

INAUGURATION OF THE „BUDDY BEAR“-EXHIBITION, PYONGYANG, 14 OCTOBER 2008



Mr. Mun Jae Chol, Acting Chairman of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ms. Hong Son Ok, Vice Chairwoman of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Mr. Kim Jong Sik, Vice Chairman of the People's Committee of the City of Pyongyang, Ambassadors and Chargé d'Affaires, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends all,

**"We have to get to know each other
understand each other
trust each other
and live together peacefully."**

Under this motto, the BUDDY BEARS promote tolerance and understanding among different nations, cultures and religions. Since their first exhibition in Berlin in 2002, around 140 Buddy Bears, each more than 2 m tall and designed by an artist on behalf of his or her native country, have travelled the continents and been admired by more than 20 million people world-wide.

Looking at the bears in front of us, two features, in particular, strike me:

First, the bears' diversity: The bears are not only colorful; they are also painted in different styles and different techniques. Some seem more traditional, some seem to represent modern life. There are also bears that make fun of us: the British bear has disguised himself as an Arab sheik, and the Swedish bear has come to this inauguration in his night gown.

The second feature that strikes me is the bears' friendliness. They all smile, and they all seem to want to hold hands. As diverse as they are: they are good friends.

This exhibition originated in Berlin some years ago. The bear is the heraldic animal of the German capital. But the bear has a special meaning also for Korea. Tangun, the legendary founder of your country thousands of years ago, was the son of a woman who formerly had been a bear and who, by the way, must have been extraordinarily beautiful. So we have good feelings towards bears, in Korea as well as in Germany. With this exhibition, we jointly celebrate the national days of our two countries, the Korean Ninth of September, and the German Third of October.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me finish by expressing my sincere thanks to our partners in organizing this exhibition. First of all, I thank the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in particular the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture as well as the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries; I thank the People's Committee of the City of Pyongyang, my own ministry, the German Foreign Office, the United Buddy Bears organization in Berlin whose heart and soul, Mr. and Mrs. Herlitz, are here with us, I thank our logistics partners in Germany, Schenker and Hamburg Süd, and all the others that have contributed to the realization of this exhibition.

May the bears delight the inhabitants of Pyongyang!
And may the world be a little bit like these bears: diverse but friendly!