

# NUMOV German Near and Middle East Gala Event 2013

*Sustaining the strong and trusting relations between Germany and its partners in the Near and Middle East*

by Marie-Catherine Chevalier

On 3rd June 2013, the German Near and Middle East Gala Event took place within the premises of the Deutsche Bank in the heart of Berlin's city centre, celebrating the long-standing economic collaboration between the Near and Middle East and the Federal Republic of Germany. For nearly eight decades, NUMOV, the German Near and Middle East Association, has successfully supported the bilateral business activities between Germany and the countries of the Near and Middle East.

To this end, the Gala Event hosted dignitaries from the Near and Middle East countries and from Germany, all of whom were eager to deepen relationships and business activities. In a warm and friendly atmosphere, the gala was an occasion to meet key players from the Near and Middle East's economic sphere who work with perseverance and the willingness to build true partnerships.

**H.E. Gerhard Schröder**, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and NUMOV's honorary chairman, honoured the ceremony with his presence and held the first speech of the evening. Firstly, he mentioned some changes which have taken place concerning the board of NUMOV, in particular the election of a new chairman.





He thanked **Bernd Romanski**, former Chairman of NUMOV, for his significant contribution to strengthening relations between Germany and the Near and Middle East. Having served on the board for more than 14 years, Bern Romanski will continue his commitment to NUMOV as Deputy Chairman.

Subsequently, H.E. Gerhard Schröder greeted Bernd Romanski's successor, **Dr. Rainer Seele**, Chairman of the Board of Wintershall.

H.E. Gerhard Schröder pointed out the turbulent times in which this year's gala event was taking place, with the world witnessing historical changes in many countries of the Arab world. These shifts, according to H.E. Gerhard Schröder, carry some risks and are having a political and economic effect on Europe.

He thus called on Germany, as a neighbour of the Middle East, to encourage and to support stability in the region. "We are touched by the suffering, oppression and hundreds of thousands of people seeking refuge in the region" he said, adding that "Europe's task in this phase is to help freedom, stability and security to succeed".

Next, H.E. Gerhard Schröder addressed a number of issues in the Middle East which require Germany's concern, such as the developing of infrastructure, offering young people the growth of economic infrastructure and ensuring social and economic progress. He also invited the countries of the region to increase their emphasis on foreign direct investments in order to attract international business and strengthen the private sector.

Finally, he reminded the audience that Germany, well-known for high quality and innovative technologies, remains as committed as ever to promoting growth, cooperation and prosperity in the Near and Middle East.

Thereafter, the new chairman of NUMOV, Dr. Rainer Seele, spoke and expressed his gratitude to H.E. Gerhard Schröder, as well as his predecessor, Bernd Romanski. He emphasised that NUMOV is Germany's oldest and largest

organisation that supports bilateral relations with the region of the Near and Middle East. Dr. Rainer Seele stated his eagerness to take on the responsibilities that the chairmanship of NUMOV entails.

He underlined the great significance of long-lasting relationships in order to succeed in business and political projects. "It is the personal relationships; it is personal understanding and trust that made shared projects a success. Whether in business or politics, you always need a common rule. The relations between Germany and the Near and Middle East need evenings like this one. They need a platform like NUMOV."

As Chairman of the Board of Wintershall, he spoke about his experience in the Near and Middle East and gave the example of the company's investment in Libya. Since 1958, Wintershall has employed local staff and is therefore firmly rooted in the country's society. Indeed, it was able to restart production immediately after the uprising in 2011 as the local employees of Wintershall and the local communities protected the company's facilities.

He also mentioned the natural gas field which was discovered by Wintershall in Qatar – one of the first major discoveries over the last four decades and important news concerning the cooperation between Germany and the Gulf Region. The discovery reflects the need for bilateral relationships as Germany relies on the secure supply of oil and gas, and can in turn provide technology and know-how. Dr. Rainer Seele stressed the importance of cooperation and the time it requires to strengthen the ties shared with the countries of the Near and Middle East.

As he said, "together we can achieve more, we can multiply success for our companies, but what is more important, also for our societies". This was certainly the goal of the German Near and Middle East Gala Event: one more step towards a long-term partnership based on trust and commitment. The formation of the German Middle East Association took place in Berlin 79 years ago. The





most valuable extension to NUMOV was without doubt the founding of the German Orient-Foundation in 1960, under the auspices of which the German Orient-Institute was established. Ever since its foundation, the German Orient-Institute has been amongst the top non-governmental institutions in Germany that has dealt with the academic study of the Near and Middle Eastern region.

The German Orient-Foundation was inaugurated in 1960. The principal objectives of the German Orient Foundation are the fostering and consolidation of the relations between Germany and the MENA countries. This is done so with a particular emphasis on the arts, science and contemporary issues.

Amongst the board members were renowned businessmen, diplomats and academics, who all in their individual way had long-standing experience with the Near and Middle East. Up to this day the board of the German Orient-Foundation is staffed by members of the highest professional calibre.

Throughout its history, NUMOV has always provided up-to-date and useful information about business opportunities. Bringing together leading business executives with years of experience in completely different fields, the NUMOV committees have proven to be an excellent forum to exchange foreign trade knowledge. Indeed, on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2006, the Honorary Chairmanship was handed over to H.E. Gerhard Schröder. He was the first German Chancellor to visit seven Arab countries, on a Gulf tour in 2005, where he was accompanied by a seventy-member economic delegation. This tour attracted huge interest from German companies looking to boost their activities in the Middle East.

The history of the German Near and Middle East Association has been marked by a wide range of activities aimed at promoting German foreign trade and investment in the Near and Middle East. Over the decades, the association has proven to be an enduring and effective competitor in the information and consulting market.