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Press release

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Angela Merkel visits Otto Bock

The Chancellor thanks the company for its broad commitment

Germany is at the forefront of technological development and is renowned for its high quality products and services with the “Made in Germany” reputation of excellence, as well as its well-trained junior workforce. These factors give Germany a bright future as a business location. On 24 October 2007 the Federal Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel visited the headquarters of the Otto Bock Group in Duderstadt – a global player with a stable growth rate that, with every new foreign branch, has continuously increased its number of employees in Germany.

The Chancellor wished to give a talk and also to speak directly to the employees. Lower Saxony's Minister President Christian Wulff invited her to join him on his “People and Innovation” tour to two companies in southern Lower Saxony. Otto Bock HealthCare has companies in 40 countries and is the world market leader in prosthetics. The company is managed by its owners and besides producing prostheses, orthoses, wheelchairs and other rehabilitation devices, since 2006 it has also produced neuroimplants especially for stroke patients.

During a short tour of the company, Angela Merkel spoke with people who use Otto Bock's cutting-edge technology in their daily lives. Sven Zarling uses a C-Leg®, the first leg prosthesis system in the world completely controlled by microprocessors. Karl-Heinz Ammon has a DynamicArm® that is controlled myoelectrically. And Özgür Koca drives the B 600 power wheelchair.

The Chancellor had an in-depth talk with Prof Hans Georg Näder, the Chairman and CEO of the Otto Bock Group, before meeting the company's apprentices. In Duderstadt alone, there are currently 70 apprentices learning various professions. In total the company has 109 apprentices in Germany. The company's branch in Königssee/Thuringia, where Otto Bock produces wheelchairs and the SuperFour® outdoor vehicle, recently received a certificate for its vocational training from the Federal Employment Agency.

Carls Deeke is an orthopaedic mechanic apprentice who got the chance to personally talk to the Chancellor: “Surely even my grandchildren will hear of this day.” He chose this profession because he “was always interested in technology and especially in technology that helps people”.

The visit concluded with a talk by Dr Angela Merkel and Christian Wulff in front of 1000 employees of the company, which employs more than 4000 people worldwide. Wulff said “he was very happy to show the Chancellor a company that is an absolute world market leader and that has vowed not only to invest in Germany, but also to commit resources to vocational training.”



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The Chancellor was impressed by how Otto Bock continuously turns ideas directly into products ("That doesn't happen everywhere," she said). She also thanked the company for its social commitment. "Everything depends on people who are prepared to do more than they have to. Readiness to make a change everyday is a solid feature of this company." As a patron of the "Förderkreis Behindertensport" (Organisation for the Advancement of Sport for People with Disabilities), Merkel also talked about the Paralympics, of which Otto Bock is one of the most important sponsors. "This German company supports athletes from all over the world at the Paralympics."

Otto Bock provided services to athletes in the 2004 Summer Games in Athens with an international team of 116 engineers and is now gearing up for the Paralympics 2008 in Beijing. At the end of the Chancellors' visit, Angela Merkel, Christian Wulff and Hans Georg Näder signed a photo collage with pictures of various top Paralympics athletes like April Holmes (USA) and Heinrich Popow (Germany). The Chancellor will donate the collage to the "Förderkreis Behindertensport", which will use it for charitable purposes.

Inventions, innovations and leadership in technological development secure jobs and growth", said Prof Näder and thanked his visitors for what he and his employees consider a sign of recognition and an incentive for their future activities.

Additional information:

Joachim F. Hamacher

Director Corporate Communications / Company Spokesman

Otto Bock HealthCare GmbH, Max-Näder-Str. 15, 37115 Duderstadt, Germany

Phone: (05527) 848-1239, Fax: (05527) 848-3360

Mobile: (0170) 9 20 79 97

Email: joachim.hamacher@ottobock.de