# Speech by Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in the German Bundestag’s budget debate, 21 November 2012

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verbatim report of proceedings –

Mr

President, ladies and gentlemen, fellow colleagues. My visit to Israel and Egypt over the last two days is still very fresh in my mind and I believe that for this reason, contrary to custom, it is appropriate that I take the floor again in this second round of the budget debate.

I want to express in advance once again that we are all disappointed that a ceasefire was not possible last night. At the same time, the Federal Government believes that we should not give up on our efforts to achieve a ceasefire with the help of the international community. On the contrary, we will intensify our efforts in the interest of the people. We want a ceasefire to be reached. But along with the ceasefire we want to create the preconditions for a durable truce to be worked out. This is to be based on three things:

First: The rocket attacks from Gaza on Israel must cease immediately. This is a crime that cannot be justified by any means.

Second: That rockets and arms are being smuggled into Gaza is one of the causes for the state of internal armament, also of militant groups in the Gaza Strip itself. So there will only be a durable, stable truce when the arms smuggling is stopped. We also call on Egypt to take up this task, to meet those responsibilities. Egypt has shown itself to be a very responsible country in these last days. What matters now is that the smuggling of weapons be stopped. It is a threat to the security of the whole region, not only to the security of Israel.

Third: For us, it is absolutely clear that there can only be a durable truce and good, stable and peaceful development for the entire region if the people of Gaza themselves have real prospects for development.

Two years ago, I was the first foreign minister of the Western world to travel to Gaza after the first easing of the blockade. I saw the children there, and I visited schools. That’s something you never forget, of course. So I say again here very clearly that it is obvious to us that the

people of Gaza need prospects for the future, that they need to have an opportunity to develop economically. That is why it is so important that the radicals and those willing to commit violent acts no longer be allowed to hold the peaceful people of Gaza hostage. We must see the context here.

I want to add: Israel is our friend. The peaceful Palestinians are also our friends.

It is a reproach that does not do the situation justice, when the fact that we condemn rocket attacks from Gaza against southern Israel in all clarity is seen as unbalanced bias. When we condemn the rocket attacks and emphasize the right of Israel to defend itself, we are not taking sides. If that is taking sides, then it’s taking sides for the people and for humanity and for peace. We are happy to admit to this kind of taking sides.

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

Mr

Westerwelle, will you allow a question from Ms Hänsel from DIE LINKE (The Left)?

Dr Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

Please go ahead.

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

Ms Hänsel.

Heike Hänsel (DIE LINKE):

Thank you, Mr

President. Thank you, Minister Westerwelle for allowing the question.

You said that the Federal Government is interested in a sustainable peace. You have just mentioned a few conditions. But you have not mentioned the underlying conflict which comes from decades long occupation.

There is not only the conflict between Hamas and the Israeli Government; for over 40 years there has also been an occupation that is illegal under international law. Over this period a lot of land was lost in the West Bank. We all know that. How many delegations go to the West Bank every year to see how much land is being stolen and is no longer available to establish a Palestinian state?

If we want to bring about a sustainable and just peace, we cannot discuss Gaza and the Israeli Government in isolation. We need to seriously answer the question of how we imagine a two-state solution will look. Because if we remain silent, we give only radical forces a boost. There is a cycle of violence, but there is no solution.

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

Please come to the point.

Heike Hänsel (DIE LINKE):

So my appeal to you is:

we have to change this.

Dr

Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

Ms

Hänsel I’m afraid that your question is not only based on a false assumption, but also on a misguided policy. What I mean is this: Hamas does not speak for the Palestinians, but Hamas speaks for violence. The Palestinians are represented by President Mahmoud Abbas, whom I visited yesterday and who has said over and over again with great clarity: that the rocket fire from Gaza towards Israel is not the policy of Palestine and the Palestinian Authority and that it must be condemned.

We should not underestimate the differences within these forces. That’s why I specifically said: the peaceful Palestinians are our friends. The Federal Government has repeatedly emphasized that we want to see a negotiated two state solution and I have said so myself, by the way, for example in my last speech to the United Nations.

Thank you, Ms

Hänsel.

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

Mr Westerwelle, Ms

Wieczorek Zeul would also like to ask you a question.

Dr

Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

I hear it’s your birthday today. How could I possibly say no?

Congratulations, Ms

Wieczorek Zeul.

Heidemarie Wieczorek Zeul (SPD):

Let me make a comment.

Foreign Minister Westerwelle, you have rightly pointed out today that it is not Hamas that speaks for Palestine, but President Abbas. I now expect you to make it clear that the Federal Government and you yourself are willing to approve the request in the

UN

General Assembly for better international recognition of Palestine by President Abbas, who stands for the multilateral, peaceful path. I also expect you to ensure within the European Union that this proposal will be accepted.

My reason is this: you can’t on the one hand – and the ministers in the Foreign Affairs Council said this as well – rightly criticize Hamas for violence and on the other hand bar Abbas’s peaceful path to upgraded status in the United Nations General Assembly. That is inconsistent.

I expect you to make a clear statement on this.

Dr

Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

Ms

Wieczorek Zeul, would you be so kind as to stand as long as I am answering your question – not for the sake of courtesy, but so that the President does not press the wrong button so that the answer comes at the expense of my speaking time.

Ms

Wieczorek Zeul, you were yourself a member of the Federal Government for many years. So you know that in foreign policy you answer the questions when they present themselves, and not always when they are presented to you. We will make the decision when we know what’s

in the application, when it has actually been submitted, when it is actually put to a vote and after we have consulted sufficiently with all our allies. Then I will decide how the Federal Government will vote. That is responsible foreign policy.

It would not be responsible foreign policy to make any showcase announcements right now, just because that is what people want to hear here. That would cause great damage to the foreign policy of our country.

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

Minister will y

ou allow another question by Ms Wieczorek Zeul? But that would be the last question that I allow.

(...)

Heidemarie Wieczorek Zeul (SPD):

You have said that the question was not raised. I wanted to point out to you that your ministry sent us a message from the Foreign Affairs Council of 19 November concerning a consultation within the European Union. The message was that the Member States of the European Union will probably abstain. Other countries have said that they will vote in favour. So the question has been raised. I am quite sure that Mr Abbas also asked you about it.

On 29

November, in about a week, the

UN

General Assembly will deal with the application. Against the backdrop of decades of experience, I urge you to ensure that the Member States of the European Union do not shirk their responsibility in this debate, but that with their votes they put weight behind this application, thus strengthening the position of President Abbas.

Dr

Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

I want to say the following: first of all, it is not appropriate to give the impression that my ministry had announced how the European Union or Member States were going to vote. You have rather received information concerning consultations that I myself attended on Monday.

The key word in what you said is “probably”. No foreign minister can make a decision on how to vote solely on the basis of an assumption. You would not do that if you were in my position, and I must say that in my view you will not get into this position.

Please, Ms

Wieczorek Zeul, I would like to finish my answer. I have only one minute and 13 seconds of speaking time left. Therefore, you must remain standing.

I want to give a serious, substantive reason why we must consult carefully with all other Europeans about all this, and, by the way, with our other international allies. Of course, this was an issue yesterday with President Mahmoud Abbas, you know. As it also was in September when I met with him. It is an issue we discuss regularly.

The question is what helps advance the project of a real two state solution most? Unilateral steps or the results of negotiations? We are convinced that a negotiated solution is the best thing that can be achieved in this situation. So I will not make speculative announcements here. We will continue to follow this principle, as many previous governments have done. It is not so long ago that you yourself were in the Federal Government.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to make a comment on an issue that has been raised by colleagues Mißfelder and Kindler, namely on Patriots. I expect that in a short time Turkey will make a request to

NATO

for the stationing of Patriot missiles. I have instructed the German Ambassador to accept and favourably examine such a request – of course, on the condition that the prerequisites are met, and with the usual provisos, because it would be a grave error to deny defensive support to a member of

NATO

at a point in time when it finds itself being attacked from outside. I believe that if the petition of a

NATO

member state for defensive support were to be rejected by a member of the alliance, such as Germany, so that a

NATO

decision were thus blocked, then this would have unforeseeable ramifications on the alliance. Sometimes we need solidarity ourselves. You must always have that in mind when allies ask

for solidarity. That is the direction we want to take.

All parliamentary reservations will of course be taken into account. I agree with my colleague here that the German Bundestag must be involved with this decision and that a vote is required.

In closing, I would like to thank the ladies and gentlemen on the committees, especially the Budget Committee, and also the rapporteurs. I thank you very much for this very collegial cooperation. I include explicitly the ladies and gentlemen – in this case, the gentlemen – of the opposition for their reports and their work, especially in the Budget Committee. It was good cooperation in a spirit of fairness.

I understand and respect that colleagues of the opposition must always find something. That is the way it should be. But it essentially comes down to one thing: has the Federal Government been successful over the past three years in raising the reputation of our country in the world? Yes or no?

Since we were elected to the United Nations Security Council two years ago and to the

UN

Human Rights Council a few weeks ago after a controversial discussion in a secret ballot, the opinion of the world of our foreign policy clearly seems to be better than that of the opposition. I can live with that.

Thank you very much.

PART 2

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

I give the floor to Federal Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle.

Dr

Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, fellow colleagues. Because we looked at this issue at the beginning of the debate and because in the interest of the cooperation between the Federal Government and parliament, I do not want it to be said afterwards that information was held back in the debate on the budget that had already been available, let me tell you this: in the course of this debate we received the Turkish request for the deployment of defensive Patriot systems to protect Turkey. The request is before me now.

I want to tell you that, after a first reading of this proposal, I have the impression that the criteria we had set have been met. In particular, in this application it is explicitly stated that they will be stationed there for exclusively defensive purposes.

In no way does this have to do with a no fly zone or support for any offensive operation. That had been discussed previously in the committees. (...)

In the interest of good cooperation and out of respect for the German Bundestag, there is something I would like to say to you before the end of this debate: if the result of my first examination is confirmed – I received the request only just now as you have seen – that the conditions that we established have been met, then the Government will recommend that the German Bundestag approve it. That is clear.

There have been deaths in Turkey. There have been grenade attacks and acts of violence coming from Syrian territory at the expense of Turkey and Turkish nationals. Of course, in Turkey a great concern about their own safety has arisen, because we cannot rule out further steps by the tyrannical regime of Assad in Syria. When a

NATO

ally requests the assistance of our alliance to ensure its own security, we must have very good reasons not to comply with such a request. I do not see such reasons. Solidarity with our alliance partners is the top priority.

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

Will you allow another question from Ms

Zapf?

Dr

Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

If she would like to ask a question, then please.

Vice President Dr

Hermann Otto Solms:

Please go ahead.

Uta Zapf (SPD):

Minister, is it true it that you have already consented, or should we take the statement you just made as contradicting what Spiegel Online has reported?

Dr

Guido Westerwelle, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs:

I cannot comment on individual articles; please understand that. But, I don’t know, were you not here just now? I spoke here. You were present at the beginning of the debate. Each of you has heard what I have said. I would ask you not to interpolate secrets. Today I made a single public comment on this, and that was here in the German Bundestag. I cannot say anything here about how news agencies or news magazines spread the information. I would say, though, that what was said here is what counts. We should pay attention to what the Federal Government says here.

If we are only going to tell each other what we have read in the papers, we might as well skip the debate.

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