Federal Foreign Office (Germany) — auswaertiges-amt.de

“The people of Syria deserve a chance” – speech by Foreign Minister Wadephul at the German-Syrian Economic Roundtable at the Federal Foreign Office

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Thank you all for joining us at the Federal Foreign Office this morning.

Just under a week ago, we celebrated here at the ministry.

We marked the 75th anniversary of the re-establishment of our Foreign Office.

After the devastation of the Second World War and twelve years of inhumane and brutal dictatorship, this re-establishment was not a matter of course and nor was it easy.

This is also an important point for our meeting here today.

Germany knows what it means when a new society has to be formed from a dictatorship, with a society that is still deeply scarred and divided.

Until recently, Syria suffered under a brutal dictatorship and the civil war resulting from it.

The task facing the Syria of today, namely to develop a statehood that can guarantee security, freedom and a life in dignity, is immense.

Many Syrians had to leave their homeland because of the pressure of the dictatorship and civil war.

Over a million people from Syria found refuge in Germany. For many of them, Germany has become a second home alongside their first home. That remains Syria – their country.

Mr President, I want to tell you today that we stand with Syria.

The people of Syria deserve a chance. And we want to help ensure that good use is made of it.

I recall the many talks with you, Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani, and our meeting in Damascus, Mr President.

From the start, you made clear that the Syrian Government is determined to improve the situation of the people in Syria.

The global situation does not make things easy for you.

Let alone the situation in your region.

But your Government has managed to prevent the current war from spreading to Syrian territory. That is a success, a great success.

I see many steps that make me feel optimistic.

Mr President, on the recent occasion of Nowruz you said, and I quote: “Diversity is a great source of strength for our country.”

A true and correct sentence!

Make use of this strength!

Continue on the path of rapprochement, reconciliation and addressing the past.

A fundamental prerequisite is needed for you to be able to do so.

And that is a functioning economy.

You have already taken significant steps to this end, such as the cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

This is important, as reconstruction can only be achieved with international and multilateral support and coordination.

We are meeting here today because we also see Germany playing a major role in your country’s economic development.

In the medium and long term, there are huge opportunities for economic cooperation between our two countries.

Syria has great potential to develop as part of the neighbourhood of the European Economic Area. It has potential as a market, but also as a producer and above all as a partner.

Moreover, Syria is a strategic hub between Europe, the Gulf states and the Indo-Pacific.

Wherever German companies need support on matters concerning Syria, we – our Embassy in Damascus, the Federal Foreign Office and the German Government – are happy to help.

Together, we want to make use of this historic opportunity for Syria.

Thank you very much.

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