

Speech by

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Translation of advance text

Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We seem to be confronted with a phase of political hurricanes and earthquakes. And the tone of the confrontations seems to get harsher, more intransigent and belligerent from day to day and from speech to speech.

As responsible politicians, it is vital that we ask ourselves:

How can we bring about a change in direction? A change of direction which will bring about more peace, more stability, less hunger and poverty and better prospects for everyone in the world.

How do we ensure that globalisation finally delivers justice for all, not riches to the few?

One answer as to how we achieve this change in direction can be found in a report to the United Nations Secretary-General. It states:

We must not limit ourselves to the "traditional questions of peace and war," but must also work towards overcoming "world hunger, mass misery and alarming disparities between the living conditions of rich and poor."

I find this analysis very apt.

However, the bitter thing about this quote is that it comes from a report to the UN Secretary-General which is forty years old. This apt analysis of the global situation can be found in a report commissioned for the United Nations almost forty years ago to the day.

It was in the report of the International North-South Commission, which began its work forty years ago in 1977. The Chairman of the Commission was the former German Chancellor Willy Brandt.

Essentially, humanity is still faced with more or less the same structural difficulties today – but it seems to have become rather more difficult to change the world for the better.

Looking around the world today, it seems that a world view which puts one's own national interests first and is no longer engaged in a balancing of interests between the nations and countries of this world is gaining ever more ground. National egoism is worthless as a regulatory principle for our world!

For this world view describes the world as an arena, a kind of battleground, in which everyone is fighting against everyone else and in which everyone has to assert their own interests, either alone or in alliances of convenience.

In this world view, the law of the strongest prevails, not the strength of the law.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced that we have to rise against this world view. We need more international cooperation and less national egoism, not the other way round.

Some forty years ago, the North-South Commission recognised that global problems cannot be resolved through confrontation but only through often arduous efforts to identify common interests.

Ultimately, no country, no nation will gain if it only strives to assert its own interests. For if everyone were to do that, confrontations and conflicts would increase rather than prosperity.

The motto “Our country first” not only leads to more national confrontations and less prosperity. In the end, there will only be losers.

Our historical experience as Germans is very different: only after we learned following two terrible world wars to see our former enemies as neighbours and partners with whom we want to shoulder responsibility for a peaceful coexistence, only since then, do our own citizens in Germany have a better life.

We have learned that it was not "Germany first" that made our country strong and prosperous. Rather, it was only "European and international responsibility first" that gave us Germans peace and prosperity.

In international cooperation, no-one loses sovereignty. Rather we all gain new sovereignty which we could no longer have as nation-states on our own in today's world.

That is why the European Union today provides the framework for our German policies. The road was often stony and arduous. For nothing is more difficult than turning former enemies into friends. Often the road is not popular and one needs considerable political courage.

For the call for international cooperation and for efforts to balance interests is not always popular in one's own country. However, this courage has finally created peace in Europe after centuries of war. We Germans are grateful today to the courageous people in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and other countries in Europe for showing the courage after the Second World War to make us – their former enemies – new and lasting friends.

It is precisely due to this experience in Germany and Europe, that we are calling for strong and functioning joint institutions, first and foremost the United Nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

How urgently essential it is that we work together to create a safer world is demonstrated by the current irresponsible actions of North Korea, which pose a serious threat to world peace.

We have to send a clear message: the international community will not accept North Korea's nuclear provocations.

Germany welcomes the sanctions adopted by the Security Council and is calling for their swift implementation at European level.

At the same time, we have to make use of all diplomatic means at our disposal, first of all to defuse the situation and subsequently to find a point of departure for long-term solutions.

The settlement of this international crisis is so important because otherwise others will be encouraged to copy North Korea. If a country manages to build up a nuclear arsenal while the international community stands by and watches helplessly, then other political leaders will follow this example.

This will result in completely new nuclear trouble spots in the world, and our children and grandchildren will grow up in a very dangerous world. That is why North Korea acquiring nuclear weapons is neither a bilateral nor a regional problem. Rather it is a global challenge which we have to master together.

It cannot be that striving to build up a nuclear arsenal leads to success on the international stage.

It is therefore more important than ever that the international architecture for arms control and disarmament does not crumble. Existing treaties and agreements must not be called into question.

That applies in particular to the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme.

The agreement is a way out of the impasse of a nuclear confrontation which would jeopardise regional security and have an impact far beyond the region.

But only if all obligations are rigorously adhered to and the agreed transparency is created, can the urgently needed confidence grow.

Germany will work within the E3+3 framework to ensure that the agreement is strictly implemented and upheld.

This is not only about Iran. This is about the credibility of the international community.

For which state would refrain from developing its own nuclear programme if it turns out that negotiated agreements do not endure and confidence in agreements with the international community are not worth the paper they are written on?

Ladies and gentlemen,

What the world needs most urgently is new trust. Especially with regard to the implementation of the ban on the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we have a request for the United States, Russia and China. These countries will be instrumental in ensuring that the ban on the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as arms control and disarmament are implemented. To this end, the trust among them must be restored.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Speeches by the Presidents of the United States are always important and interesting. It is always worthwhile listening to them or even reading them. I found a quote in one of these speeches which I especially liked.

In this speech, the American President called for "general and complete disarmament".

Every year, he said in his speech, billions of dollars were spent on weapons that are "acquired for the purpose of making sure we never need to use them". This, he went on to say, was certainly not "the most efficient means of assuring peace".

The speech was given by John F. Kennedy in 1963.

You can see, everything we need for a safer future has already been thought, written and said.

I believe we should focus today on the bold visions of the North-South Commission and that of John F. Kennedy and have the courage to put forward new offers on disarmament, arms control and confidence-building.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of our tasks is to resolve emerging crises early on.

One recent example of this is the escalation of violence against the Rohingyas and the flows of refugees in the region. We have to act as quickly as possible here – in the form of both political and humanitarian support – in order to alleviate the suffering and end the conflict. Germany will again increase its aid for the Rohingyas via the International Red Cross.

Germany is committed to providing political and humanitarian support, as well as to practical peace-building, in many crisis regions around the world.

Military engagement under the auspices of the United Nations is also sometimes necessary. However, we have to make sure that we do not create an imbalance.

The report of the North-South Commission included an impressive finding: the military expenditure of only half a day would have sufficed to finance the whole malaria eradication programme at that time.

These days, I suspect that not even half a day would be necessary.

We currently spend just under 1.7 trillion US dollars each year on arms around the world. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations, i.e. to eradicate extreme poverty in the world by 2030, we would need only 10 percent of that.

We Germans have therefore tripled our funding for civilian peacebuilding measures during the last few years.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thankfully, progress has also been made. For example, in Iraq. We have to quickly consolidate the successes which have been achieved there in the fight against the

so-called Islamic State by initiating reconstruction and stabilisation measures in the liberated cities and regions.

Germany has therefore decided to make available an additional 250 million euros for the reconstruction of Mosul. For we cannot abandon the victims of the IS thugs!

It is also important to strengthen a democratic and inclusive Iraqi state – and to ensure that the actions of an individual region do not leave it exposed to a renewed threat of destabilisation. We can only ask the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq not to trigger any new conflicts. New conflicts are the very last thing that this country needs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We also have to make progress in the Ukraine conflict.

The Minsk agreements provide a clear road map for peace, in the elaboration of which Germany played a key role.

It is based on the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the inviolability of borders.

If proposals are now put forward on deploying a UN peace mission, then I think we should pursue this idea resolutely. Certainly there is not yet sufficient consensus on what this peace mission should look like. However, it is worth the effort to try this idea out and we ask the UN Secretary-General to press for this proposal to be realised.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The North-South Commission pointed out that focusing solely on questions of war and peace is not enough.

Rather, these issues are inextricably linked to the fair distribution of resources, to economic and social development and to respect for universal human rights.

Only a world in which solidarity prevails will ultimately bring us security and stability.

Agenda 2030 shows that the international community has identified this as a “common interest”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If we want to realise major ambitions such as peace, security and justice, we need strong joint institutions, particularly the United Nations.

The founders of the United Nations were not naive – they had experienced the horrors of the first half of the 20th century.

For that very reason, they bequeathed to us the UN Charter with its timeless principles and maxims.

However, ladies and gentlemen,

Although the principles of the United Nations are not outdated, the world organisation has to adapt to the challenges of our time.

We therefore support the Secretary-General's efforts to push ahead with bold reforms within the United Nations. He has set the right priorities.

How well the reform of the United Nations succeeds is largely up to us, the member states.

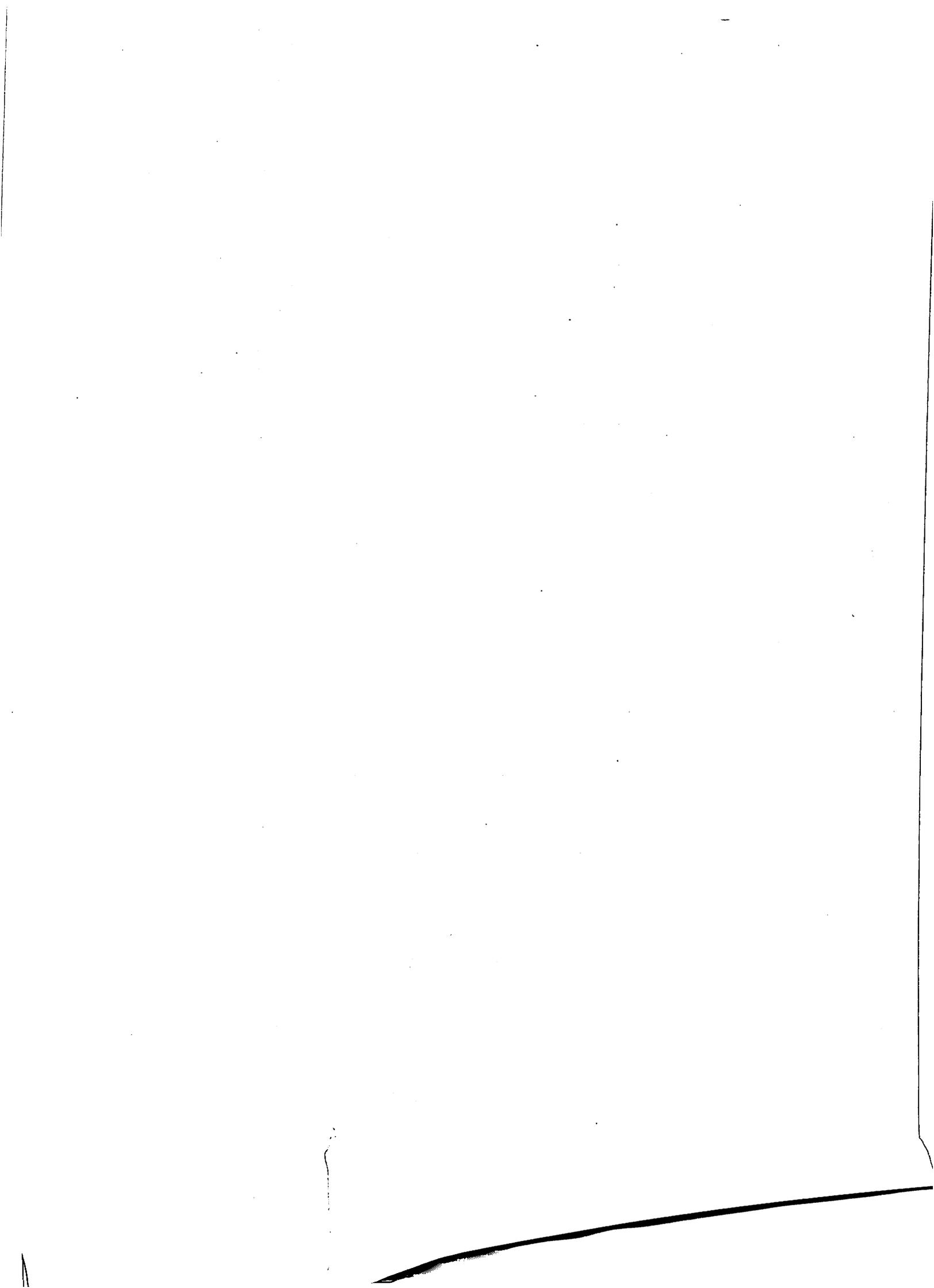
We have to work together to give the United Nations more clout and more efficiency.

In my view, the reform efforts should not focus primarily on cutbacks.

On the contrary, the United Nations will probably need more funding. We have to provide the United Nations with the means it needs to fulfil its mandate.

At present, however, the figures tell a different story:

The World Food Programme receives less than 50% of the *funding needed to* combat the world's hunger crises today.



The United Nations Development Programme receives a mere 15% of its contributions as voluntary, non-tied payments today, in 2011 it was still 50%. And things do not look any better with respect to other UN aid programmes.

It cannot be that those in positions of responsibility at the United Nations spend more time distributing begging letters to find the necessary funding than in organising effective assistance.

We have to change course here. We have to grant the United Nations more freedom, in exchange for greater transparency on the use of funds.

Germany, at any rate, intends to maintain its financial support for the United Nations.

As the fourth biggest provider of assessed contributions and far beyond that, for example as one of the biggest donors of humanitarian assistance around the world, our input is substantial.

I believe that we as member states should now adopt a further reform project which is long overdue:

the composition of the Security Council should reflect the realities of today's world.

For today, more states than at the time of the establishment of the United Nations over 70 years ago are shouldering responsibility for peace and security – and are prepared to live up to this responsibility in the United Nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

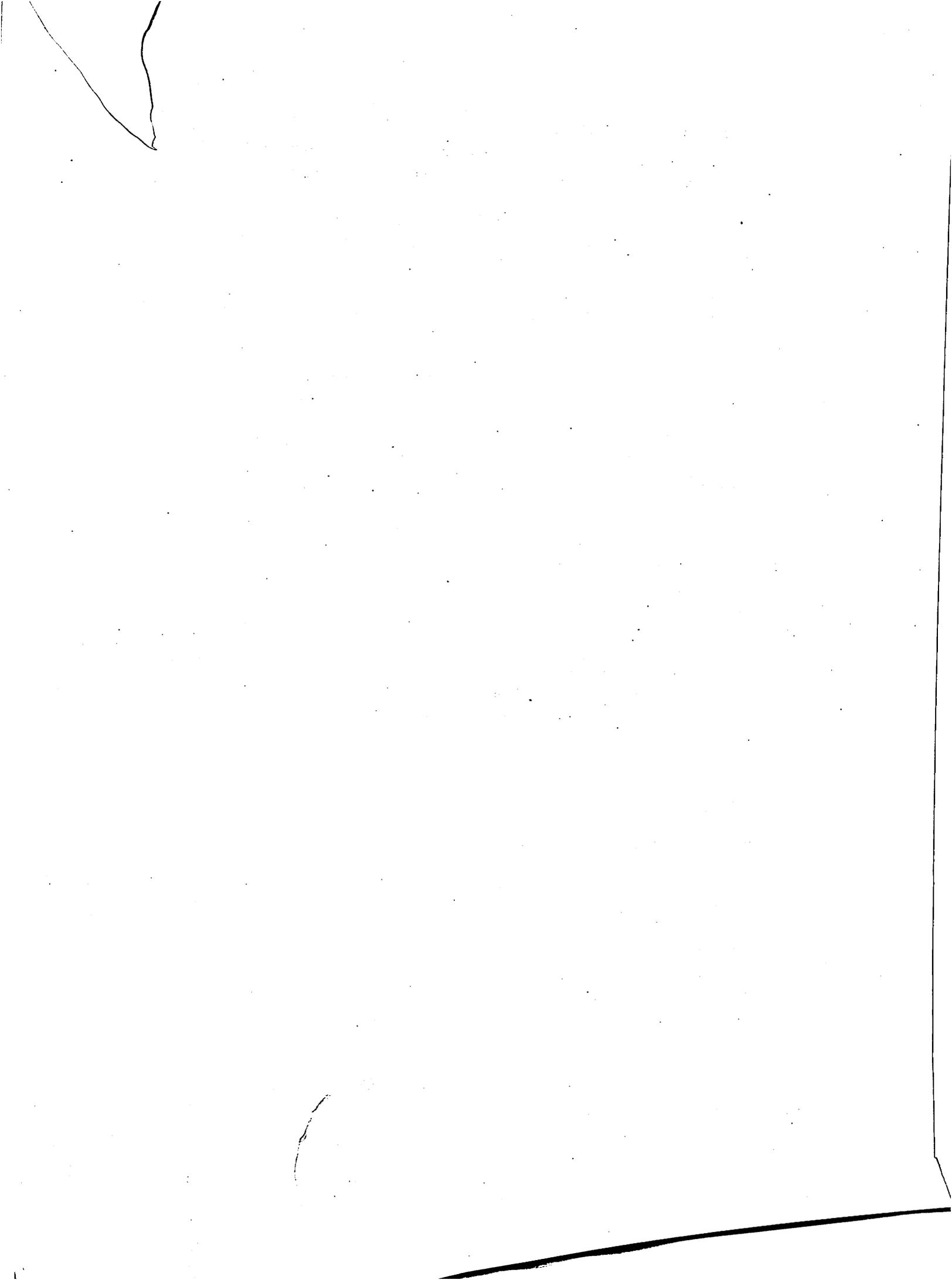
Germany is ready and willing to shoulder additional responsibility.

That is why Germany is seeking a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2019-2020 term.

We do so with a clear compass – peace and security, global justice and human rights are indivisibly linked.

We intend to work in partnership with all members of the *United Nations – in Africa, Asia, America and Europe.*

For we can only resolve the global problems if we reach a *fair and peaceful balance* of interests among all nations.



Yes, this is an arduous process. However, we have to muster up the courage to
down this path.

For, as Willy Brandt, who headed the North-South Commission after leaving office as
Chancellor, once said:

We firmly believe "that problems created by men can also be solved by men".

Let us work on this together!

Thank you very much!