

Rede Kristine Lütke am 19.06.2018 auf der Europakonferenz in Riga

Dear Deputy Head of Mission Mrs Kliese,
Dear World President Brian,
Dear Executive Vice President for Europe Kevin,

Dear National Presidents,

Dear Jaycees and guests,

I'm delighted to welcome all of you at our reception of JCI Germany in the beautiful town of Riga. It is always a great pleasure to meet you and to gather with friends from all around the world. Let me start by thanking Manja Kliese, Deputy Head of Mission from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Latvia, for joining us today. Later on, she will give us further insights into the commercial relations between Germany and the Baltic states. Thank you for your time!

German businesses consider the Baltic countries the best place for investment in comparison to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, according to a survey conducted by the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce in 2017. This is a huge success story considering the turbulent history of Germany and the Baltic.

After centuries of shared history during which the Baltic was a region of missionary activity and settlement and by economic ties created at the time of the Hanseatic league the tide turned in 1939 with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The secret protocol conceded that the independent Baltic states would fall into the Soviet sphere of influence. After the Second World War and 40 years of Soviet dominance, Latvia became independent again in 1991 and is now a member of the European Union, the Eurozone and NATO. This year eventually marks the 100th anniversary of Latvia.

What do I want to say with this short digression into history? Change is possible. Two countries that once were considered enemies have now become allies.

This year's JCI European conference motto is "One step to success". Success is not an event, it is a process. To finish any great endeavor, you must first start. The successful entrepreneur is the person who makes an idea happen. This is what we do at JCI. We believe in international understanding and foster sustainable development through concrete projects.

This is the reason why we as JCI Germany want to become even more involved in our global JCI network. Dear Brian, it is an honor to have you here and we are looking forwards to your words. I think the sheer number of German participants at this conference already shows the great interest of our national chapter in JCI.

Grassroots engagement and the international cooperation of civil society is of tremendous importance in times when states fail to cooperate. We live in an era of transition from one world order to the next. The US is looking inward, putting "America first". I think there will be a long-term damage to the world if we pursue the "my nation first" strategy.

Just look at the results of the G7 meeting in Canada. Once-friendly relationships have suddenly turned sour. We have to face an American President who seems to see allies as a burden. Donald Trump attacks his closest allies and rejects a joint communique. How shall we tackle international challenges such as climate change, poverty and war if we don't manage to agree on a joint statement? Global problems need for multilateral answers.

Protectionism is not the right answer to an increasingly interconnected world. Since 1980, the volume of world trade has increased fivefold. All countries have a large stake in these interconnections. Trade battles will have bad outcomes. A tit-for-tat tariff battle will hurt all of us.

Fortunately, politicians and states are not the only actors on the world stage. Non-state actors have gained a more prominent role in international politics. Therefore, I'd like to encourage all of you to become an ambassador for international understanding, economic and cultural exchange. Change

begins with you and me. My family is a perfect example of our common European legacy. My grand-dad was born in Latvia and raised in Riga.

I am very much looking forward to the JCI European Conference. Let's take this unique opportunity to bring together like-minded people to share ideas, exchange thoughts and to spread our business and knowledge.