Speech by Minister of State Niels Annen at the closing event of the Bucerius Summer School

2018-08-23

-- Translation of advance text --

Ladies and gentlemen,

Honoured guests,

After 18 years, the Bucerius Summer School on Global Governance is this year reaching adulthood! So before I go any further, please accept my warm congratulations. You have been closely monitoring developments since the dawn of the 21st century. Every year bright young people come together and consider the most pressing issues of our time. And I’m not just saying that because I was able to take part myself in 2002.

Much has happened since the School was set up in 2001. The headings speak for themselves:

9/11.

Afghanistan.

The Iraq War without a

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Resolution.

The economic and financial crisis.

The Arab Spring.

Fukushima.

Libya and Syria.

The illegal annexation of Crimea.

Boko Haram.

The so called Islamic State.

Refugees coming to Europe.

Brexit.

Growing nationalism and right wing populism. And

a multilateral global order which is under increasing pressure.

A somewhat dismal picture. The 21st century seems to have dawned in crisis mode and hasn't got out of it yet. Has all hope been banished?

No, ladies and gentlemen, it hasn't!

I am pinning my hopes on you!

61 curious young people from 33 different countries who have come together to discuss their positions and build friendships, who want to make a difference and who can serve as multipliers in their individual contexts.

While he was Foreign Minister, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier once called for a global partnership of shared responsibility. That is, a partnership, and I quote, "in which opportunities are seized together and in which risks are faced together".

This was and still is what we need. And you, ladies and gentlemen, seem to be the right target audience for this ambitious call. You and indeed all of us need to work to promote a world in which treaties and agreements are respected. We all need to stand up for a rules based international order. We need to be able to rely on one another.

The world may have experienced a fundamental shift in the last 18 years, one which has been especially rapid over the last two years. We are all registering the return to zero sum thinking and nationalism. And we all recognise that our liberal global order is on shaky ground. We don't have to accept this. Indeed you must not accept this. And German foreign policy also has its part to play.

We are all seeing how the world around us seems to have become more fast moving, unpredictable and complex. Our global order is re forming and in many places people are lamenting the supposed end of the Western order. Are things really that grim?

Not everyone considers a shifting world as cause for disquiet or concern. In many countries, people see above all the opportunities that are emerging as a result of globalisation accelerated by the digital transformation and global shifts in power. This holds true first and foremost for Asia where China's rise has triggered the emergence of a new global policy powerhouse.

And yet, I believe there is a different quality to what we are currently experiencing. This is not an upgrade or a more inclusive version of the existing order moving towards a liberal global order 2.0.

On the contrary, we are seeing setbacks when it comes to the protection of international human rights. International law is being purposely watered down or even broken. The system of international trade and its institutions face serious threats. Divides are emerging between those who believe in international cooperation following shared rules and those who seek confrontation on the world stage with a firm unwillingness to compromise – and all for the sake of a short term victory which will turn out to be short sighted and in fact a defeat for all.

Just a few days ago, my colleague State Secretary Andreas Michaelis presented his case for multilateralism in the Federal Foreign Office and talked to you about why this remains the best response to the challenges of our time.

Multilateralism has not reached the end of the road. It is truly the best response to the questions we are asking ourselves today, particularly given the increasing fragmentation of our treasured world order.

Since the end of 2016, the liberal global order is lacking a central stabilising power that is prepared to invest in it without expecting a return on investment for every last penny.

There can only be one response to the tendency of prioritising short term interests in the national sphere of influence at the expense of the international order and this response is: multilateralism.

What does that mean for us in Germany, in Europe?

Particularly given our own past, there can be for me no question that German foreign policy needs to work more than ever to promote a fair, just and rules based international order.

After all, this is what allowed Germany to again become a recognised member of the international community: by including it in European, transatlantic and global institutions, through international trade relations and economic growth.

A stable, reliable economic and trade order is crucial for our economy which is very much geared to exports.

We can also best preserve our security interests in resilient alliances which are bolstered by a stable architecture of disarmament regimes.

So for us the pressing question is what precise contribution Germany can make to defend the rules based international order.

We need the European context if we are to make a difference in the world. If the European Union is to tap its massive potential, we need first of all to deal with our internal challenges.

Following the UK's decision to leave and the rise of populist and nationalist movements, the cohesion of the European Union has for us become the top priority. This is no easy matter given the large number of interests at stake.

Within the European Union, we need to grasp what Foreign Minister Maas recently said in no uncertain terms: the response to America First can for us only be Europe United. For us, it is a matter of presenting European responses. Of reaching political compromise and balancing out interests for example on issues such as security, migration and financial policy. But questions of democracy and the rule of law are also at stake. After all, the European Union is more than an internal market. We are a community founded on shared values. That is what will make us strong in the long term.

To hold its own in this world, Europe – secondly – needs to be able to act effectively in the wider world. It goes without saying that the nation state will remain the central point of reference for citizens in Europe. However, in an increasingly fragmented world, we can only maintain our ability to shape the world if we present a capable and self confident Europe.

The future of multilateralism and the liberal order will, of course, not be decided in Europe alone. Much depends on whether we in Europe manage to act together with partners who share our interests and convictions. Many countries – from Australia and Canada to Mexico, South Korea and Japan – consider Europe to be a close partner when it comes to defending the rules based order.

In a multipolar world, particularly we Europeans can no longer define our interests in geographical terms. What we are talking about are shared values and shared priorities which will ultimately enable Europe to hold its own in dealings with actors who have different interests.

Relations in the quadrilateral made up of the

EU

, the United States, China and Russia are of course of immense importance at the horseshoe-shaped table of the

UN

Security Council in New York – the body that remains central to our global order.

The very good result of 184 of 190 votes for Germany's candidature for a seat on the Security Council shows we are trusted. People have high hopes. Performing this role will be a central

task of German foreign policy in this legislative term. Expectations are high, perhaps even a little too high, as we take our seat at a difficult time. In recent years, the Security Council has often been characterised by blocking tactics rather than agreed, shared action.

We will thus speak out more for multilateralism also in the

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Security Council.

This holds true for the difficult crises on the agenda, first and foremost the situation in Syria. As a member of the Small Group, we are working to ensure the political process in Syria can move forward. The aim is to support the

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led Geneva Process in order to finally create the prerequisites for real talks within Syria under the aegis of the

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Of course, this is also true of the tensions in eastern Ukraine where new momentum is required for the implementation of the Minsk agreements after five years of fighting. It was also to the credit of German foreign policy that a meeting in the Normandy format was held in June this year at the invitation of Foreign Minister Maas – after 16 months of radio silence.

Alongside acute crisis diplomacy, we will also work to strengthen the United Nations in the spheres of conflict prevention and peacekeeping. With our humanitarian assistance as well as our work on crisis prevention, stabilisation and post conflict peacebuilding, we are making a concrete contribution to moving political processes on conflict resolution forward, to stop violence and give the people who have fled violence and terror brighter prospects at home.

Particularly in this field, the Federal Foreign Office recently restructured and added to its tool kit. Ultimately, we need to work to implement the famous coordinated approach which pools civilian, police and military approaches as well as short and long term approaches and uses the various conflict resolution instruments in strategic fashion. It is clear that the primacy of politics and prioritising prevention are our guiding principles here.

How do we want to work on the major challenges we share? What solutions are possible? And how can we prevent a return to nationalism and a world dominated by power struggles? Dealing with these questions is more important than ever.

This is first and foremost a challenge for policy – also, let me be clear, foreign policy – and a challenge we need to rise to. To compete with the supposedly simple solutions peddled by populists and propagandists, we need to make our policy inclusive and comprehensible.

That is why the Federal Foreign Office is sending its diplomats not just all over the world but increasingly also all across Germany, into our schools and universities. We take the opportunity to talk to the citizens for example about what they expect of Europe, how they see the United States or how we are to shape relations with Russia. This isn’t about preaching to people but about being in touch with what is going on and giving the citizens an insight into the often difficult and sometimes even painful process of political decision-making.

Conducting these debates is not just the job of government members and politicians. It is also the job of the media, think tanks, businesses, culture professionals and universities.

And how wonderful that you, ladies and gentlemen, from all these so diverse fields are here today and are willing and able to conduct precisely this debate.

After 18 years of the Bucerius Summer School on Global Governance, the format aiming “to foster leadership qualities in young professionals by involving them in an international dialogue” seems more relevant than ever. Particularly given the growing divide in Germany, in Europe and in the world between those who advocate openness and tolerance and those who preach isolation and a return to nationalism, it is important to listen to one another, to keep communication channels open, to build networks and together look for solutions.

I thus very much encourage you to continue with your dialogue, with your thinking across borders and with your constructive criticism of the debate ongoing in society and politics. I encourage you to assume responsibility for peace and justice in the world. You are the generation in whom we are vesting our hopes.

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