Federal Foreign Minister Westerwelle on the German Presidency of the UN Security Council (interview)

2011-07-13

Federal Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in an interview with the ZDF-Morgenmagazin on the issues facing the Germany Presidency of the

UN

Security Council. Broadcast on 13

July 2011.

How does it feel to be holding the gavel again?

It is a great responsibility that Germany is assuming here. Important decisions are to be made. Today we will decide that the United Nations will receive a new member, South Sudan. That is a positive result, at least so far, of international efforts, because we should not forget that only a few years ago millions of people died in the Sudan. It is an important step forward that there was a peaceful process leading to the establishment of a new country.

There is, however, no peace in Syria. The embassies of the USA and France have been attacked. How do you want to achieve the adoption of a resolution against Syria in the Security Council approved by Russia and China?

First of all, we have – above all through a statement by the Council President – condemned the attacks against both embassies in no uncertain terms. It is every government’s obligation to protect the diplomatic missions that are guests in a country. Naturally, together with our European partners here in the Security Council – that is together with France, the United Kingdom and Portugal – we also co-sponsored a draft for a resolution to increase political pressure on the regime in Syria. But there is still a certain resistance that we will have to overcome in many discussions.

When the revolution began in the Arab World, you were very enthusiastic about this “Arabellion”. Saudi Arabian tanks crushed this freedom movement at Pearl Square in

Bahrain. Now Germany is apparently considering selling 200 Leopard battle tanks to Saudi Arabia. How can these two things be reconciled?

First of all, it is still the case that we are happy about the peaceful revolution in Egypt, and we Germans and Europeans will continue to support freedom movements not only in Egypt. As for Bahrain, we found clear words and made it clear that the problems in Bahrain must be solved by a dialogue in Bahrain. But of course every country is different and every situation must be assessed individually. I cannot comment on this, because the consultations are confidential, which has been decided in Germany's Federal Security Council and has been discussed ... I only want to say something in general about the situation in the Middle East: we have made it abundantly clear that the human rights situation is not negotiable for us, but we must also always take our security interests and those of our allies in the region into consideration. Only in this way does a complete picture emerge of what appropriate foreign policy is.

When the question of soldiers being sent to Libya was brought up in the Security Council, you abstained ... Why should the permanent members of the Security Council be in favour of admitting you as a permanent member of the Security Council?

We advocated a political process when the question arose of how we can change the situation in Libya. You can see that more and more countries – including some who are participating in the military intervention in Libya – are also advocating this political process. From our point of view it was the right decision for us Germans to push the political process forward. We decided that we would not send our own soldiers to fight in Libya. We considered that carefully and it was very obviously the right decision to advocate a political process, because there will not be a military solution in Libya. There will be a political solution and Germany is, after all, really involved in solidarity in Afghanistan, for example, and other parts of the world.

A new form of German foreign policy became visible in that context and it can be seen at the moment, too: the Chancellor is travelling through Africa to create business for Germany, selling tanks to Saudi Arabia is under consideration ... You get the impression that German foreign policy is now more business-oriented than it was under earlier governments. Is that the case?

Yes, I consider it one of my responsibilities to see that an exporting country like Germany is well represented all over the world. It is also one of my responsibilities and a central concern of mine to see that around the world doors can be opened for German businesses. Tomorrow I

will travel on to Colombia and then to Mexico. Those countries are not just markets, they are also investment locations and not just for large German companies, also for small and

medium-sized enterprises. We live in a globalized world and if we are smart and do not want to lose the prosperity we have at home in Germany, we must establish partnerships and friendships with the new centres of global power early. For the world is no longer like it was after the end of the Second World War – rather the world is developing a new architecture, a global architecture with new centres of power. For that reason, one constant in my foreign policy has been that we cultivate our established friendships, but also establish new partnerships and friendships in a changing world. And that explicitly includes economic ties, because in our own history we have seen that trade can promote change, even towards enlightenment and free societies.

Questions: Wulf Schmiese

Overview "Newsroom"

Source : https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/110713-bm-zdf-moma-244390