Speech by Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle at the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly New York, 26 September 2011

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-- Translation of advance text --

Mr

President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Seldom has people’s yearning for freedom, dignity and self-determination played such a dominant role as it has this year.

Until now, we have experienced globalization first and foremost as ever greater integration of the world economy. Today we see that globalization means so much more. That it has also brought about a globalization of values. These are the values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the inalienable rights contained in the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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In North Africa and in the Arab world, millions of people have shaken off the shackles of decades of oppression. They want freedom, democracy, human rights, as well as better lives for themselves and for their families.

This road is anything but easy. A new political system has to mature in order to become stable. That takes time and patience. However, even the longest road begins with the first step. This year is a year of momentous steps.

We have not forgotten the moving images of people who had gained dignity and self-respect by their own efforts, the proud faces on Bourguiba Boulevard in Tunis und in

Tahrir Square in Cairo

. These people want to shape their own future. And this yearning is by no means limited to the Arab world. In Belarus, too, people long for an end to repression and tyranny, for opportunities to fully develop their individual personalities.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification more than 20 years ago, Germany experienced for itself the joy of a peaceful revolution. Today we have a fundamental interest in the success of the political awakening in the southern Mediterranean.

We Germans offer our support:

for the reforms in Morocco and Jordan,

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or the political awakening in Egypt and Tunisia,

for the fresh start in Libya following the overthrow of the dictator.

Every country, every society will find its own way, either through reform or through revolution. We Germans want to provide advice and support. We want to help create an independent judiciary, a pluralistic media landscape, a vibrant civil society. We want to support the constitutional process and help these countries come to grips with the past. We expressly want to do our bit to eliminate the hazardous means of mass destruction still stockpiled in Libya. Above all, however, we want to assist in the crucial process of building a new social and economic order in these societies.

For we all know that the success of social change largely hinges on economic success. The people who took to the streets for freedom and self-determination must experience first-hand that they, too, can succeed with the help of their ideas, their creativity and their commitment.

Germany is therefore not only working towards close partnership but also market access. We want to foster the changes through more trade. We are offering investments, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises, which form the backbone of an open and successful society.

Most important of all, however, will be to offer young people education and training so that they can make the most of their opportunities.

Mr President,

The courageous men and women in Syria deserve a clear signal of our solidarity. The Syrian Government has responded to the legitimate demands of the Syrian people with brutal force.

Germany will continue to press for a Security Council resolution. That is not only about showing solidarity with the Syrian people. It is also about the international community’s

credibility. If the repression continues, we Europeans will further tighten the sanctions against the regime. The Syrian people should be allowed to shape its own future.

Mr President,

This week has been dominated by the unresolved conflict in the Middle East.

Here in New York, President Abbas expressed the expectations of the Palestinians as well as people's understandable frustration about the lack of progress made.

Prime Minister Netanyahu reaffirmed Israel's justified desire to exist in peace within secure borders.

Both sides have legitimate interests. And these interests are compatible.

Germany is backing a two-state solution. We support a Palestinian state which will allow the Palestinians to live in dignity and self-determination. A state which is independent, sovereign, contiguous, democratic, as well as politically and economically viable. During the last few years, we have been very much involved in the very practical development of this statehood, in building the administration, infrastructure and vocational training, as well as politically in the German-Palestinian Steering Committee. And we do not want this state to be founded sometime in the distant and indeterminate future.

However, let there be no doubt: Israel's security is one of the fundamental principles that guide the Federal Republic of Germany. There can be no lasting peace if Israel's security is not guaranteed.

Peace between Israelis and Palestinians is possible. A Palestinian state is possible. Two states existing peacefully side by side are possible. However, this can only be achieved through negotiations.

The statement issued by the Middle East Quartet on Friday identified the milestones along the way. Germany worked hard for this Quartet statement and staunchly supports it.

The confrontation of words here in New York must not be allowed to lead to an escalation in violence in the Middle East.

I therefore call on both sides – Palestinians and Israelis – to enter into direct negotiations without delay!

On Friday, the two sides reaffirmed their desire for a negotiated peace. The task now is to channel the energy and pressure of these last few days into a constructive process. The two sides are called upon to come forward with "comprehensive proposals" within three months on territory and security and to refrain from all provocative actions.

The international community will continue to support the difficult road to peace. This includes the Moscow Conference as part of the negotiations timetable of the coming months.

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who has worked so hard during the last few days to bring about this opportunity for a constructive solution. As a European, I would like to extend my special thanks to the European Union's High Representative, Lady Ashton.

Let us make use of the impetus provided by the intensive efforts here in New York for the benefit of people in Israel and in the Palestinian territories.

Mr President,

The international community has been working tirelessly for years to ensure that Afghanistan no longer harbours a threat to international peace and security. Many, indeed too many people have already lost their lives as a result of this.

On 5 December in Bonn under Afghanistan's chairmanship, we will discuss the way forward.

The Conference will focus on three major issues:

First, the complete handover of responsibility for security. This summer saw the start of a process by which the Afghans are to gradually assume responsibility for security in their country by 2014. This is a responsible handover of responsibility.

Second, the international community will remain engaged in Afghanistan after 2014. Afghanistan will continue to need economic impulses and more regional cooperation to strengthen its sovereignty. The New Silk Road Initiative, which we launched here in New York, is intended to serve this aim.

Third, Afghanistan's internal reconciliation and support from states in the region is the key to lasting peace.

The brutal murder of former President Rabbani shows that this reconciliation process will continue to suffer setbacks. Nevertheless, it must and will go on. Germany will play its part on the road to Bonn.

Mr President,

While people are seizing the opportunity to build a better future for themselves in freedom and self-determination in a growing number of countries around the world, millions of people in the Horn of Africa are struggling to survive. The United Nations has played a valuable role in providing swift humanitarian assistance. Germany is doing everything in its power here and in many other crises to alleviate the suffering. The collapse of state authority and the impact of climate change are aggravating the already disastrous situation.

Germany will continue to be in the vanguard of the fight against climate change. Just like disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, as well as the protection of human rights, the fight against climate change is an integral element of preventive diplomacy. It is part of a far-sighted peace policy.

At the end of this year, our planet will have more than seven billion inhabitants. In this world, Germany places its hopes in a strong United Nations:

as a forum for political consensus-building,

as a source of

rules with international legitimacy,

as a player in the crisis regions of this world.

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Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights offer more people than ever before orientation and inspiration for a cooperative world order and a fairer global community.

However, the United Nations has to adapt to our changing world. Only then will the decisions made here gain political force, effectiveness and acceptance. New centres of power are emerging in global politics. Their economic dynamism has prompted them to demand political participation.

The last General Assembly looked at reform of the United Nations. However, no real progress has been achieved so far. We welcome your decision, Mr President, to again personally champion this reform. We will do everything we can to support you.

Mr President,

38 years ago in September, two German states were admitted to the United Nations. At that time, my predecessor in office – Walter Scheel – stated before this Assembly:

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Where it is a question of international cooperation, of preserving peace, and of protecting the rights of man, there the Federal Republic of Germany shall always be found. If there is anything we have learned from our own bitter experience then it is this: man is the measure of all things.“

Germany remains committed to this principle.

Thank you.

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