

**Ambassador Joachim Bleicker**

**Speech on the German National Day 2023**

**Excellencies, dear guests and friends,**

**thank you so much for joining us today in such large numbers to celebrate with us our national holiday, yesterday's Day of German Unity. COVID-19 is still with us, but fortunately it is not anymore the deadly threat it used to be and we can meet again without restrictions and fear!**

**These days, Germans can celebrate 33 years of unity in peace and freedom after 45 years of separation and cold war confrontation. We are proud of what we have achieved and at the same time grateful that after the horrors of the Second World War we were able to become an equal and reliable member of the international community again.**

**This path, based on a clear renouncement of Nazism and all its crimes and horrors, also includes 50 years of membership in the United Nations, which both German states joined in September 1973. Reunited Germany's commitment to multilateralism and the UN, where it is now the second largest contributor, have been central pillars of our foreign policy for decades.**

**During all this time, and with renewed vigor after unification, Germany has gradually taken on more and more global responsibility and actively worked to strengthen the UN as the main pillar of the**

**international order, an order based on the UN Charter and international law.**

**We are not only willing, but also determined to defend the goals and principles of a rules-based international order as set out in the UN Charter. This applies in particular to the right of every state to live in peace and to defend itself against outward aggression. That is why we stand firmly on Kiev's side and support Ukraine, which is being attacked by Russia in an unprovoked full-fledged war, with continued brutal attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, representing also a blatant violation of humanity and international humanitarian law.**

**This war is taking place in Europe. However, its repercussions are felt throughout the world. Moreover, that's why all this also concerns our joint work in and with the Rome-based Agencies:**

**Russia's war has already removed millions of tons of grain and fertilizer from the world market, which countries around the globe need to guarantee food security. Russia is deliberately targeting grain silos and port infrastructure. Moreover, Russia has withdrawn unilaterally from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, triggering more poverty and more food insecurity all over the world.**

**There is no justification for that. Any claims that sanctions are hampering Russian exports of crops and fertilizer are false. There are no sanctions impeding such exports. On the contrary, Russia dominates the global fertilizer market, for quite some time with record revenues. And 2022 was a record year for Russian wheat exports.**

**The reason for the continued suffering in Ukraine and around the world is shockingly simple: Russia's President wants to follow through with his imperialistic plan to conquer his sovereign neighbor Ukraine. The United Nations in New York, but also the Governing Bodies of our Rome-based Agencies, within their areas of competence, have clearly and rightly condemned this, the General Assembly calling for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. One thing is clear: peace must mean respecting the territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine. That is the promise the UN Charter gives to every UN Member State.**

**Thanks to good harvests elsewhere, the Black Sea Grain Initiative when it was alive, and the European Solidarity Lanes, additional catastrophic global hunger could be prevented so far, but food prices are still prohibitively high for many people in poorer countries and further good harvests elsewhere are by no means guaranteed. Ukraine's harvests, already severely hit by Russia's reckless attacks, must continue to reach the world.**

**The latest edition of the Global Report on Food Crises clearly identifies the three main drivers of food crises: conflicts; economic shocks; and extreme climate events, notably caused by an aggravating climate change. In 2022, close to 258 million people were acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance. This represents an increase of nearly 60 million people since 2021! Globally, inequality is rising, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which pushed millions into poverty.**

**The world has transformed – from the relative stability and optimism of the post-cold war decade with its embrace of multilateralism, to an**

**increasingly multi-polarized planet, where the international 'rules-based order' - and the fabric of global multilateralism itself - are under increasing pressure. Concerns about international development have given way to a greater focus on national security issues, as conflict, climate change, biodiversity loss and geopolitical competition present new challenges and dangers.**

**It is very clear: not only the Rome-based Agencies, but also the United Nations as such will have to adapt to new realities in the context of a constantly changing world. That is why we want to reform and further develop the UN and other multilateral institutions so that they can provide better answers to the global challenges of our time. In addition to structural reforms, this includes, among other things, an even greater commitment to containing the climate crisis and dealing with its consequences or achieving the sustainable development goals. Germany will continue to play its part, everywhere, and is also happy once again to take responsibility for peace and security in the UN's most important body. That is why we are running again for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2027 and 2028.**

**With that commitment, I would like to end my remarks and in a moment, the hymns will bring the official part of our gathering to a closure.**

**I wish you all a pleasant and joyful evening, please enjoy the music and the food, as usual with some German accents, which this year include some bio-cheese specialties from Bavaria's Allgäu region and an in-person presentation by family farmer Alois Hofer.**