I am Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress and Chairman of the Commission for Art Recovery. I want to begin with my deepest apologies for not being there in person with all of you. But due to a previous and unavoidable commitment, I am afraid the best I can do is this video message.

First I want to thank Minister Grütters, the German Government and the museum for the opportunity to convey my thoughts to all of you. I will admit at the outset: I was deeply sceptical about this exhibition from the very start. And after some early difficulties with this exhibit I was even more concerned that putting the Gurlitt Collection on display was the right decision. For many decades, everyone in the art world knew who Gurlitt's father was, what he did, and how he managed this huge collection and great wealth after the war. That was no secret. About Cornelius Gurlitt: we will never really know his intentions. But from all outward signs, he was a troubled man who lived of the proceeds of stolen property.

But it was private collection and there was no legal rules dealing with private collections. That must change. But I also tell you that my opinion of the Gurlitt exhibition changed for I saw the decision to focus on the victims and their stories. This is critical not just for arriving at any kind of justice for the victims of Nazi persecution and theft. It is critical for Germany and the Germans to move on as well. We are now three generations past the end of World War II. The first generation committed the crime. The second generation lived with the terrible guilt of their parents. And the third generation, like the second, had nothing to do with this crime, and wants to move on. That is reasonable. Germany should be able to move on. Because there have been few governments anywhere in the world that have been more responsible since 1945, more decent, and more moral than Germany. The way to move on, I believe, is to finally - once and for all - solve the vile, unfinished business of the war. And that is the restitution of art and property that was stolen from Jews in the 1930s and 1940s. And then stolen again by governments, museums, and private collectors in the years since. And this was done by people who should have known better. But they looked the other way.

None of this is about money. It is about a moral obligation that governments, museums, and individual collectors must fulfil. When this is finally done, then the past can be put where it belongs: in the past. And all of us can move forward together, to make sure this never happens again to any people.

Minister Grütters has taken important steps toward this goal. Professional structures have been put in place, funding has increased and the Limbach Commission's weaknesses are starting to be addressed. More is needed, especially for private collections. But if there is a positive sign to the entire sordid Gurlitt affair, it is that it has made the entire art world focus on the original crime, and the felonies of over 70 years to correct this injustice. And it has therefore created awareness that much more needs to be done.
Gurlitt is only the tip of the iceberg. Much work still lies ahead. But I am confident that with the positive intentions that I have seen, we can put structures in place that will solve this. And we can finally - once and for all - move forward.

Thank you.