Speech by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas at the event „Meet the Alliance for Multilateralism in Geneva: Promoting International Humanitarian Law and Fighting Impunity”

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“Recession”.

That is the word I used at the Munich Security Conference last week to describe the ongoing decline of international cooperation.

However, today’s meeting proves that it is possible to stop this decline. More than 60 countries have joined our alliance. We share one conviction, namely that the challenges of today and tomorrow can only be solved by international cooperation.

My friend Jean-Yves Le Drian and I decided to focus today’s work on two important elements: the Humanitarian Call for Action and the Alliance against Impunity.

Today, we are here to share and collect best practices, with the aim of improving the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. The need for this has rarely been more urgent than it is today. From Idlib to Sana’a, humanitarian space is shrinking.

Let me give you one example. With our support, the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation gathered together over 100 aid workers in Berlin last November. They pledged to train those who negotiate access on the frontlines. This can literally save lives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our second topic today is the Alliance against Impunity.

Last week, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria published a gruesome report, vividly documenting serious human rights violations against children, the most vulnerable group in any society.

But those responsible are not called to account. Our Alliance must change that. The goal is to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

With the three investigative mechanisms, the international community has made important progress.

Our focus should be on connecting the investigative mechanisms to international and national criminal justice systems.

German prosecutors have brought several cases before our courts, including crimes committed by Da’esh against the Yazidi community and war crimes carried out by the Syrian regime.

Ladies and gentleman,

we should also look at other areas where multilateralism is under pressure. I am thinking of the World Trade Organization, for example. In order to survive, it will need our support to reform its dispute settlement system, as well as its negotiation and monitoring mechanisms.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Multilateralism is not an end in itself. Its benchmark is to deliver tangible results for our citizens.

In order to do so, we must stop the “recession” of international cooperation. We have the critical mass to make a difference, so let us get down to work!

Thank you.

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