



The 2023 Henry A. Kissinger Prize

WELCOMING REMARKS

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PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ACADEMY IN BERLIN

*President Steinmeier,
Secretary General Stoltenberg,
Speaker Emerita Pelosi, we are so grateful you made the flight from Washington to join us here.
Distinguished Representatives of the NATO Member States Excellencies,
Friends of the American Academy in Berlin,*

It is truly an honor to welcome you here. Tonight, for the sixteenth time, we will award the American Academy in Berlin's Henry A. Kissinger Prize.

Unfortunately, I need to begin with the news that Dr. Kissinger cannot join us tonight. We received word earlier this week that he had to cancel his trip to Europe because of doctor's orders. I know that Dr. Kissinger was eager to be here to see the award bestowed upon someone who he admired greatly. Indeed, it was no small task to find a date that would work for both the Secretary General of NATO, who has a thing or two keeping him busy, and the world's most active — and in demand — centenarian. I know you join me in wishing Dr. Kissinger, the Academy's sole remaining founder, a full and speedy recovery.

We are meeting at a moment of great challenge and great peril. A terrible war of aggression, now in its 20th month, grinds on in Ukraine, just a day's drive from here. Outside of Europe, the conflict in Gaza has captured the attention of the world and threatens to engulf the Middle East. In the Pacific, the tension with China continues to grow.

Against this backdrop, however, there are remarkable stories to be told. The Ukrainian people, in their struggle to remain free and independent, have demonstrated a heroism that has astounded and impressed the global community—and I want to express my profound admiration to Ukraine's ambassador to Germany, Oleksii Makeiev, who is here tonight.

We have also witnessed a galvanizing of the Western Alliance that has exceeded anything that might have been imagined just a few years ago.

That revitalization has been an extraordinary development led by determined and committed leaders. By President Biden in my country, by Chancellor Scholz here, and by others across the 31 member states of NATO.

And in the forefront of that group of leaders, ensuring that these many nations are doing all they can and are effectively coordinated, has been the indispensable NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. I cannot imagine a more deserving individual for tonight's award.

Secretary General Stoltenberg has played a pivotal role in rallying our community of democracies to support Ukraine and help defend its democracy. Not only has he ensured that NATO do everything it can for Ukraine, but he has also helped strengthen the Alliance with the admission of three new members during his tenure with a fourth that will, we hope, join soon. In this work, he has been guided by an observation of an earlier Norwegian, Foreign Minister Halvard Lange, who signed the Treaty of Washington that created NATO. And I quote: "Peace will never be secure in a world where democracies are weak and dictatorships are strong."

We can be quite certain that when the history of the period is written, Jens Stoltenberg will stand out as one of the exceptional figures of this time. And now in his tenth year at NATO and with eight years as Prime Minister of Norway behind him, he is a public servant of rare dedication.

The American Academy is pleased to bestow this honor on Secretary General Stoltenberg because he so embodies the values we stand for. Values at the heart of the transatlantic relationship: A dedication to freedom, to the bonds between democratic nations and a common defense, to the preservation of peace and the creation of a prosperous world for all our peoples.

We at the Academy seek to live these values by bringing outstanding Americans—scholars, artists, diplomats and others—to engage with counterparts and audiences here in Berlin, across Germany and across Europe. We work to provide a forum for leading figures from both sides of the Atlantic to engage on the most urgent problems our societies face. Now, in our 25th year, we are dedicated to deepening the political, cultural, and intellectual ties between the United States, Germany and Europe more broadly, and we have built a large and dynamic network of committed individuals across two continents. We take this gathering tonight as a demonstration of the durability of our values and, I hope, the quality and importance of our work.

I would now like to invite to the stage the Chair of the board of trustees of the American Academy in Berlin, Sandra Peterson.

Thank you very much.