



Permanent Mission of Germany
to the United Nations

Address

by Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier,
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Federal Republic of Germany,
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Mr President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Please accept my congratulations, Mr President, on your election as President of this 63rd session of the General Assembly. I wish you every success.

Maintaining and creating peace and security – the United Nations mandate has lost none of its urgency in 2008.

The task remains. However, fulfilling it is more demanding than ever.

When the Berlin Wall fell, no-one had greater hopes than we Germans that not only would Germany be reunited but that a new age of global cooperation – beyond the traditional frontlines – would begin. The Iron Curtain had divided the world into two blocs and when it came to dealing with crises and conflicts, often enough, loyalty within the blocs had priority; what was needed to improve the lot of ordinary people was of secondary importance.

The end of the East-West confrontation in the early nineties seemed to mark the dawn of a new age of effective multilateralism, while the United Nations seemed to be on the threshold of a great renaissance.

Disillusionment has now set in – quicker and more profoundly than we had feared. The hoped-for peace dividend did not materialize. On the contrary, the cynical certainties of the Cold War had disappeared, and they were not replaced by new ones!

The world is clearly searching for a "new order"; and multilateralism does not always seem to be the first choice in this quest. What we have experienced since then is the confluence of

- the traditional power politics of the 19th century,
- the legacies of the Cold War,
- as well as the new challenges of the 21st century.

At the same time, new players and powers which have still to find their place in the international order are seeking to enter the global stage.

It is now generally accepted that we can only master the new challenges of the 21st century such as climate change, scarcity of raw materials, access to food and water, the fight against epidemics, pandemics and terrorism, if we act together. Although we know that and although it is absolutely vital that we focus on finding common solutions to the key issues of the future, time and again we are called upon to resolve conflicts which have their roots in a past which we have only seemingly put behind us.

One conflict which smouldered for some time and then escalated suddenly and violently is the crisis in Georgia, where an entire region found itself on the edge of the abyss of war and destruction and where common sense failed to prevail on all sides.

The United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union agree that the weapons must be silenced for good! We must help the suffering population without delay! For the sake of clarity, let me add: this does not mean accepting the status quo, the calling into question of Georgia's territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, we have to work together to ensure reconstruction, the return home of the refugees and long-term security in Georgia and the entire region. The European Union is making an important contribution by sending an observer mission. My country is leading this mission. Together with the United Nations and the OSCE, the mission will put forward a comprehensive strategy in Geneva this October. We are aiming to pave the way towards the durable resolution of the conflict through stabilization and confidence-building.

The same task is even more demanding in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, a country where the situation is still precarious.

It is clear to us that without security Afghanistan will not, and indeed cannot, develop. Equally, however, we need economic development in order to improve the security situation and to encourage people to reject fundamentalism and terror.

We have achieved much together during the last few months and years. Millions of children – many of them girls – are going to school again, while streets, bridges and hospitals are being built.

The training and build up of the Afghan police force and army are progressing. Compared to the deteriorating security situation, however, they are not progressing fast enough! Especially in this sphere, Germany intends to do even more in future.

However, we cannot afford to look at Afghanistan on its own. We need to step up our efforts to help Pakistan master the economic and social challenges it faces. Pakistan's internal stability is crucial to stability in the entire region.

This will require concrete support from everyone, and my country will play its part.

International engagement is also still necessary in the Middle East. We call upon all parties to the conflict not to ease up their efforts to resolve the conflict in the current phase of domestic uncertainties.

For experience has shown that "standstill" in the Middle East often means "a step backward". A new wave of terror and violent clashes would result. Neither Israel nor Palestine nor the international community can afford to let that happen.

Germany believes it has a particular responsibility to provide concrete help towards improving the framework conditions. Just recently in Berlin at the Conference in Support of Palestinian Civil Security and the Rule of Law – many of you were there – we agreed on concrete measures aimed at strengthening the Palestinian security sector; measures which are already having an impact.

An Iran armed with nuclear weapons would pose a threat to security in the entire Middle East and trigger off a nuclear arms race.

Therefore, Iran must put its cards on the table. We have made our offer. The Iranian side's delaying tactics must not exhaust the patience of the international community. We expect a clear signal from Iran indicating its willingness to comply with the international community's demands and build confidence.

And let me make the following very clear: the Iranian President's remarks on Israel are irresponsible and unacceptable. In my view, the blatant anti-Semitism he expressed in his speech again this year is outrageous and should be condemned by us all.

We must stand together on this issue!

The problems in Georgia, in Afghanistan/Pakistan and in the Middle East highlight one thing: it is more urgent than ever that we develop the foundations for a stable world order.

My country stands for dialogue and the reconciliation of interests. This does not mean dialogue for the sake of discussion without any results. Nor does reconciliation of interests imply we are prepared to abandon our own principles. We believe that the renunciation of violence, fairness and recognition of international law are indispensable.

For us, this is the alternative vision to a world of fabricated opposing interests, of the bloc mentality and of oversimplified categories such as good and evil.

East against West, North against South: this is yesterday's thinking. It no longer has a place in today's world. For to resolve the problems of today and tomorrow, we all need more partners and not more opponents. The 21st century is the first in which we can only resolve problems if we work together.

The same applies to disarmament policy. Only a global responsibility partnership can achieve lasting results.

The dangerous trend of ever more countries striving to gain access to nuclear technology or even to build nuclear weapons must be stopped.

My proposal on the multilateralization of the fuel cycle showed how the risks involved can be minimized.

Furthermore, I call upon all states to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the CTBT. For its entry into force would mean a huge security gain.

For all that, however, we must remember that more people die every day due to hunger than to wars! The pledges we made at the turn of the millennium must not remain a mere piece of paper. The fight against hunger and poverty is also part of a global responsibility partnership.

Germany will therefore step up its efforts to promote poverty reduction and global fairness. As part of these efforts, we will increase our ODA contributions in line with the EU's plan; in the coming budget alone, we will increase development assistance by 1.2 billion dollars.

In this connection, I would like to say something about Africa. For too long we have perceived this part of the world solely as a continent of wars and conflicts. However, I also know an Africa which has set off into the future with courage and resolve. It deserves our partnership and support along this road.

The headlines are dominated at present by the international financial crisis. Recklessness, greed and a lack of common sense among the players has set us back years. The long-term consequences cannot be assessed yet! However, I am certain that the painful tremors on the world financial markets will accelerate the multipolarization of the international financial systems. There can be no future without rules and no player will be able to lay down the rules on their own. It will no longer be possible for any one country to act as if were immune to undesirable developments. Europe with its tried and tested policy of mediation and the reconciliation of interests could come to play a key role in this.

Together we now have to finally ensure the long overdue transparency, stability and provisions to guard against risks, as well as oversight, on the world financial markets.

My country developed concrete proposals on this a few years ago. In the face of this profound crisis, I hope that the international community will now act quickly and with resolve. We need universal rules for the international financial markets.

This applies not only to the international financial sphere. Clear rules, solid structures as well as joint action are the vital prerequisites for mastering global challenges. That is why we need a strong and effective United Nations which enjoys the confidence of the international community, which has the requisite legitimacy and can form the umbrella for a global responsibility partnership.

We therefore support the process of reforming the United Nations and its organs. Security Council reform is overdue. Its composition must reflect the realities of world politics today. Germany is prepared to shoulder greater responsibility here.

Just a few days ago, the General Assembly decided unanimously to begin the negotiations soon. This important step must be now be followed by others.

Germany is firmly convinced that in the 21st century we need the United Nations more urgently than ever before.