

Speech by Ambassador Ammon on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of GERMAN INDUSTRY UK

30 October 2015



Celebrating 40 years of GERMAN INDUSTRY UK

On Thursday evening, Ambassador Ammon, patron of GERMAN INDUSTRY UK, welcomed distinguished guests at a reception celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the organisation. Together with chairman and chief executive, Dr Bernd Atenstaedt they hosted the dinner at the Royal-Over Seas League Club to mark the occasion.

Herr Dr Atenstaedt, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As patron of German Industry UK, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all tonight to this celebration dinner on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

It is an occasion to celebrate the strong business and investment ties that build the solid foundation in the relationship between Germany and the United Kingdom.

German Industry UK is a reliable pillar of support for German business in the UK.

I would like to commend Chairman and CEO Dr Atenstaedt and his team for their excellent work. German Industry UK lends German Business in this country high visibility, a strong voice and efficient lobbying capabilities.

Germany is Britain's biggest trading partner when it comes to trade in goods.

German investment in the UK is second only to the US.

Around 400.000 jobs have been created by German companies, many of them represented here.

This is more than 1 in every 80 jobs in this country.

German companies contribute substantially to strengthening British manufacturing.

Take for instance the car industry.

One in five BMW engines is manufactured here in the UK.

Not just for the British market, but for export – thus strengthening the British export industry.

German companies also contribute strongly to the British economy as a whole with know-how, vocational training programmes and apprenticeships.

For example, Volkswagen-owned Bentley will open a Vocational Training Academy next year in Crewe to give young people opportunities to acquire the skills needed in 21st century manufacturing.

And what could be a more striking symbol of German-British cooperation than Lewis Hamilton's third Formula One World Championship title: won on a Mercedes that was built in Britain.

German Industry UK was founded on 19 May 1975 – three weeks before the UK's first referendum on Europe was held.

This showed quite a bit of optimism on the part of the founding fathers of German Industry UK.

Three weeks later, the people of the United Kingdom decided by a two-thirds majority to stay in the Common Market.

Today we are on the threshold of another referendum that will decide Britain's future in Europe.

Which brings me to the point I would like to make this evening: the risk of a British exit.

The migrant crisis in Europe, the Euro-crisis as well as the crisis in Ukraine – all these crises are very important.

But we run a great risk if we let all our energies be absorbed by these issues.

What worries me most is the question of a possible Brexit, which is very much at the forefront of the debate in this country here.

I am deeply worried that a British exit from the EU – which is not impossible, I am afraid – could be much more damaging than we all can imagine.

Not only could it hurt our economies, which depend on smooth cross-border transactions and compatible technical standards, it would also drastically reduce our political weight in a new global arena.

An implosion of Europe would create a power vacuum in this part of the world at a time when political orders are rapidly failing all around us, where the alternatives quite often are only between dictatorship and chaos.

A British exit could be a mortal blow to the whole project of a stable, prosperous and democratic Europe which is seen as beacon of hope for all those unstable countries around us.

After all, the European Project is at the very heart of the vision for a lasting peace conceived after World War II.

There are many challenges facing our two countries today. Who could be more qualified to give us a German perspective on German-British relations than our keynote speaker tonight, the Head of the Federal Chancellery Peter Altmaier.

Minister Altmaier will give us his views on “Germany and the UK: Common Interests and Joint Challenges”.

His responsibilities did not allow him to come to London today, but we are delighted and very honoured, that Minister Altmaier will address us via videolink.

After his speech, Minister Altmaier has agreed to take a few questions.

Peter Altmaier needs no introduction.

He is one of Chancellor Merkels closest advisors.

A member of the German Bundestag since 1994, he became Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 2005.

In 2012, he became Federal Minister of the Environment and since December 2013 he has been Head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks.

A few weeks ago, he was also given responsibility - in addition to his many other tasks – for the political coordination of refugee policy.

We look forward to his intriguing insights.

Minister, the Floor is yours.

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http://www.uk.diplo.de/Vertretung/unitedkingdom/en/pr/Embassy_Events/10/GIUK-40-Rede.html