Rede

des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen

Heiko Maas, MdB

vor der Genfer Abrüstungskonferenz:

"A watershed year for arms control"

Berlin/Genf, den 22. Februar 2021

"While disarmament (…) has become a ***necessity for the survival of mankind*** *(…),* ***little progress*** *has been made since the end of the Second World War."*

Madam Secretary-General,

Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is a **quote** from the historic resolution that created the **Conference on Disarmament** in **1978** *(sprich: nineteen seventy-eight)*.

Of course, our global **conventions banning biological, chemical and certain conventional weapons**, as well as the **Nuclear Test Ban Treaty**, are important **milestones.**

But the truth is that, over the years, too many of these agreements have been **neglected or openly violated**.

This year, however, a **new perspective** for disarmament is arising.

The importance of the **New START Treaty**'s extension can hardly be overstated.

Now, it is up to us to **build on that success.**

Our first task is to **get nuclear disarmament back on track.**

- Last year, the **Stockholm Initiative** presented a roadmap to advance nuclear disarmament. These **practical steps** – ranging from **risk reduction** and **verification** all the way to further **stockpile reductions** – remain on the table.

- The **Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative** has also made valuable recommendations to strengthen <u>all</u> aspects of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
The **Review Conference** later this year will be our opportunity to **put these words into action** – and to take decisive steps towards our common goal: **a world without nuclear weapons**.

Our <u>second task</u> is to **counter proliferation and to end impunity.**

- **President Biden** and **Secretary Blinken** have stated their readiness to **rejoin the JCPoA**, if Iran returns to **full compliance**. It is in Iran's best interest to **change course now**, before the agreement is damaged beyond repair.

As a participant in the JCPoA, we expect nothing less from Tehran than **full compliance, full transparency and full cooperation** with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

- **North Korea** also demands our full attention. Not only did it violate, and later leave, the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is constantly enhancing its forbidden nuclear and missile programmes. **Staying united** in our efforts to **denuclearise** North Korea is a matter of credibility. Combined with **diplomatic engagement**, that is our best chance to reach **lasting peace.**

- **Syria** has repeatedly used **chemical weapons** against its own population. These **horrible crimes** were clearly confirmed by the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**. Our duty, as responsible states, is to hold those who committed these acts **accountable**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our <u>third big task</u> is to **re-think arms control,** due to the changing face of **technology**.

- **Artificial intelligence, biotech and cyber** all bear great **potential** for human progress. But they also create new **threats**. **Autonomous weapons** operating outside of human control gravely undermine human rights and humanitarian law.

Addressing such risks is what **maintaining security in the 21st century** will be about. It is high time to develop **necessary rules** – based on **international law** and through **multilateral cooperation**.

- Finally, the **COVID-19 pandemic** has shown us how **vulnerable** we are to a virus. **Biological agents** can be even more dangerous.

  The **Biological Weapons Convention** must therefore be updated to address new threats and rapid progress in biotechnology and science. That is the **goal** we should set ourselves for the **upcoming Review Conference**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Arms control strengthens security.

Disarmament saves lives.

43 years after the **Conference on Disarmament** was created, its **huge potential still remains untapped.**

This **needs to change.**

And the **change can start here today, in 2021 – a <u>watershed year for arms control</u>.**