



Welcome Statement by Christophe Eick, Director General for Legal Affairs, Federal Foreign Office, on the occasion of the Conference “UN at 75: Effective Multilateralism and International Law”

9.10.2020

Dear Under-Secretary-General, dear Miguel de Serpa Soares,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are grateful for the opportunity to co-host this conference with the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations. And we are grateful to all the panelists and moderators who have agreed to discuss the topic of this conference from various angles in three panels.

Today's conference is about “effective multilateralism and international law”. A very befitting theme in these times of pandemic. Covid-19 does not only pose a challenge to our health systems, our societies and our economies. It could also leave our international system even more fractured – with countries competing over vaccines and medicines. Or it could lead to more international cooperation – for example, if we manage to make coronavirus vaccines available for all of humanity.

However, the Covid-19-pandemic is only one, albeit very striking reminder of the challenges we face: We are confronted with a multitude of global problems and existential questions for the future of mankind, such as climate change and the protection of our environment, to name just a few.

As Chancellor Merkel put it in her video address on the occasion of the 75th UN High Level Week: “Those who believe that they can get along better alone are mistaken. Our wellbeing is something that we share – our suffering too. We are one world.”

What we need in these challenging times is more international coordination and cooperation, more effective multilateralism, not less.

At the heart of an effective multilateralism lies an international order that is based on rules, applicable to all. International law, with the UN Charter at its core, provides a set of guiding principles for multilateralism – it is the DNA of a just and legitimate international order.



As Minister Maas has just mentioned: “The UN Charter is an invaluable achievement. Today, its promise remains as valid as in 1945: A more just and peaceful world is possible!”

Although the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, such as the measure to maintain international peace and security and the prohibition of the use of force in international relations, are the timeless and enduring core of international law, their application is subject to contemporary challenges. They need to evolve in order to ensure continued authority and legitimacy.

Today’s conference is a unique opportunity to discuss the development of international law. We will be taking stock of the contributions made to international law by UN bodies, international jurisdiction and academia to the development of international law.

For Germany, international law is and remains a fundamental cornerstone of our foreign policy.

Why are we so convinced of the importance of international law? Why do we campaign for this conviction around the world? We believe that the rules-based international order and international law at its core lie in our national interest. But we are also convinced that they lie – at least in the long run – in the interest of all countries and in the interest of the international community as a whole.

First: International law is imperative for all countries to be able to participate in international relations on an equal footing. In a world order based only on power and the exercise thereof, those who hold the most power and use it most ruthlessly will win. International law offers a fundamentally different approach: that of sovereign equality of states. Those who prevail through force do not depend on rules. But whether an order is just, and whether it is generally accepted, is measured by whether it enables those who are weaker to have their interests heard and recognised.

Second, international law acts as the guardrails of just foreign policy action. It places boundaries on arbitrary power politics. Its rules are the outcome of a balancing of foreign policy interests. In many areas, they reflect the consensus to which all of the countries involved in the creation of the law were able to agree. This is the essential foundation for the acceptance and observance of international law. The prohibition of



the use of force enshrined in the UN Charter is paramount in relations between countries. It embodies the aspiration and the promise that countries can, as a matter of principle, deal with one another without the use of force. This was a quantum leap in the history of international law, one which was previously considered to be impossible.

Third, law creates peace. It provides countries with procedures for resolving conflicts in peaceful ways. The rise in the number of cases before international courts in recent decades shows that ever more countries are making use of the possibilities for peaceful settlement of conflicts that international law offers. Even in the case of particularly sensitive disputes over borders and territories, more and more countries are placing their trust in the order-fostering impact of a verdict or an arbitration ruling.

Our choice is clear: multilateral cooperation and the respect of international law remain the foundation for peace, prosperity and justice.

In closing, I would like to once again extend my sincere welcome to all participants of this conference. I am very much looking forward to our debate.

And without further ado, let me give the virtual floor to Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, United Nations Legal Counsel.

Filename: Rede D5 (002).doc
Directory: C:\Users\Rustam.Nazirboboev\Documents
Template: C:\Users\Rustam.Nazirboboev\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Templates
 \Normal.dotm
Title:
Subject:
Author: Cafarella, Sonia (AA privat)
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 10/12/2020 11:46:00 AM
Change Number: 14
Last Saved On: 10/12/2020 12:12:00 PM
Last Saved By: Leo, Alina (AA privat)
Total Editing Time: 0 Minutes
Last Printed On: 23/12/2020 1:22:00 AM
As of Last Complete Printing
 Number of Pages: 3
 Number of Words: 902 (approx.)
 Number of Characters: 4,750 (approx.)