

**Speech by Lord Mayor Fritz Schramma,  
held at the 1<sup>st</sup> “Cologne Latin America Symposium” on 17 October 2005, 9am,  
at the University of Cologne, Main Building, New Senate’s Chamber  
(Check against delivery)**

Dear Rector Prof. Freimuth,  
Dear Prof. Foders,  
Dear Prof. della Paolera

I am extremely pleased with the joint initiative of *connosco* and the Department of Political Economy of the University of Cologne to organize the Cologne Latin America Symposium and wish to welcome you here in the cathedral city. Events like this one serve to strengthen ties between Cologne and Latin America and this, I am sure, is advantageous for both sides.

Our relations with the Ibero-American continent are manifold. Professor Freimuth has already portrayed the scientific exchange and the outstanding position of Cologne as research location.

As Lord Mayor, I am both glad and proud of our academic capacities.

Apart from the scientific activities, some 2,600 local residents of Latin American extraction and the Spanish-speaking parish of Great St. Martin both contribute to further deepen the relationship between Cologne and Latin America. Furthermore, we often welcome guests from Latin America in Cologne. Thus, twelve mayors from Argentina and Mexico visited us in the past year. Renowned personalities such as Ernesto Cardenal or Pelé have come to Cologne. The Bonn-based Latin America Center that through its vice-president has an important representative in Cologne plays a prominent role in intensifying the relationship. Of special relevance are our partnerships with Corinto and El Realejo in Nicaragua.

A Cologne City council delegation went there this summer to gather information on the progress of three computer projects that were funded by the City of Cologne. The stay provided the opportunity to further deepen the long-standing amicable contacts.

Many cultural events introduce Latin American atmosphere to Cologne, for example the Festival Cultural Iberoafroamericano or the many concert and dance evenings of Salsatecas in our city. During my travels through Chile, Brazil, and Mexico in 2001 and 2002, I was able to experience this feeling first-hand. The culture of Latin America is extremely fascinating for people from Cologne. I believe that this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that we are quite familiar with carnival and Latin American joy of living.

Apart from these – let me call them “soft” factors – economic relations are important as well.

In this context, allow me to say something about *connosco*. This is indeed a unique organization. At cost – that is on a voluntary basis – students invest both their expertise and abilities with the objective of fostering economic relations with China, Latin America, Spain and Portugal. And they are obviously successful. Their activities allow the students to gain valuable experience and I am sure this commitment will pay off later on. We can only hope for more student initiatives of this kind. I would like to take this opportunity and congratulate you on your work, ladies and gentlemen.

Regarding our economic relations with Latin America, the current situation offers a wealth of opportunities that are far from being fully exploited. According to estimates by the Cologne Chamber of Commerce and Industry, approximately 1,000 companies in the region export into or import from Latin American countries. Main emphasis is clearly Brazil.

Among Cologne companies that are active in Latin America, small businesses with two or three employees are represented to the same extent as large ones with 10,000 staff and more. The individual sectors are quite diverse as well. They comprise lumber trade, tourism, music industry, automobile and chemical manufacturers, biotechnology and much more. In addition, Latin American countries constitute an extremely interesting market for KölnMesse, the Cologne trade show organizer.

As you will surely realize, we are currently marketing Cologne as a destination for Brazilian football fans of the 2006 World Cup. Early this September, my deputy Ms. Spizig headed a delegation to Brazil with the objective of promoting Cologne. We have already successfully won over 3,000 Brazilian fans for Cologne and we will try to double this figure.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Heinrich Böll, Nobel Prize laureate and our honorary citizen, already decried the economic structures in Latin America and the poverty of so-called "ordinary people", who for him were truly great, and emphasized our responsibility for their situation. I believe that not very much has changed since then. Even if many countries in Latin America demonstrate higher economic growth rates, only few generally profit from this development. Consequently, the much cited globalization needs to be shaped in a way that it not only improves the macroeconomic data of poorer nations, but helps marginalized people in Latin America reap the benefits too.

I would like to express my deepest condolence to the people victimized by the torrential rainfalls and landslides in Guatemala, El Salvador and the bordering regions to Mexico. Above all the poor are affected by these natural catastrophes as they occur time and again in Latin America. I sincerely hope that the survivors will find fast and efficient aid.

I think that concerning the economic future of Latin America not liberalism or socialism but rather a social market economy with its different characteristic attributes offers a sustainable approach.

It is my strong conviction that long-term economic progress can only be ensured if many, if possible all, can profit from it. Otherwise costs of civil wars, violence, corruption, drug production and other factors will continue to increase, thus eroding all economic success.

Therefore, I believe that the issue you will address during this symposium is essential for the further development of Latin America. And it is essential for our relations to Latin America, not only for economic but also for ethical reasons.

I hence wish your symposium every success.

May you have a fruitful and intensive exchange with good impulses and ideas and may these ideas come to fruition.