

**Rede von Oberbürgermeisterin Henriette Reker anlässlich
des Empfangs für seine Exzellenz Botschafter Khaled Galal
Abdelhamid am 23. Januar 2023 im Muschelsaal**

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Dear Excellency,
dear guests,

let me express my warm welcome to the historic town hall of Cologne. In Cologne we are proud of our history as a medieval center for culture, religion, trade and commerce. The Rhine river really provided our city the potential to grow. I feel like this is something that connects Egypt and Cologne. We have profited greatly from our respective rivers – the Nile and the Rhine. However I wisely won't compare Cologne's history with the 6,000 years of cultural history in Egypt that has greatly affected the course of the world even up to our times.

Your Excellency, I very much welcome your visit today. Given the current state of international affairs, it is fair to say that international cooperation never has been more important as it is today. As I can see that Egypt is of course following its own interests and I respect that many countries in the region are walking a tight rope on Ukraine, please allow me to say that I think that our interests in fact do align on most matters, including Ukraine.

Egypt and Germany are both countries that benefit to great extent from global stability. We both enjoy the benefits of an interconnected world where trade remains free, where people are free to travel. Cologne and Egypt alike depend strongly on tourism.

In a globalised world, we share the same challenges. First and foremost we need to address the global climate crisis. In Cologne, we already feel the impact of global warming and I know that this issue has been at the top of your government's agenda hosting the 2022 COP 27 Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh. A representative of our city, deputy mayor Wolter, took part. I am hopeful that Germany and Egypt already work closely together investing into a shared future based on the reduction of carbon emissions.

I believe by working together towards a shared future, we cannot tolerate international order, peace and freedom being taken hostage by Russian aggression. Our shared response should be to make it abundantly clear that such actions as the terrible Dnipro attack has no place in the 21st century. A shared future can only materialise if we enhance cooperation and give renewed attention to democratic values and standards at home and abroad.

Your Excellency, thank you again for coming to Cologne today. A little known fact is that Cologne's patron St. Gereon is

believed to be a roman soldier from Egypt. He was an early christian and therefore executed by his roman legion that was on duty in this area in the year 304. His body was thrown into a well on top of which Helena, the later wife of Roman Emperor Konstantin built a church, St. Gereon. In 1950, archeologists found an altar devoted to the ancient egyptian goddess of Isis underneath St. Gereon. It can be visited today. So I will conclude my remarks with this small item of early global history, which I hope you found interesting.

I now would like to ask your Excellency to sign our city's guest book in order to commemorate the visit. Afterwards I look forward to your remarks.