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Ladies and gentlemen,

On the 3rd of October 1990 Germany officially became one again. The wall that separated the east from the west was disbanded and the people who suffered from the fence were satisfied again. Today we reminisce this large event. An event neither I, nor the rest of my generation was able to see with their own eyes. My grandparents were there, when the wall was built. My parents were there when it was destroyed. But I was yet to be born...

However, to give us an impression of what it was like, our school organized an exchange with the German Theodorianum in Paderborn. Visiting museums and memorial sites, we learned a lot about the short and intense history of the Federal Republic of Germany. A history of a young but ambitious country that became an economic superpower. A country that fought two wars, the first because of treaties, the second because of Versailles.

After the second world war, Germany was split up into four parts. Three of them ended up working together, becoming the capitalist FRG. The other part became the communist GDR. A wall was built in just half a night, dividing the country for 28 years. Germany became the silent battlefield of the cold war, since both political systems met here.

My father was serving in the army when the wall fell and he explained to me the complete change in outlook - no longer this artificial war of fighting with ghosts who might all of a sudden appear over the North-German plains, but a joyous outbreak of friendship - of getting to know one another, again. All the distrust melted away when the facade, that was the wall, fell. He visited the eastern part of Germany soon, to see for himself, and was impressed by the energy and spirit with which the rekindled friendship was being pursued.

And today for the 25th time, official reunification is celebrated. 45 years of separation turned out to have changed the countries, although the people were of the same nation. The west was both economically and technically ahead of the east, so the east was helped to catch up. The result was the strong and healthy country, that Germany is today.

And as a Dutchman, this is something we can certainly appreciate: 25% of our exports, valued at more than 100 billion euro is destined for the new and enlarged Germany. Where I live, in Willemstad close to the rivers of the Rhine-Maas Delta, this is very visible: many inland barges pass by on their way to deliver cargoes to Germany.

The union of East and West Germany 25 years ago was a big challenge for your country. Despite close ties, there was always a risk that people would be unhappy accepting, and paying for, a new reality. It has proven a resounding success. Now, we face different, but similar challenges. Again, we are asked to accept into our midst, people that are 'different', and again the challenge of broad acceptance arises. Now, as 25 years ago, Germany has shown its strength, by accepting refugees from the middle east and Africa into your country. We can only admire you for it.

Your reunification has shown us and the rest of the world the possibilities, the potential that can be unleashed in times of need when unity is created. As a youngster with limited historical baggage, my goal is to travel and meet people in the many and diverse parts of our world, but certainly also in Europe. To me, traveling in Europe is, in many ways, a seamless experience - the only things that change when I cross a border are things I like: a different language, a different culture - and different cakes at the bakery! I cannot imagine the old days of border crossings and passports - and one that was easy compared to the ordeal refugees have to put up with. And although I only know from current affairs programs and history books, we should not forget that we too could become refugees again - we are not somehow magically immune from disasters, whether man-made or natural, and may find cause to leave our country in despair.

I can only hope that the 25-year old unification spirit of Germany remains a strong example and is applied as broadly as possible in all the countries I will visit - as a tourist.

Thank you very much for your attention.