Speech by Minister of State Werner Hoyer at the German-Canadian Conference 2011 of Atlantikbrücke e.V.: “Current Challenges in Foreign and Security Policy”

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Ladies and gentlemen,

may I invite you to think back and recall the foreign and security political situation on 7 November 2010 – one year ago. What would you have considered the main challenges at that time? At the regional level, Afghanistan, piracy off the Somali coast, certainly the Middle East Peace Process and perhaps the Western Balkans come to my mind. Furthermore, topical issues such as non-proliferation, terrorism and the so-called “new challenges” like energy, cyber-security and – still with a more distant perspective – security risks due to the consequences of climate change come to my mind.

While none of these issues can be considered resolved, the death of the Tunisian fruit seller Mohammed Buazizi early December and the subsequent protests in his country sparked what is now called the “Arab Revolution”. These events have significantly altered the international political landscape and have changed our transatlantic agenda considerably.

I will start by reviewing the consequences of the Arab spring, because I believe that Canada and Germany will have to contribute to stabilizing the achievements in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. We must address developments in Syria and Yemen. Both of our countries will have to push for a

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Security Council which is capable of acting. Not only in this context we transatlanticists will have to join forces in dealing with the “BRICS countries”, but also have to think about the future role of our ally Turkey. Making progress in the Middle East Peace Process remains an imperative. Germany as the co-host of the Bonn conference, I will address the transitional process in Afghanistan. And finally, no speech nowadays without the financial crisis and developments in the Euro zone: Europe’s future clout as foreign political actor must be discussed.

History does not repeat itself. In most cases we tend to feel happy about this well-known fact. But there is no rule without exception.

The end of the Cold War, which brought freedom and democracy to the countries of Eastern Europe, remained peaceful.

In contrast, the peoples of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have suffered severely in their fight for freedom and human rights. Bloodshed is ongoing in Syria. It is thus even more urgent to think about the right strategy in order to preserve the recent achievements. The transatlantic partners should continue to support a sustainable political and economic development in these countries.

Of course we must look at each country in the region individually and design our support accordingly through Transformation Partnerships. In Tunisia, we witnessed free and fair elections, conducted under the eyes of

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election observers. Hopefully, Egypt will follow soon. In both countries, these elections may lead to profound constitutional reforms.

Also Morocco and Jordan have started to reform their constitutions, which may eventually lead to greater political freedom and a real division of powers. Libya on the other hand must re-design its entire statehood after 40 years of Gaddafi´s dictatorship.

The European Union has understood the potential of historical proportions offered by these developments. The world expects from us Europeans as direct neighbours that we take up this challenge to forge a new region of shared peace, freedom and prosperity in the Mediterranean region.

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responded swiftly by offering a “Partnership for Democracy and shared Prosperity” and by re-designing its Neighbourhood Policy, offering more support for more reforms.

The European Investment Bank has made substantial funding available and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will extend its scope to include North Africa for the first time.

Canada and Germany should jointly continue to support the Deauville Partnership offered by the G8 to reforming countries in the region. We should also push for further trade liberalisation and support the competitiveness of the North African economies so that they

can fully profit from free trade agreements. What we already promised them many years ago must now be agreed on paper.

Let me go further and underline that the issue of supporting the North African countries which have undergone transitions towards democracy is a credibility test for the

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and West as a whole. Of course we can express admiration for their struggle for dignity, democracy and the rule of law. But this is not enough – they need bread and rice, they need strong economic progress. If we fail to support them also in this respect, we will not encourage such positive developments in other countries.

While new eras have begun in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, we are still far from any such positive development in Syria. Protests have been brutally crushed down from the very beginning. After seven months of daily protests, at least 3.000 people have been killed, and many more have been detained or have disappeared.

But this situation should not discourage us from our efforts to support those men and women who courageously continue to take to the streets to peacefully demonstrate for a better future of their country and a life in freedom and dignity.

On the contrary, it is the duty of the international community to raise its voice, to condemn the ongoing widespread human rights violations, and to engage with those working for a democratic transition. Let me be clear: Continuous use of repression, violence and intimidation will, in the short or long run, lead to the fall of a regime. This is what history tells us and this is our firm belief.

Time is running out. If the repression of the Syrian regime does not stop, violence will escalate further, and that would have far-reaching effects on the whole region. In this situation the

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Security Council must not stand aside.

We also welcome the action plan by the Arab League on Syria, which asks to stop all violence as a prerequisite to a national dialogue. The engagement of the Arab League shows that it is ready to live up to its responsibility, and that the support of Western countries for human rights in Syria is taken up in the region itself. We hope that the Arab world will exert sufficient pressure on Syria. The initiative must not be abused by the Syrian regime just to buy time and continue its gross violations of human dignity. So we have to be careful.

In the context of transformation from authoritarian regimes to democratic forms of government, I would like to share with you some impressions from my recent visit to Myanmar. In that country, we are witnessing a breathtaking development. Elections have taken place which have – though largely flawed - brought members of the opposition to Parliament. A dialogue between Aung San Suu Kyi and the President, who seems to be interested in reform, has been established. Censorship has become less severe. Nobody knows whether the reform process will be successful at the end, but developments seem promising.

You may ask why former military dictators show themselves so interested in reform. There are many possible reasons. The country seeks to be elected as ASEAN presidency for 2014. Myanmar needs to approach ASEAN benchmarks for a free trade zone to start in 2015, in order to remain at least partially competitive. But I am sure that Myanmars rulers are also aware of the North African example, and have noticed the fate of Gaddafi. These aspects may contribute to convincing them of the need for real changes. I am optimistic that many of them have understood that Myanmar needs sustainable reforms.

The Arab Revolution also teaches us one very important lesson again: We do need an effective

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Security Council which is capable of acting and responding quickly to the deterioration of a security situation wherever it takes place.

However, what could seem a formation of blocs and fronts inside the Council increasingly inhibits its decision making.

We have unfortunately witnessed a certain extent of such confrontation recently: The Council was unable to respond speedily and decisively to events in Syria and Yemen. Important opportunities to react were lost because Council action was blocked.

By the way, this unfortunate development shows that a popular argument against Security Council reform does not hold. Some insist that in a larger Council, obtaining majorities for critical decisions became more difficult. Well, the problems just mentioned occurred in the 15 member Council in its outdated configuration of the end of World War II.

We thus feel encouraged to continue promoting a more representative Security Council.

The world is being rearranged since the end of the Cold War. A multipolar world is taking shape. The number of people living in “Western” countries - Europe and North America - mainly is declining in relative terms. “Emerging countries” and notably the “BRICS”, namely

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, are gaining weight not only in terms of the global economy. They are more and more actively participating in global politics as well.

We Westerners should bear in mind that back in 1990, it seemed that economic success was possible only in modern democracies, while authoritarian regimes were also bound to fail economically and technologically. Today, China is the number one counterexample which demolishes this old belief of ours. Nowadays it seems that authoritarian regimes may be equally successful in economic and technological terms. This must motivate us to promote even more intensely the values which characterize the Western world – not just in a geographical sense but in the philosophical sense. The values which form the basis of our statehood – rule of law, participation, democracy - go back to enlightenment. It is them which make the West attractive.

Without doubt the emerging economies are partners for the transatlantic community. The world in the 21st century faces global challenges that cannot be addressed by Europe or North America alone: Climate change, energy security, migration and terrorism must be dealt with on a global level and through international cooperation.

But the emerging economies are also our competitors. They compete with us regarding export markets and natural resources of all kinds, driving up prices. And they become more and more our political competitors.

They compete with us for majorities in international organisations, notably the

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Security Council. To mention one example: Brazil had shown flexibility in the substantial negotiations of a resolution on sanctions against Syria. However, when it became clear that Russia and China would use their vetos, Brazil changed sides and abstained (so did India and South Africa), although Western members of the Council had agreed to each and every Brazilian text proposals. Apparently “BRICS” group solidarity was decisive, not content.

What does that tell us? While we see at least some emerging countries as our “value partners”, it seems that they may interpret these values differently, or do not consider them as a priority. We may not only have to intensify our “value dialogue”. We also must convince them that it is in their own interest to care about human rights in other continents – and to act accordingly.

In any case, we must address these countries individually and eventually highlight the differences between them. I certainly do not recommend to try and take the wall apart “brick by brick”. Still, they are no monolithic bloc.

As permanent members of the Security Council with a right to veto, Russia and China share a perspective which is different from Brazil, India and South Africa. While Brazil's and China's economic development is equally stunning, their political system could hardly be more different. We should also focus on India as the most populous democracy in the world. Our goal must be to avoid a "bloc confrontation" of "the West" against "the emerging economies".

Another upcoming actor is Turkey. Its foreign policy has undergone dramatic changes during the last ten years. Turkey has strengthened its position in the region and beyond.

Turkey has also played an important and active role during the Arab revolutions. It has maintained communication channels with the regimes as long as there seemed to be a chance for peaceful change. When this failed, Turkey supported the

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operation in Libya and stood by the opposition.

Regarding Syria, Turkey has tried to convince the Assad regime to initiate reforms. When this did not show results Turkey consequently dissociated itself from Damascus. We welcome the fact that Turkey is now considering sanctions against Syria, and commend it for accommodating thousands of Syrian refugees.

Despite Turkey's engagement with its Eastern neighbours and the Arab world, the

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and the Transatlantic Alliance remain fundamental pillars of Turkey's foreign policy. Turkey's aspiration to join the

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has been underlined by President Gül during his recent visit to Germany. We should foster this process.

On the other hand, I would like to stress that the ambition of Turkey to play a leading role in the region does also comprise the obligation to contribute to regional stability. The deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations has had negative consequences for a traditional key issue of international politics: the Middle East Peace Process.

The region's full potential will only unfold if the conflict of Israelis and Palestinians can be solved. Progress is more urgent than ever. But sometimes you have the feeling that it is farther away than ever.

We have to see very clearly that radical forces throughout the region are working to aggravate the conflict. They not only pose a challenge with regard to security and stability,

they also may block the necessary reforms and modernisation of Arab societies. A resolution of the conflict in the Middle East will bear multiple fruits for the entire region.

Against this backdrop, negotiations must resume. The Quartet statement of September 23rd has laid out a clear timetable. Reactions by the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership were positive afterwards, and initial meetings between Quartet envoys and chief negotiators have taken place. We and our

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partners support this process. Priority rests with further Quartet action and a resumption of negotiations based on clear parameters.

At the same time, the Palestinian leadership has submitted an application for full

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membership and has achieved

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membership through a contentious vote. We believe that these steps have not been helpful. Any action at the

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should remain pending at this stage, in order not to disturb preparations for negotiations.

But provocative action must also be avoided. Recent settlement plans in East Jerusalem and Israel’s announcement after the

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vote to accelerate settlement activities are unacceptable.

We must continue encouraging both parties to preserve good faith and a basis of trust. Negotiations remain the only way towards reaching our common goal: a two state-solution with Israel and a future State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

With regard to the broader Middle East region, I have to address recent media discussions in Israel as to a possible military strike against Iran and its nuclear programme. While Germany's stance on a possible military component of that programme has always been very clear, we strongly advocate a diplomatic solution of this key concern. The international community has to focus on the challenge how to increase pressure on the Iranian regime, including further tightening of the sanctions regime, to stop illicit nuclear activity and to abide

by its international obligations. Speculation about military options does not help to achieve this purpose. We have to be cautious not to enter into a dangerous dynamic. We have to stay the course of the two-track approach which is the best response to the threat posed by the Iranian nuclear programme.

Both Canada and Germany are strongly committed to contributing to rebuilding a stable, democratic and sovereign Afghanistan.

Last summer, President Karzai announced the start of the transition process in seven regions throughout the country. There is already remarkable progress in the field of security. Afghan security forces run their operations increasingly independent.

However, the recent severe incidents in Kabul and in other places show that more efforts are necessary to avoid similar attacks in future.

The International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn on December 5th will be the other key milestone by the end of this year. Over 80 countries and international organizations will be represented, more than 60 of them, including Canada, at the foreign minister’s level.

We will focus on long-term political and economic support of Afghanistan in its region. Our message will be clear: We will remain engaged in Afghanistan far beyond the completion of Transition in 2014.

I applaud Canada for continuing its commitment towards Afghanistan after the withdrawal of combat troops. The priorities the Canadian government has defined for its engagement going forward, including ANSF support, are well aligned with those of Afghanistan and its international partners.

Finally, we will offer strong support at the Bonn Conference for the political process, by endorsing the principles for national reconciliation: it must be Afghan-led, inclusive, and respected and supported by the region. The regional conference on Afghanistan held in Istanbul last week was a good step forward.

Last not least, foreign and security policy cannot be discussed without analyzing the current performance of Europe as a political and economic actor. This is because we should always bear in mind that our clout in the international political arena also depends on economic factors. Only on a solid economic basis, the

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and its member states will be recognized as a key partner for other major players, and will be able to contribute in substance to the resolution of international issues.

This relates specifically to the topic that is dominating our headlines these days: the Euro or – as I would put it – the problem of fiscal discipline and the lack of competitiveness of some parts of the

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The development in domestic politics in some countries does not make things easier.

After the last European Council we had hoped to get into less troubled waters at least for some time.

But the discussion on referenda on the one side and the questioning of political will for economic reforms on the other have put us back behind the curve.

But I remain optimistic.

We are determined to prove all those wrong who feel to be right in predicting a collapse of the Euro as one common currency for Europe.

We will show commitment and resolve to overcome this debt crisis that has hit some of the Euro member countries, but not only them.

There is no doubt that we Europeans, Germans included, will stand to the Euro and will take any necessary measure to defend this currency and what it stands for.

Without sounding too pathetic it is all about defending our prosperity, our freedom and our liberty.

This is what Europe has brought to us for the last decades after the atrocities of the last century.

This is what Europe will bring us in a more and more globalized world.

Some people believe that we Germans in relation with recent problems in Europe and the Euro zone might be tempted to go it alone. This is nonsense. Germany rests on pillars of economic integration and the absence of internal barriers within the European Union. In the next weeks, months and years we will have to reestablish confidence in the financial stability of all members of the Euro zone. Because our partners depend upon successful European integration, we will have to address the construction deficits of the monetary union.

In the early nineties I witnessed a lively discussion between Otto Count Lambsdorff and Hans-Dietrich Genscher on the issue of monetary union. Lambsdorff accused Genscher of moving into the trap of a currency union. Genscher replied “I am certainly not dumb enough

not to see that we are doing the third step before the second and the second step before the first.” Looking back, of course we now realize that the monetary union is the third step, the economic union the second and the political union the first. But regarding both the first and the second step, we are not there yet.

This goes in line with the observation that the good old saying “It’s the economy, stupid!” no longer holds. To the contrary: what we need now is a dedication towards more political integration of Europe. We are convinced that to overcome the current crisis and to assure Europe’s prosperity in the long run we will need more Europe, not less.

Let me conclude: international politics will continue to offer large amounts of interesting jobs to highly skilled people. We will need their dedication and hard work to resolve the key challenges. Many of them are located around the Mediterranean Sea. We need the will of political leaders and the peoples they represent to choose peace instead of conflict. We also need to redesign the world order to accommodate new decisive powers from what was formerly called the “Third World”. Last not least, we have to get our “First World” in order and resolve the financial crisis as well as current turbulences around the Euro.

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