

## PRESS RELEASE

### Prize of Peace of Westphalia 2012

#### Former Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt

**Münster/Westphalia, 22 September 2012** : Helmut Schmidt was Germany's fifth Chancellor from 1974 to 1982, having previously held the offices of Federal Minister of Defense and Federal Minister of Finance, among others. Today, at the age of 93, the "elder statesman" is considered one of the most popular and respected Germans, who is held in high regard both nationally and internationally.

Schmidt was born in Hamburg in 1918. Influenced by his experiences as a soldier in the Second World War, he regarded the liberation of the Germans from National Socialism as a mission. He became involved in the Social Democratic Party as early as 1945. Schmidt gained popularity and a high reputation in 1962 as a young Senator of the Interior during the flood disaster in Hamburg. His time in office as Federal Chancellor was also marked by major challenges: the global economic recession and the oil crises in the 1970s and, in particular, the terror of the RAF.

During the so-called "German Autumn", Schmidt made a name for himself as a courageous crisis manager. His consistent stance on the issue of rearmament and his commitment to the NATO Dual-Track Decision contributed to the end of the Cold War.

Helmut Schmidt earned his merits above all as the architect of a peacefully united Europe. Together with French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing - who was already honored with the Peace of Westphalia Prize in 2006 - he set the course for European integration. For example, the European Council was established shortly after he took office as Federal Chancellor. Together with Giscard d'Estaing, Schmidt also initiated the introduction of the European Monetary System and the European Currency Unit (ECU) in 1979, which later gave rise to the European Economic and Monetary Union and the euro. Together with Giscard d'Estaing, Schmidt also launched the World Economic Summit in 1975.

Even decades after his retirement from active politics, Schmidt continues to make passionate pleas for Europe. "The common public good of the European nations must be the maxim of our own actions," he declared in 2011.