Speech by State Secretary Andreas Michaelis at the UN Security Council

2019-08-20

“Maintenance of international peace and security: Challenges to peace and security in the Middle East”

Germany welcomes the initiative taken by Poland to put today’s meeting on the agenda, and we particularly appreciate US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s presence among us today.

The Middle East has always been looked at as a volatile region. And one of the truisms was and is that it can be destabilized easily. Unfortunately, this is what we witness today. But this is not the old story. Many trends indicate that we are looking at a New Middle East. And this New Middle East certainly does not match the vision of a prosperous and peaceful region which spread in the 1990s. It is the story of increased tensions and mounting dangers.

Show larger version of image

Close

State Secretary Andreas Michaelis at the

UN

Security Council

© Ständige Vertretung bei den Vereinten Nationen

Allow me to distinguish five trends:

Firstly, we see heightened tensions between states of the region. This, for instance, holds true of the situation along the Gulf.

Secondly, we observe long-term internal conflicts which contribute to large scale fragmentation. Syria and Yemen being two examples.

Thirdly, we are looking at an interplay of intra- and interstate conflict. This is what characterizes the nature of the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. They increasingly involve regional and outside actors.

Fourthly, powerful regional actors are displaying an increasingly aggressive behavior, thereby undermining regional stability.

And last but not least, we notice an increased interest by new actors from outside the region. Often pursuing a selfish and destructive agenda.

The combination of these factors makes the situation in the Middle East more volatile and more dangerous than it has been for a very long time. We have to change the negative dynamics in the region and stop moving from bad to worse in the Middle East. Long-term instability in the Middle East will make us all suffer, and most certainly the people in the region.

How do we move forward in the Middle East? First of all, it is for the nations of the region themselves to create political environments which allow their people to lead a life without fear of repression and torture, hunger and violence; and which instead provides them with safety, dignity and liberty. Dialogue and compromise within the region that bridge religious and ethnic divides are the only sustainable way to reconciliation.

As much as the states of the region have to do their share to build peace at home and in the neighborhood, it is not their task alone.

The stability of the Middle East has always been a question of global concern. The involvement of the international community comes with increased responsibility: Only if all outside actors look beyond their narrow national interests and regional actors invest into lasting stability can we make progress towards a secure Middle East.

Thus, the international community cannot stand on the sidelines. But which principles should guide our action? The answer is three-fold:

By fully respecting international law. This is particularly true for international humanitarian law, which – looking at Syria in particular – is too often ignored.

By taking de-escalatory steps and devising de-escalation strategies. Where international law is disputed or brushed aside, political processes that promote de-escalation and confidence building need to be put in place. I believe that this has to lie at the heart of our MidEast policy! Today, we are far from providing solutions to the problems of the Middle East. But we can create the foundations for the development of these solutions.

By coordination and cooperation of all outside actors, and by choosing multilateral solutions instead of unilaterally imposed ones.

I would like to pick out three country files to illustrate this approach:

Syria. The bloodshed in Syria must end. Here we have not one but two platforms of dialogue of the international community (Small Group and Astana) that in theory can reconcile conflicting interests and foster regional cooperation – bridging those two formats will be key to bring peace to the Syrian people. Germany stands ready to play a role here.

Iran. We remain firmly committed to maintaining the JCPoA, because under the JCPoA, Iran is subject to the world's most robust nuclear verification regime, implemented by the International Atomic Energy Agency. We believe that this is a valuable safeguard to ensure a nuclear-weapon-free Iran, and we have not seen any viable alternative to it. At the same time, we are not naïve, and we know that the JCPoA is only one part of the puzzle. Iran's regional role, its ballistic program, its threats to maritime security in the Gulf need to be addressed and are being addressed. We do this through political dialogue and if need be through coordinated sanctions. France, UK and Germany are right now looking into options of how to foster regional cooperation in maritime security. We are convinced that active de-escalation by all sides will yield positive results. And that an ever higher pressure and unilateral actions will do the opposite.

Israel and Palestine. All in all, I have served almost eight years as a diplomat in Israel. Germany's steadfast commitment to the security of Israel is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. And it is the bedrock of my personal belief. Here, as in the region as a whole, the US is the key stability factor. I hope that it will continue its longstanding policy of supporting both parties towards a negotiated two-state solution. What is badly needed, is a resumption of dialogue in the absence of which violence is spreading.

Today`s debate has once again underscored: the Middle East offers one of the most intricate webs of political, religious, socio-economic and cultural forces worldwide. It is a fascinating and wonderful region. The people of the Middle East deserve peace and stability. We, the Security Council and the

UN

as a whole, need to support all initiatives which bring us closer to this goal.

Overview "Newsroom"

Source : https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/michaelis-unsc-2239988