

Is Germany Punching Below it's Weight?

On Monday the 31st of October 2016, Utah Valley University had the awesome opportunity to hear from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN, Ambassador Harald Braun. Envoy of Germany to the UN enlightened us on many different topics as far as international relations. The majority of his lecture was him talking about Germany and the type of state that the country is in. Everyone there learned a lot about the UN's plans for these next years, and what they're going to focus on.



Ambassador Harald Braun at UVU

The ambassador started by talking about his responsibilities in the UN and what his job is and how he interacts with his other members of the United States. He then reassured us that even though Utah is 2,000 miles away from New York and even further from Germany, the issues that they deal with there and what we deal with here, are very similar. How everything that happens all over the world affects every country in the surrounding area. He told us that he would be speaking for 20-30 minutes and then he wanted to answer our questions and that we should be thinking of things that we wanted to ask him.

The ambassador started by giving a brief overview of the history of Germany. He went over things like the rise and the fall of the Berlin wall, the cold war and how it affected them, both world wars, and of course how Germany ended up being in the United Nations. I learned that they joined the United Nations back they were East and West Germany. He mentioned that first peace-keeping mission that East Germany participated in during 1931. He said that Germany continues to try and not only try to send military contingents when it comes to keeping the peace. That Germany always tries to maintain the peace domestically, using political leaders and regular citizens. He said that he believes that the world needs countries

like Germany that have the resources and are able to help repair the defaults that are present all over the world. Countries with strong democracies and strong members of their country. The first question that he posed was, "Is Germany punching below its weight?" I thought that was interesting because i've never really heard that Germany is having issues or that other countries might be feeling that they aren't performing the way they should. He then continued to almost "talk up" Germany to all of us and try to help us understand that Germany really was able to help out and pull it's own weight. I thought it was a very interesting approach to take, I almost felt like he was trying to convince us of how good of a country Germany is. It almost felt like he was presenting Germany's resume to us. He said that in the area of peace and security that Germany is a solid contributor as far as budget. They are the 4th biggest contributor to the United Nations as far as the peace keeping budget. They contribute just over 500 million U.S. dollars to the budget. Apparently the peace keeping budget for the United Nations is even bigger than it's regular budget.



During his presentation VIP guest pointed out Dr. Rusty Butler, former Associate Vice President for International Affairs and Diplomacy at UVU in the audience who had a button on his jacket with seventeen colors. Ambassador Braun said that those colors represented the seventeen sustainable developmental goals that have been put forth by the United Nations and that those will outline their next fifteen years as far as their focuses. He said that Germany will be able to help the UN with that by using their multiple locations that are employed by the United Nations in Germany. There are many judges that live in Germany as well. One of them won an award for sustainability programs and is very highly admonished for that.

Ambassador Brauns' third and final part really drove home his beginning point of whether Germany was punching below his weight, after which he answered questions. To be honest, after listening I didn't feel at all like Germany wasn't doing all that it could. If what the Ambassador said was true, it definitely seems like they pull their own weight and do

everything they can to contribute to world peace and the other goals made by the United Nations. Overall it was a great lecture. I enjoyed it and learned a lot.

Max Taylor, UVU Student