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VNGV-Rede

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

we live in a **world of quick headlines and even quicker slogans.**

“Take back control”

“My country first”

“Us against them.”

Slogans that paint the world in black and white.

Slogans that want to make us believe things are very simple.

That there is only **one side to look at.**

Us versus them.

I come from the country where **this logic ... “us versus them” ... was taken to the worst extremes** that humankind has ever seen:

A murderous World War that killed millions.

And the worst imaginable crime against humanity – the Shoah, the genocide of 6 million Jews.

Dehumanized, **murdered. Just for being Jews.**

Murdered because of a Nazi ideology that would only accept the humanity of those they defined as Germans.

After World War II, this **institution was founded on the understanding that**

[pause] **“us versus them”** *[pause]*

leads to disaster.

That the world needs a countermodel: our UN Charter.

A countermodel to a world in which we only accept the humanity of **ourselves** – but not of others.

A countermodel that **grants every country in the world the right to determine its own destiny,**

that **casts a positive vision of our shared future:**

- A vision of an **international order** that is based on **rules**, on the equality of every **state** and every **human**
- Of **cooperation - instead of divisive nationalism.**
- Of **a humanity that is indivisible.**

And ... **these are not simply slogans.**

Those are the principles we try to live up to every day.

Yet **living up to them is anything but simple.**

It **demands hard work**, maybe more than ever before.

It needs **empathy and solidarity** – the opposite of **“my country first”**.

It demands the will to **put ourselves in the shoes of others.**

It **demands, especially in times of crises,** the strength to recognize the other's pain, even if our own pain seems unbearable.

And to **find common ground** – despite all the things that divide us.

It also means that we have to **face the dilemma** that the **values of the Charter can at times appear to contradict each other.**

Such as the **inherent right to self-defense** and the **responsibility to protect civilians** – especially, when **civilians are misused as human shields.**

Resolving this is harder than simply exclaiming:

“either – or”,

“us versus them”.

Especially in our days of social media, where simple TikTok truths seem to blur out all complexity and nuance, sometimes even facts.

And we can see how hard it is in the **Middle East.**

In its **ruthless attack of 7 October last year**, Hamas maimed and killed some 1,200 Israeli men, women and children.

To this day, the terrorists are holding more than 100 people hostage.

Including **German citizen. Including children.**

At the same time, in Gaza, hungry, traumatized children are wandering the ruins of what used to be their homes, desperately searching for their parents under the rubble.

Seeing all this... with burning hearts... I guess it's human that we are all tempted to fall for simple slogans.

To only see one side.

In addition, each of us is looking at this conflict from our own perspective and history. We need to respect that.

But we must not stop there.

Instead, we need to ask ourselves: "What if this was me? If these were my children?"

(Pause)

"In a competition of pain, there can be no winners".

This is how one of the hostage families put it.

Humanity is universal.

If in the darkest hour of her life, the mother of a murdered hostage finds the strength to see both sides, ...

Then we as leaders, who have the privilege to speak in this hall, should be capable of doing the same.

Not to fall for quick slogans.

But to rally around humanity in order to overcome this vicious circle of hate.

Universal humanity means: the **rights of Israelis and Palestinians do not cancel each other out.**

And this is why my country **stands by its commitment to the security of Israel. By Israel's right to self-defense.**

And why, **at the same time**, we are **working every day to end the hell for the children of Gaza.**

Because **lasting security for Israelis will only be possible if there is lasting security for Palestinians.**

And the opposite is also true: **lasting security for Palestinians** will only be possible if there is **lasting security for Israelis.**

This is why we are **working so hard for a hostage deal**, the **Biden plan** which was **endorsed by the Security Council**,

Why at the same time, **together with our partners, we are working hard to get more aid into Gaza. Germany alone has provided more than 360 million euro** for humanitarian aid for Gaza since last October.

And this is also why yesterday we came together with a group of countries to call for an immediate 21-day ceasefire along the Blue Line.

Because an escalation in the North would not bring anyone long-lasting security.

And ... as frustrating the lack of progress is, we are not giving up on seeking a political vision for the day when the fighting has stopped...

For Israelis and Palestinians to be **able to live peacefully, side by side, in two states.**

For me, resignation is simply not an option – because that would mean that the playbook of terrorism and extremism carries the day.

We need to recognize each other's pain, each other's interests,.. and yet, also listen openly to each other's complaints if we want to move forward.

And if we do so, we might sometimes hear things we don't want to hear...

our own shortcomings.

I remember how I called... two and a half years ago... so many colleagues here in the room, to ask for your support in standing up against Russia's imperial war in Ukraine.

And how one of you said: "but where were you when we needed you? When we were attacked by the Houthis?"

And others asked: "Why didn't you stand with us in our anticolonial struggle?"

And yes, that gave me pause – because they had a point.

I firmly believe: critical self-reflection, of what we or the generations before us have done wrong, is actually to our benefit.

Because the ability to learn from past mistakes makes societies stronger. And is the only way to build a better future.

That's why my country has started to **address our colonial past more thoroughly**. The **restitution of artefacts is a crucial element here**.

That's also why we are in the midst of an **important reconciliation process with Namibia**.

Because we **can't undo mistakes of the past**.

But **we can unite for a better future**.

Facing our colonial history to me means **doing the right thing**.

But it also means that we can stand up to the imperialist atrocities we're witnessing in our days.

Russia does not have a **better future in mind for Ukraine**

Ukraine is an **independent country**. That gave up its nuclear Arsenal in the 1990s, because it believed in the **principles and guarantees of the Charter**.

And in **its bodies, like the Security Council**.

Three decades later, it is attacked by a P5 country.

One of the **countries that bears**, as the Charter says, "**the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security**".

Russia's **war against Ukraine has been ravaging Ukrainian cities, schools and hospitals**. For almost 1000 days now.

And it is **ravaging the security order of my continent, Europe**.

Its ripple effects have been felt across the world

Many of you are feeling are feeling it in your own countries.

That's why I understand, that some of you are **asking**:

“wouldn't the war be over soon, if you just stopped providing Ukraine with weapons?”

There's **nothing wrong with asking that.**

Because **we all wish for peace.**

But the idea that **if there were no defensive weapons, there would be no fighting and no dying** in Ukraine **is as simple as it is wrong.**

We **have seen what happened in June.** When Ukraine invited Russia to an international peace summit.

But instead of stopping his attack and coming to the negotiation table, **Putin sent his response by bombing a children's hospital.**

As long as Putin is not willing to come to the negotiation table, **stopping our support for self-defence would simply mean: leaving Ukraine's hospitals and its children defenseless.**

It would mean more war crimes, not less.

Possibly in other countries, too.

Time and again within the last months, **Russia has been toying with the inviolability of the borders of the Baltic states, and Poland.**

Two weeks ago, it fired a missile against a civilian grain ship in Romanian territorial waters.

This is why today I am also **asking for your support in calling on Putin to cease his attacks and come to the negotiation table.**

Not only for our security, but also in your own interest.

If a **permanent member of the Security Council** is allowed to conquer and destroy its smaller neighbor, the **very essence of the Charter is under attack.**

If Russia stops its attack, the war is over. If Ukraine stops defending itself, Ukraine is over. And our Charter:

- **Sovereign equality.** Article 2, paragraph 1.
- **Peaceful settlement of disputes.** Article 2, paragraph 3.
- **The prohibition of the use of force.** Article 2, paragraph 4.

And this is why **we will continue to stand firmly with Ukraine.**

To achieve a peace that is just and lasting... with security guarantees.

A peace that secures Ukraine's existence as a free and independent country.

A peace that ensures Ukraine's and Europe's security.

And the security of all of us.

...

Obviously, none of this is easy.

For almost 1000 days now, so many countries have been working for Ukrainian children to sleep in their beds again – and not in air raid shelters.

For almost a year, so many of us have been working to help end the suffering in the Middle East. In countless talks in the region, countless meetings in our UN bodies.

And yes, **sometimes I, too, feel like giving in to despair.**

But throwing up our hands in resignation is not an option.

Because then, the **logic of “us versus them” takes over.**

And also, we tend to forget one thing, and this is important to me, and we need to state it loud and clear:

there is a lot we can achieve as an international community.

If we stand together. If we take each other’s perspective.

And to name only two striking examples:

Think about what we achieved at the COP in **Dubai**, only a year ago.

When **we saw what is possible when we overcome “us-versus-them”**.

Industrial states against G77. North versus South.

When we **listened to those most affected by the climate crisis, to our **SIDS partners****, who have been telling us for decades that the climate crisis is threatening their very existence.

When with more than 190 states, we **agreed to signal the end of the fossil era, at COP 28. And when we set up the Loss and Damage Fund for the most vulnerable.**

And we saw again what we can achieve just earlier this week.

When we passed the **Pact for the Future**.

It took **tough negotiations**, hundreds of hours of text work in conference rooms, **overnight sessions, last-minute compromises** – ...for over two years, helped along with our partners from Namibia.

But **in the end, the vast majority of us found the strength to rally around what unites us.**

rules - instead of brute nationalism.

cooperation - instead of division.

A humanity that is universal.

And it is **in this spirit that Germany is running for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2027-2028 term.**

We are running **as defenders of the Charter**. Of our **shared principles**.

And that means that we also need to take a **critical look** at the **status quo of our multilateral institutions**.

Because in many ways, **our multilateral system still reflects a time when hardly any of us here had been born,**

when the striking number of **142 of the countries represented in this hall today were not sitting at the table.**

That needs to change.

And that's why we are working for a **reform of the Security Council** so that it better **reflects the world we live in**. That has a **better representation of African countries**.

And yes, it is also totally **unjust** that at the two most important **international financial institutions, there are only Europeans and Americans at the top**.

We **need our institutions to be accepted by all of us**. And for that, they **need to represent all of us**.

And "all of us", that is not just the men of the world.

The one thing we definitely all have in common is this: ...

women make up 50% of every single country.

But in 80 years, this organization has never had a female Secretary General.

So if this organization calls for equality and justice in the world, it is long overdue for us to show it - here in New York!

So... we all should already practice to say the words:

"Madam Secretary General, you have the floor!"

Because the next Secretary General of this organization has to be a woman.

Obviously, **that alone will not immediately end all the remaining inequality for women** in our own countries.

Yet, **representation matters**.

"If you can see it, you can be it."

In this General Assembly, we **hail from all regions of the world**, but **none** of us has **reached full gender equality**.

And I think we can only achieve it together. By **learning from each other**. And by **speaking up for women rights**.

Not only in our own countries - but everywhere.

Because women's rights are human rights.

And not something Northern, Western, Eastern or Southern.

They are universal.

None of us want to be raped for standing up for our rights,

none of us wants to be arrested for showing our hair out in the sun.

No woman, and I would guess, no man either.

Because a life is a life.

A Palestinian woman's life is a life.

An Israeli men's life is a life.

A Sudanese girl's life is a life.

A Ukrainian boy's life is a life.

Almost **80 years ago**, the **UN** was founded exactly on that.

On the realization that simple slogans, that "us versus them" leads to disaster.

That humanity is indivisible.