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Dr. Wolfgang Maaß, Präsident der IHK Gießen-Friedberg

Welcome Address:

**„Die saudi-arabische
Fußballnationalmannschaft zu Gast in Bad
Nauheim – Anstoß für die Wirtschaft“,
30. Mai 2006 um 16:00 Uhr**

**Dear Mr. AL DABAL,
Distinguished guests from Saudi Arabia,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,**

It is my privilege and pleasure to say a few words of welcome on behalf of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Central Hesse.

Mr. AL DABAL, we are honoured by your presence. All of us are curious about your key-note-address, and would appreciate, if the timetable of you and your fellow delegation members allows you to join the business reception commencing around 6 p.m.

We enjoy the hospitality of the City of Bad Nauheim in this historic building “Trinkkuranlage”. Not just for today, the City is a long-term supporter of the work of the IHKs. We address our profound gratitude to the Mayor, Mr. Witzel.

A warm welcome goes to the Deputy Chairman of the German Near and Middle East Association, Mr. Stier. For more than 70 years, your Business Association has been involved in fostering foreign trade and investment with the countries you cover. We are pleased to have with us such a distinguished German partner of the Arab world.

In this context we are delighted to welcome another expert on Saudi Arabia: Mr. Grau from the German Office for Foreign Trade (bfai), who will also speak to you later on.

Through the fruitful association to those institutions as well as to the German Saudi Arabian Liaison Office for Economic Affairs in Riyadh (AHK) we could organize this event.

The speeches are going to provide us with information about business opportunities and perspectives in Saudi Arabia. Opportunities to talk and to do some networking will be provided during the business reception. We are grateful for the valuable support from Mr. Benirschke of HypoVereinsbank. Thank you for the good cooperation we enjoy having with you.

And I am happy that **Mr. Weinzetler**, Chairman of our IHK-foreign trade committee, has been able to be today our master of ceremonies. We are proud of the fact, that in the IHKs the companies are direct members and in the driving seat. They engage themselves in the boards and steering committees of the IHKs. If you are interested in the work of the foreign trade committee, please contact Mr. Malzacher.

Mr. AL DABAL, when our football teams last met during the World Cup 2002 – I do not want to recall the particular result again –, it turned out to be the beginning of some unexpected successful weeks in Korea and Japan for our German team. This time your country is in a group together with Spain, Ukraine and Tunisia. When I consider all three opponents, and furthermore remember the comfortable way Saudi Arabia booked their ticket to Germany in the preliminary group stage – I believe that staying for more than two weeks in beautiful Bad Nauheim is not a mission impossible.

In qualification you went undefeated through 12 qualifiers and beat the 2002 semi-finalists Korea both home and away. You won your Asian qualifying group and entered your fourth consecutive World Cup finals. It seems to me, that you are well prepared when the serious business will start in ten days. Maybe you are going to turn out to be the Greeks of this World Cup and stay until July in Bad Nauheim.

However, today it is not about the fixture Saudi Arabia against Germany in football, but about what Saudi Arabia and Germany can achieve in their business relations.

The goal of this event is *on the one hand* to gather the regional business community and promote the business location to our Saudi Arabian guests. As you may know in Central Hesse we have 65.000 enterprises. Many of them have foreign background. The investment-friendly relocation and formation costs and streamlined government administration make Central Hesse attractive for investments. The Frankfurt RheinMain metropolitan region is one of the fastest growing regions in Europe.

On the other hand we want to provide first-hand information about the Saudi-Arabian market. Saudi Arabia has emerged as one of the wealthiest nations in the Middle East and has much more in stock than vast oil resources. By today's speeches we hope to offer our German audience some hints about trade and investment opportunities. Saudi Arabia plays a vital and even increasing role in the Middle East, and there should be a larger role for the German private sector too. Realizing this is up to your entrepreneurial spirit, your application of innovation and creativity and the way you grasp the Saudi-Arabian market.

Nowadays one out of three jobs in Germany depends on foreign trade. A flourishing foreign trade can be the driving

force for economic growth at home. We are pushing hard by the means of DIHK, not only in Berlin but through the EU, to promote free and fair trade - opening up more world markets - breaking down barriers. Our prosperity is hugely dependent on international trade and investment. I urge all of you in the business community to see that opportunities in Saudi Arabia are realized.

I would like to close my remarks by thanking you, Mr. AL DABAL, and the Saudi Arabian Football Federation once again for having accepted our invitation. Welcome to Central Hesse! I wish you a pleasant and long stay in Bad Nauheim - this stay should last at least as long as I can possibly wish you as a supporter of the German team. In any case we want to kick off business ideas and business links by today's forum that should last beyond the maximum of four World-Cup-weeks.

I thank you for your attention.

Bad Nauheim,

Tuesday, 30th May 2006.

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