# Speech by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas to the German Bundestag taking stock of Germany’s term on the Security Council

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Security Council mirrors international politics, and international politics has certainly more than deserved the label “difficult” these past years. The word also describes the work in the

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Security Council itself.

America’s withdrawal from multilateral structures under Donald Trump, increasing US-Chinese rivalry at all levels and the disregard for international law displayed also by permanent members – this has all had an impact on the Security Council. And of course these developments have dramatically reduced the scope for progress and compromise over this period.

However, I would like to quote a figure at anyone who says the Security Council has outlived its purpose. This figure is 101. That is the number of resolutions the

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Security Council adopted during our term, notwithstanding all the controversies and in spite of the difficult circumstances. They covered situations from Afghanistan to Yemen, from the Sudan to the Central African Republic, and it was often us Europeans who repeatedly proposed compromises, sought solutions in endless rounds of talks and, where necessary, put up stiff resistance.

For example, I still remember well the difficult talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov back in July, during our Security Council Presidency, when Russia and China threatened to let the cross-border humanitarian assistance in Syria expire.

And of course it pained us that we ultimately had to limit humanitarian access to Syria to one border crossing only. But the difference between this one border crossing and zero border crossings meant the difference between life and death for thousands of Syrians. And therefore – and this is just one example – we negotiated day and night on this one issue, as on many others too. And that is why, working with others, we ultimately forced a compromise.

The same happened on the Sudan, for instance, even though some Security Council members had already closed the

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mission in Darfur for good in their minds.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to remind us of some situations that show that the Security Council has at least not entirely lost its ability to act. I've already mentioned Syria, and would now like to say more about the Sudan, and in particular the

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mission that many considered already over. But in the end, we did not leave the Sudan in the lurch following the ousting of Omar al-Bashir, amid the country's hopes for a new democratic beginning. Working with the UK, we managed to launch a totally new

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mission, which now supports the political reforms and the ongoing peace process. This could not have been predicted when the discussions started!

The same is true of Libya. Without the Berlin Process we launched at the Libya Conference early this year, and without our constant monitoring of the obligations entered into both in the Security Council and in the sanctions committee, we would not today be talking about a peaceful political solution in Libya with free elections in December. The approach endorsed by the Security Council as a result of Berlin's work, of the Libya Conference here in Berlin, now forms the basis for the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum.

The fact that we were able to achieve this kind of progress, although the Security Council was so polarised, is related to the fact that we stuck to our course and to the two-year programme we had originally submitted. We had from the outset attached great importance to being a strong European voice on the Security Council.

Not only did we coordinate with our European partners on a daily basis, we also jointly convened special sessions, voted together, and so explained together to the world public what we wanted to achieve, namely to strengthen the clout of Europe, and above all the European Union, in the

Security Council. And I am glad that Norway and Ireland will be taking over in January, two countries that want to continue resolutely down this road.

Fellow members of the Bundestag, we have remained true to ourselves these past two years, on matters of substance, too. In each of the 101 resolutions adopted over the last months, our colleagues in New York and Berlin have worked on the basis of a forward-looking, comprehensive concept of security, with the aim of ensuring that the Security Council did not deal with situations only after they had turned violent, but much earlier, in order to potentially prevent conflicts. In other words, human rights, bringing war criminals to justice, the involvement of women in peace processes, their protection against sexual violence – all of this would often have simply fallen by the wayside because not all members of the Security Council, even permanent members of the Security Council, are willing to accept these priorities and thus to recognise these realities in international politics.

Getting the Security Council to act far more on a preventative basis is particularly important because of the serious consequences suffered by the people trapped by wars and conflicts. And it is precisely those people – members of civil society – to whom we listened in the Council. More often than any other member of the



Security Council, we had civil society organisations and human rights organisations come and brief the Security Council. Together with France, we launched the Call for Humanitarian Action. This is symbolic of our efforts to protect international humanitarian law and to preserve humanitarian space.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have also put the topic of disarmament and non-proliferation back on the Security Council agenda, after a hiatus of eight years. For eight whole years, this issue had not been addressed by the Security Council. Some of the permanent members of the Security Council expressed scepticism as to whether this topic should be looked at again at all. The necessity of addressing it is plain to all, I believe, at a time when an arms race is picking up speed. We have reason to hope that this will pay off in the coming months, for example when preparing the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which will be held next year.

Ladies and gentlemen, of course we have not achieved everything we set out to, let alone what we would have liked to. But under our leadership in July, the call for a worldwide ceasefire during the corona pandemic was finally issued. Regrettably, far too much time passed – a full four months – before the Security Council forced itself to act on this matter. And unfortunately nothing came of another ambitious resolution on the impact of climate change on peace and security due to opposition from the Trump Administration. But we did

lay significant groundwork. We established the first ever Security Informal Expert Group on climate and security, we collected reference documents that unambiguously attest to the security policy risks posed by climate change. Our Irish and Norwegian friends will build on this work from next year.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am also glad that our successors on the Security Council will not only be able to build on that work, but will also be able to work with a Biden Administration that has finally reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism. It is not only the first nominations and staffing decisions taken by the future American President that make us hopeful that the US will finally resume its role as a convinced multilateralist and a pillar of the world order.

However, we Europeans would do well to remember one of the lessons learned over the past few years: it will in future depend far more on us than before to defend rules in this world, and to make new rules that benefit everyone. That is something we must all be clear on. Germany, too, must continue to face up to this responsibility – in the United Nations and of course in the

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Security Council.

We have shown over the past two years that we are capable of filling a seat on the

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Security Council in the long term. We therefore want not only to stand for a non-permanent seat again in eight years' time, but also seek to become a permanent member of the

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Security Council before that date.

Thank you very much.

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