

**A service of celebration to mark the retirement of Professor Dr h. c. Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2021, and subsequent words of greeting**

Words of greeting: Dr. Gerd Müller, Federal Minister for Economic Co-operation and Development

Dear Professor Dr. Füllkrug-Weitzel,

Dear guests,

For 20 years, you have led the largest Protestant aid agency in Europe with great success, much idealism and many creative ideas. You are, and will remain, an energetic fighter and voice: a voice for the poor and the disadvantaged.

And I would like to express my personal gratitude to you – for your outstanding co-operation. Through your commitment, you have been a real inspiration to me.

We have, indeed, surmounted several summits together – literally! I recall, when, in February 2015, you sent out invitations in preparation for four upcoming summits: the G7 summit in Elmau, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda (New York) and the Climate Summit in Paris. These summits helped the world move forward, and it is up to us, now, to change it – by implementing the resolutions of these summits. In fact, each of these summits have proven to be milestones and defining moments for the multilateralism that you have always fought for and advocated. Successes, to which civil society and the churches have largely contributed. Brot für die Welt with its partners throughout the world; have given a voice to those, who have suffered for so long already from the effects of climate change.

Dear Mrs Füllkrug-Weitzel, you lead the way, and always have done. Your exceptional virtues are something we all know so well and appreciate: your tireless commitment to those, who are especially disadvantaged and needy in all corners of the world; an unshakable sense of justice, empathy and the conviction to live and uphold Christian charity, exhibit ethical values, attentiveness, compassion and humanitarian regard for others – as you, yourself, expressed it. And you are also not afraid of arguing your point, when, out of a sense of conviction, you believe it is of vital importance. Something I remember, and something for which I am also grateful, was when you publicly declared that the BMWI (Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy) was actively blocking the Supply Chain Act. The Ministry immediately issued a denial. As Federal Minister for Economic Co-operation and Development, it is not something I, myself, would deny. This demonstrates, firstly, that your voice is, indeed, heard and, secondly, that you are taken seriously. For this, specifically, I am all the more grateful to you for your support of the Supply Chain Act. Both of us – you, Brot für die Welt and so many fellow campaigners in civil society have been fighting for this Act, because it stands for the prohibition of child labour and the realisation of human rights. Unfortunately, it currently remains a fiercely contested issue. Thank you so much for your commitment and support.

Your accomplishment: you are able to rally support against the short-sightedness that is prevalent in many areas today. Your credo has always been: if sustainability is to be the guiding principle of political action, it is, therefore, imperative that the entire cabinet works together. And sustainability must be our global guiding principle. I have greatly appreciated working with you, because, for us politicians, you have been a valuable dialogue partner: open, unambiguous, competent. Yes, you would surely have also been a good politician and a good government minister, too. At the same time, though, you are close to the people, for whom you travelled to the world's most remote regions on behalf of Brot für die Welt. To the places, where the need and misery are greatest, in the refugee camps and crisis regions.

As a government minister, I have supported your work and that of the church and church aid agencies to the best of my ability. This is important to me at a personal level. And, thus, we were able

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together – it is only possible together, and never the achievement of one individual – to strengthen church-state co-operation and, thereby, the promotion of the valuable work of the churches. Because we knew that the funds allocated would reach precisely where and whom it had to reach: the poorest of the poor. We are aware of, and value, the networks and the many people in the church aid agencies, who are active on the ground.

Yes, the BMZ is turning 60 this year and, for 59 years, in other words from the very beginning, we have been working in co-operation with the main Christian churches. And you, dear Mrs Füllkrug-Weitzel, have made a major contribution to this success story. At the celebrations marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brot für die Welt in the Deutsches Theater in Berlin in 2018 –a magnificent event, which I was honoured to attend – you set the headline “Hunger for Justice”. What a challenging proposition. And today, more relevant than ever. Because Corona has deprived 300 million people of work and forced a further 130 million – probably many more, I fear – into extreme poverty and hunger. And the worst affected: families, children and women throughout the world. Nevertheless, I maintain that a world without hunger is possible. We only have to want it enough. What is absent, though, is decisive, global political will. And I wish that the world today would, at last, submit to that shake up that Helmut Gollwitzer called for in 1959.

We are currently united by the call for global solidarity and vaccine justice. Yes, and I suspect – more than I actually know – that you will not really just retire and put your feet up. And one thing I ask of you: please continue to speak out; continue to be involved and combative, and making your voice heard. Incidentally, this message was recorded on 12<sup>th</sup> May and I want to take the opportunity to offer you my heartfelt congratulations on your birthday. And I would like to express my gratitude, respect and appreciation for your many years of beneficent work as President of Brot für die Welt.

I wish you all the best, good health, God's blessing, much vitality and courage.

With thanks and appreciation for your life's work, Gerd Müller.