

**Speech by Juergen Boos
Director of the Frankfurt Book Fair
Opening Press Conference of the Frankfurt Book Fair
14 October 2008**

**Frankfurt Book Fair Cinema, Forum Level 0
Blocking period until 14 October 2008, 11.00 a.m.
The spoken word is golden.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear Colleagues,

In its 60th anniversary year, the Frankfurt Book Fair is well on course for success. As we speak, around 7,400 exhibitors (7,373 to be precise) are busy setting up their stands, ready for the doors to open tomorrow morning – a similar number to the record year in 2007. In total, we have rented out 1.4 per cent more space. Particularly satisfying is the higher-than-average two percent growth among the Anglo-Saxon exhibitors – this was not something we could take for granted, but was the result of much hard work. With 3,337 stands, German exhibitors form the largest group. They are followed by the British with 834 and the USA with 662.

The book sector follows its own rules, even in the face of the international financial crisis. This has been demonstrated by a survey of the heads of German publishing houses, which the Book Fair recently carried out in cooperation with the magazine “buchreport”. Although there were almost as many pessimists as optimists among the respondents, the majority opinion was that the business situation for publishers would remain consistent. Books seem to be resistant to economic cycles of boom and bust – which underscores the fact that they are not luxuries, but necessities.

We are just about to experience the five days of the Fair, involving exhibitors from 100 countries and an intensive programme of over 400 events for professionals, more than half of which address the subject of digitisation. For example, at tomorrow’s CEO Roundtable, publishers from India, Australia and the USA will discuss the future of educational publishing; while immediately after this press conference, some 300 international and German rights managers will share their professional experiences at the International Rights Directors Meeting. At Saturday’s party for exhibitors, some 3,000 “book people” – ranging from Frankfurt or Cape Town publishers to printers from India – will celebrate our anniversary.

The Book Fair began in 1949 in order to meet the need for a platform and an international network. Already by 1953, more of the approximately 1,000 exhibitors came from abroad than from Germany. Today, Frankfurt is the largest international book fair in the world. Those were days of division between East and West; it took battles and subterfuge to get countries such as Albania – isolated from both the East and the West – to the Fair. Today, there are connecting lines that span the whole globe: fibre-optic cables are now being laid in the Indian Ocean to reach East Africa, and Google is about to buy a satellite system to provide broadband internet access to developing countries and so meet the needs of the added billions of internet users which the OECD has predicted.

This incredible growth in speed corresponds with the growth in opportunities for rights usage. This is made clear here at the Fair. The area taken up by the Digital Market Place in Hall 4.2 has expanded by a third, while the Literary Agents & Scouts Centre (LitAg) has seen growth of five percent. And this year, once again, exciting potential film deals will be negotiated in the Forum Film & TV. An international industry survey which we have just completed, involving 1,000 members of the book sector from 30 countries, has shown that there is strong demand among international publishers for networks with new partners. Foremost among these is the telecommunications industry, followed by film, music and games.

People often ask me: “What does the Director of the Book Fair actually do – all year round?” Put simply, I am a networker. Throughout the year, the team of the Frankfurt Book Fair does the kind of thing that Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing do – we build up networks in readiness for these five days at the Fair. To prepare for the first ever biennial theme at the Book Fair in 1976, my predecessor, Peter Weidhaas, needed three weeks of travelling. In this globalised world, in the space of just four days, my team and I can attend the opening of our new German Book Office in New Delhi, then visit the international book fair in Tianjin to discuss the appearance of China as Guest of Honour. In South Africa the following day, we can meet our cooperation partners, the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA), to plan the up-coming Cape Town Book Fair, and then, back in Frankfurt again, finalise arrangements with our current Guest of Honour, Turkey.

The result of this networking, which is being driven by many partners and personalities from around the world, you will be able to see tomorrow: the Guest of Honour, Turkey, is represented by more than 150 publishers in Hall 5.0, and more than 400 events about Turkey are taking place. China, Guest of Honour in 2009, has

already found a place for itself at the Fair, with events on new Chinese lyrical poetry as well as the new, independent publishing scene which, together with the internet, has begun to compete with the state-owned publishing houses. German members of the book sector can acquire first hand knowledge of India as a future market, and of the Cape Town Book Fair. The Instituto Cervantes, with whom we have just entered a partnership, will establish a focal area on Spanish literature and thereby also strengthen the position of Latin American countries at the Fair. Peru is at the Fair for the first time this year, and Argentina, the Guest of Honour in 2010, has expanded its presence considerably.

For a long time, the Frankfurt Book Fair has been a content-oriented fair. Now, about 42 percent of exhibited products are books, while 30 percent are digital. With the latest generation of e-readers, digitisation has reached the mainstream publishers for the first time. At the new stand "Books and Bytes" in Hall 3.0 – at the centre of the area occupied by German publishers – you can see for the first time how the marriage between creative fiction and the fast digital world really looks.

At the heart of the Book Fair network is the work of the authors – expressed in legal terms, this is the product of an intellectual process. The fact that the book industry around the world is the strongest of all the culturally-based industries is due in large part to a lot of work. And the same word "work" – derived from the Greek, "ergon" – is also used to refer to an author's product. After the intellectual work of the authors comes the work of the intermediaries in the value chain. As a networker, it is the task of the Book Fair to promote international standards which protect this intellectual work. Trust can only grow in any business relationship, especially in the international context, if it is conducted along well regulated paths, according to models of best practice. For this, personal contacts are essential. And so, too, is the acceptance of common rules which, taken together, form a safety net.

The question of how the work – the product of the intellectual work – can be both protected and utilised dominates the Book Fair, from the events organised by the International Publishers Association ("Piracy on the Net"), to the Supply Chain Conference for the European Area and the Rights Directors Meeting, which I've already mentioned.

The book industry around the world feels fit to face the challenges of digitisation. However, no one knows where the journey will lead. Speed has always seemed to be the key to the digital world – don't move too fast, and jump prematurely into crude technology, but don't move too slowly either. Sten Nadolny described this attitude in

his novel, "The Discovery of Slowness": "You could do the right thing, yet it was always possible that everyone else would think it the wrong thing. And they might even be right." Finding orientation in the international market, catching your breath and taking stock during this sprinting race, talking to the right people: the Book Fair is the right place for all these things.

The notion that a free exchange of ideas is only possible within a protected space applies not only to the literary work as a product of intellectual effort. The 13 hall levels of the Book Fair also represent a space for social and political debate and free expression. Already in Luther's day there was really only one reason why the publishers and printers came to Frankfurt, rolling their "book barrels" in from all points of the compass: the political discussions held at the Book Fair were feared by the authorities, but were adored by the intellectuals. In 2008, too, political subjects will dominate the Fair, from climate change and European Islam to the future of the South American continent. Not only Guest of Honour Turkey, but also Central and Eastern Europe and the continent of Africa are the subject of separate focal themes in the Forum Dialogue and the International Centre. The names Orhan Pamuk, Alaa al-Aswani, Kiran Nagarkar, Zafer Senocak and Yuri Andruchovysh all stand for the political dimension of literature at its best. With its core theme of "Education for the Future", in 2008 the Book Fair is again highlighting the topics of literacy and media competence.

As shown by the survey we conducted jointly with the magazine "buchreport", suspense and fantasy are the mainstay of German fiction. Suspense and fantasy are what I also wish us for the next five days. At the Fair you can see authors such as Günter Grass and Orhan Pamuk, Ilija Trojanow and Peter Härtling, politicians like Gilberto Gil or Michail Gorbachev, and actors such as Katja Riemann and Mario Adorf. Go and discover the colourful variety of our Guest of Honour, Turkey, from its authors such as Perihan Magden and Elif Safak, to its contemporary dance and music scenes. As part of Turkey's Guest of Honour presentation, the exhibition "Palimpsest Reclaimed" – one level above this, in the Forum – provides a good introduction to the history of Turkish literature as well as today's scene. After this press conference, there will be a short tour of the Guest of Honour presentation for the press.

I wish you all a good fair. Many thanks for your attention.