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Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the year 2016, I had the honorable task to serve as head judge to the WUSV World Championship in Meppen (Germany), and would like to use this opportunity to give thanks to the WUSV Board of Directors for the appointment.

The Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde (SV) e.V. in Germany – the mother country of the breed – was host to the 29th WUSV World Championship. The venue, the *Hänsch-Stadium* in Meppen, as chosen by the local organization team – the national group WATERKANT – was predestined since it turned out to be the perfect choice for events in the field of high performance dogs sport. A dog friendly city council and the local sports club of Meppen supported the event in every possible way.

As already in the years before, the personnel requirements were huge again. We are especially grateful to Messrs Heinz und Michael Gerdes – the management of the organizational team who closely cooperated with the managing director of the SV, Mr. Hartmut Setecki. A huge team of volunteer helpers ensured that the event turned into a special experience to which both the international guests and participants from all over the world will happily think back to. The broad feedback – both in written and word by mouth – are proof of the success of the event.

Prior to the competition activities of the WUSV World Championship 2016 the animals were subjected to a veterinary check-up and the dogs were tested for their impartiality. All dogs had to pass the "table-jumping" exercise. The check-up and character based testing of the dogs by a veterinary doctor and the head judge all in all earned a positive feedback and should be continued at future events. Except for one animal, all dogs left an excellent general impression and showed good social behavior. They were open-minded and of positive conduct and expression.

Throughout the event the highly qualified teams presented the high level of training and qualification that for sure differs on such an occasion owing to the particular demands and environment of the competition. But once again the WUSV could prove the positive aspects of the training of the German Shepherd breed as a service and utility dog in a very impressing fashion.

High performance competitive dog sports and breeding requires good team players and challenges trainers and dogs alike. And the vast majority of dogs we saw clearly enjoyed what they were doing, and radiated true enthusiasm while performing. This is certainly the result of training methods based on partnership, fair, and highly motivating cooperation of dogs and handlers. The performances shown were top-class and in strict compliance with animal welfare laws. It requires a combination out of diligence, communication, concentration, stamina and mutual understanding to make the outstanding performances shown possible.

The number of international participants has increased over the last couple of years and developed into the desired direction. Many nations could improve their standards and performances. Nowadays, it can no longer be considered a given fact that certain nations will potentially present the top-ranking performers. Diligence and an open-minded approach paid off nicely for those who aimed at improved results and standards.

The trial judges in 2016 were Hans Graf for section A from Switzerland, Haruo Masuda for section B from Japan, and Toine Jonkers for section C from the Netherlands. All three of them offered impeccable work in perfect compliance with the examination regulations. Their judgement was conclusive and significant.

Also, the helpers worked perfectly and in an absolutely uniform fashion from the first to the final starter. And of course, praise is also due to Peter Mayerl from Austria, and to his entire team of tracklayers.

Many thanks, my respect and congratulations to the dog handlers, the top performers and the well-deserved winner from the Czech Republic.

Thank you to the SV in Germany for this impressive event. May the spirit of the WUSV carry on into a bright future.

Günther Diegel, Head Judge 2016