been present ever since the founding days. Then there are ties to regions perhaps more distant, but just as important in today's world, such as Asia. Latin America and the Middle East are two more regions with special expertise gathered at Freie Universität.

As we all know, understanding foreign cultures needs a solid foundation with regard to the knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural and political heritage. Hence, European Studies are a necessary prerequisite for our academic and scholarly expertise in the non-European World. The understanding and analysis of international crises in different world regions and the challenges they produce for the international community must be based on endeavors of cultural translation. The formulation of possible solutions for these crises needs to reflect the implicit Eurocentrism of our norms, values and concepts such as e.g. rule of law, democracy,

legitimacy and participation. Thus we need to educate our students in the cultural and normative foundations of Europe and the Western World in order to prepare them for a better understanding of the cultural and normative questions pertaining to international conflicts.

The organizer of today's event, the Italien-Zentrum, is one of Freie Universität's institutes with a European focus in research and teaching. Others are the Institute for European Studies, including a Jean Monnet Chair for Political Science and the Frankreich-Zentrum. These institutes represent the richness and diversity of academic expertise that Freie Universitaet can bring to bear on the analysis of questions pertaining to the European Union, to Italy and France, two of the central German partners within the Union, but also on regional or transregional issues. Our approach to area studies connects discipline-based academic expertise in order to form inter- and multidisciplinary networks with specific regional or transregional foci. To this end, Freie Universität draws not just on a variety of academic units with specific regional foci, but has founded the Center for Area Studies in 2006 in order to bundle such expertise and to contribute to the formation of overarching research agendas. The Center for Area Studies unites the competence within the humanities and social sciences, and focuses on regional and transregional dynamics in historical and contemporary perspective.

Given these developments and priorities of Freie Universitaet, it is clear why we consider your visit today, Minister Frattini, a true highlight. Italy, a country to which Freie Universität has such a long-standing tradition of rich academic ties, a country whose culture, politics and society are the subject of studies of the Italien-Zentrum, is holding the Presidency of the G8 group this year. Although the current economic

crisis invites parallels to the very first meeting of what was then G6 in Rambouillet in 1975, we know very well that the agenda in 2009 will encompass more than macro-economic questions and ideas on how to deal with the current economic threats. As you work to set this final agenda for the summit in La Maddalena in July, you have chosen to introduce us to the bid the Italian presidency has made for a regional stabilization concept for Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is an extremely important bid and we are pleased and grateful that you will share with us today some of your ideas and concepts.

I will thus dwell no further, but wish to conclude with a few notes of cordial thanks. My sincere thanks and acknowledgment go to the Italien-Zentrum that - in cooperation with the Italian Embassy and the Italian Cultural Institute in Berlin – has made this afternoon possible. I wish to express sincere thanks on behalf of Freie Universität to the Italian Ambassador Puri Purini: Your support for the Italien-Zentrum and your cooperation in making events such as this one possible are a wonderful contribution to academic life at Freie Universität and in all of Berlin. Please accept our cordial and sincere thanks for it. I also wish to thank our guests this evening, the representatives of the diplomatic corps, colleagues, students and friends of Freie Universität, for joining us. The final and most important note of thanks, of course, goes to you, Minister Frattini. Welcome at Freie Universität.

And now I wish to hand over to you, Ambassador Puri Purini, and look forward to a highly interesting evening.

Thank you very much.