



Permanent Mission of Germany
to the United Nations

Address
by Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier,
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Federal Republic of Germany,
at the 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
New York, 22 September 2006

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Please accept my congratulations, Madam President, on your election as President of this 61st session of the General Assembly. I wish you every success.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the outgoing President of the 60th session for his dedicated work and wish him every success with his future tasks.

World events during the last 60 years are reflected more graphically in Germany than in almost any other country. Until 1989, the wall and barbed wire across our country symbolized the division of Europe and the world into two blocs. Since then, Germany has become the embodiment of successfully overcoming this division.

Both – division and overcoming division – have influenced our view of the world. For 45 years, peace in Germany was largely due to the friendship, political and military protection of partner countries, who took their responsibility seriously. This experience moulded Germans' political outlook. That is why we, too, are now shouldering responsibility – both in Europe and in other parts of the world.

With regard to the UN this means that reunited Germany believes it has an obligation to do everything it can to support the United Nations in creating a more peaceful and fairer world.

German soldiers and police officers are taking part in numerous peace missions either led or mandated by the United Nations.

- In the Western Balkans, in Kosovo and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Germany has provided the largest contingent of peacekeeping troops.
- Germany is playing a prominent role in Afghanistan's reconstruction.
- Germany is leading the European operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is supporting the first free elections there.
- Germany is engaged in the Sudan through its support for AMIS and UNMIS.
- And German navy vessels are on their way at this very moment to the Lebanese coast where they will reinforce the United Nations peacekeeping force. Germany will provide up to 2400 troops for this peace mission.

Germany stands for a policy of dialogue and the peaceful reconciliation of differing interests. We firmly believe that political conflicts cannot be resolved with military force or military victories. Peace is brought about by political talks, economic ties and giving people tangible hope for the future.

If the parties to the conflict are unable to overcome political divides on their own, the international community, represented by the United Nations, has an obligation to help. This is the guiding principle of our foreign policy.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs of reunited Germany, German and European history have had a particularly strong influence on me. From this I have derived a concrete mandate: we have to do everything in our power to prevent the world from dividing up once more into hostile blocs.

Politicians in every country have a responsibility here. Everyone can and must make their contribution. It is my firm conviction that anyone who instigates antagonism between people of different cultures and religions is not living up to their responsibility.

No-one should interpret the involvement of Germany and its partners in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, in the Sudan and in Lebanon as an aggressive global campaign waged by the West against Islam. In a world which has grown closer together than ever before, we do not need exclusion or polarization. Rather, we need the courage to promote understanding and to engage in dialogue.

In the Middle East, it is crucial, following the Security Council resolution on Lebanon, that the opportunity to promote understanding be seized. Here, too, I call on all parties to the conflict in the region to act responsibly. Those who want their children and grandchildren to live in peace instead of violence, in safety instead of fear, in prosperity instead of poverty, must have the courage to embark along new paths rather than simply cultivating long-standing enmities. The principles for a settlement are clear: Israel's right to exist and the establishment of a Palestinian state. That was the core concern of the Road Map to which we have to return.

However, in order to ensure lasting success we have to do everything we can to include everyone involved – even if this appears to be a roundabout way of achieving our goal. I therefore hope that we will succeed in persuading Syria to engage in a constructive dialogue. We need stronger engagement on the part of the international community, particularly that of the Middle East Quartet.

The international community is demonstrating in Afghanistan how the principle of responsibility can be put into practice in concrete terms. Following 23 years of civil war, the development of political structures is underway. Millions of refugees have returned to their home country. And what is equally important: young people can go to school again, also girls.

However, drug cultivation and the security situation pose a threat to the progress made, at least in certain regions of the country. We as the international community cannot allow the successes to date to be destroyed again.

In the Western Balkans, too, war is a thing of the past. The political and military commitment of the United Nations, the United States of America, Russia and the European Union has played a key role in this.

In Kosovo, the task now is to ensure that the two parties to the conflict take their responsibility for peace and stability seriously. Settling the status of Kosovo, which has remained unresolved for many years, is overdue. Germany staunchly backs the efforts of the UN Special Envoy, President Ahtisaari. Stability cannot be achieved if only the will of the majority population is expressed. Kosovo Serbs have to be guaranteed adequate minority protection.

One only has to glance at a map of Africa to realize how important peace and stability in the Sudan and in the Congo are for the African continent as a whole.

Instability and conflicts in Africa have a direct impact on Europe. For this reason, too, Germany is supporting the United Nations in its efforts to find a solution to the conflicts in the two countries.

While the UNMIS peace mission in southern Sudan has made an effective contribution towards the implementation of the peace agreement between northern and southern Sudan, peace in Darfur is still a long way off.

Neither the Sudanese Government nor rebel groups can be released from their responsibility for the humanitarian disaster in the west of the country. Nevertheless, a lasting solution to the conflict is only possible with and not against them.

During the past few years, Germany, together with France and Britain and supported by the US, Russia and China, has been intensively seeking to find a solution to the conflict about Iran's nuclear programme.

No-one wants to deny Iran the right to use nuclear energy peacefully. Nor is the objective of the diplomatic efforts to isolate Iran. On the contrary, we hope that Iran will become a reliable and responsible partner in the crisis-stricken Middle East.

That is why on 6 June we offered Iran a package aimed at far-reaching cooperation. This package includes proposals for closer diplomatic, economic and security cooperation. And it expressly acknowledges Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

However, the international community also rightly expects cooperation and transparency from Iran. If Iran were to prove that the IAEA's suspicions are unfounded and send a clear sign that it really does only intend to use its nuclear programme for peaceful purposes that could open the door to a development which benefits people in Iran and in the entire region.

It is now up to the Government in Tehran to face up to its responsibility. The decision in favour of peace and stability in the entire Middle East requires courage. I call upon Iran to end the current phase of procrastination! Give a clear sign of confidence so that we can look to the future together and we can finally sit down at the negotiating table!

The resolution of the nuclear conflict with Iran is urgent. However, the challenges of the proliferation of nuclear weapons go far beyond that. We have to act now if we want to halt the erosion of the non-proliferation regime. The next attempt to implement the Non-Proliferation Treaty in full must not fail.

Not only Iran but also other countries are thinking about developing enrichment technology. We have to develop new instruments if we want to prevent the resulting risks from materializing.

I am therefore strongly in favour of not merely exchanging ideas on the multilateralization of the fuel cycle, on transferring responsibility for uranium enrichment to the international community but of further developing them into concrete options. I advocate that we put greater effort into finding solutions together with the IAEA.

The conflicts in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in the Western Balkans, in the Sudan, with Iran, as well as the fight against international terrorism have one thing in common: in none of these cases is the West taking a hostile stance against Islam. Nor do they involve a clash of civilizations.

Rather, they are very diverse conflicts involving diverse interests.

There is only one link, albeit a very different one. Each one of these conflicts can only be resolved with a willingness and ability to engage in dialogue. This is because a dialogue gets everyone concerned involved, engages them and does not allow them to shirk their responsibility for resolving the conflicts.

However, a policy of cooperation and dialogue does not mean talking at any cost.

Those who want to engage in dialogue must fulfil some basic prerequisites. In my view, these include a readiness to bring about a peaceful reconciliation of interests, that is to say they must be prepared to renounce violence, respect the position of the other side and their own position must be consistent and credible. If these prerequisites are not met then no dialogue with any hope of success can get off the ground.

I am firmly convinced that a dialogue beyond cultural borders can succeed. For despite all differences, we are living in one world. The different cultures in this world have more in common than political rabble-rousers would have us believe. People everywhere have the same fundamental interests: they want to live in peace, security and free of poverty. They want good health care and good schools for their children.

No responsible government would ever want to withhold these from its people.

The United Nations, its organizations and programmes, embody this vision. And it is this vision which makes the United Nations so indispensable.

I am convinced that we will need the United Nations more than ever in the coming decades. The number and scale of crises in the world are increasing. That could bring about a renaissance of the UN even in countries which are sometimes still sceptical about the world organization.

The UN's effectiveness and the confidence it inspires as the international community's main multilateral organization are closely connected. Everyone can see how necessary transparent structures and effective institutions are for the UN. Reform of the United Nations, not only of the Security Council, should not therefore simply remain on the agenda – concrete progress must be made. With the expectations placed in the United Nations rising, this is especially urgent in the case of the review of mandates, as well as management and financial reform. Germany pledges to support this endeavour for we need to reform if we as members of the international community

want to remain effective. We owe that not only to the United Nations but, above all, to the people in whose name we shoulder responsibility together.

Thank you for your attention.