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THE SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE

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BORIS PISTORIUS

MINISTER OF DEFENCE, GERMANY

Boris Pistorius, Minister of Defence, Germany

Dear Dr Chipman, thank you very much for the kind introduction, president, madam prime minister, ladies and gentlemen, excellencies. It is a really great honour to be here today and I'm really glad to be in Singapore at such an early stage of my term as German defence minister.

Singapore, like a few other places in the world, has made excellent use of its small size, its unique geographic position in the world and of its resources. It has played its card very well and that shows much more important than size is a degree of cooperation, networking and globalisation.

Singapore is excellently connected to world trade, highly successful economically and a place of cultural and religious diversity. The same applies to the Shangri-La Dialogue, an outstanding forum for intensive exchange among partners – open to the global diversity of views, positions, interests and perspectives based on mutual respect.

Ladies and gentlemen, in an increasingly interconnected and multipolar world, multilateral cooperation is key. In my speech at the Munich Security Conference a few months ago, I said that I am a child of the Cold War. But that is only half my story.

I may have started my school career overshadowed by a divided continent and in a country whose security was protected by its allies but I started my political career in my hometown, Osnabrück, a city in northern part of Germany as a mayor. And Osnabrück is the city of the Westphalian peace, the peace who ended the 30-year war in the 17th Century. And the Westphalian peace still has implications to the world order up to now. And I am shaped, as to say it like that, by that history of peace in Osnabrück. And I started this career in Osnabrück in a unified country and unifying European continent – unifying and unified thanks to the engagement and the foresightedness of our American allies, the European and international community and its leaders led by the ideas of democracy and multinational cooperation.

This historic achievement brought unprecedented peace, stability and prosperity to Europe and to Germany. But for too long, it also made us self-centred, especially with regard to Asia. For too long, we were focused primarily on economical relations while not paying enough attention to the global political developments, especially in the Indo-Pacific.

Over the past decades, this region has become a powerhouse in many respects – emerging and fast-growing economies closely integrated into the world economy and a young, well trained and educated population full of expectations and ambitions.

Economic growth and success lead to political power shifts – in terms of global trade architecture and technological standardisation as well as in questions of peace and security. It is very clear that countries of the Asia-Pacific are shaping the 21st Century.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a region of such importance, thriving economies and impressive growth rates have stimulating effects on the entire world economy. At the same time, any major tension or even armed conflict will have severe negative consequences, not only on the Indo-Pacific but also on the rest of the world, including Europe and including Germany. That is why Germany is committed to contributing to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific. And we are ready to strengthen our engagement in the years to come.

We want to actively support multilateral fora and institutions that we consider important for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. This is particularly true for ASEAN. ASEAN's ability to unite countries

with a high degree of diversity in terms of history, ethnicity, religion and governance is impressive. We believe in the centrality of ASEAN, with its reach far beyond geographical situation.

We commend ASEAN's inclusiveness with the many partnerships and fora that it has created in order to bring main stakeholders in and around the Indo-Pacific to the table. And we fully share ASEAN's unwavering commitment to the rule-based international order.

Ladies and gentlemen, in this spirit, Germany, having become a development partner of this organisation already in 2016, joined the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2020. During our EU council presidency in 2020, we were equally able to establish the strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN.

As defence minister, I see a particular added value in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). It provides an excellent platform to maintain dialogue with all important players in the region, including specifically, the US and China.

Ladies and gentlemen, today, the rules-based order, which ASEAN, the EU and so many nations of the Indo-Pacific and across the globe are committed to is under severe stress. Russia's illegal war of aggression is a ruthless attack on Ukraine's sovereignty, its innocent people and its brave soldiers.

This war jeopardises energy security, economic prosperity and food security around the globe. And it is an attack on the foundation of the international security architecture and the foundations of international law – principles we had all considered self-evident, principles that, unlike pointed out this morning before, were not made by the powerful few but were made multilaterally and inclusively to protect especially the many less powerful countries around the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is incredibly dangerous for the world as a whole. If Russia wins, the message to revisionist powers around the world will be that aggression and the unprovoked use of military force are acceptable can be successful also here in the Indo-Pacific.

I'm, thus, deeply grateful for the strong and swift support many countries of this region have shown in order to make it very clear to Russia. The global community does not accept this illegal war. This dedication, it is opposing any attempt to undermine the rule-based international order and any attempt to change the status quo by force – be in Europe, the Asia-Pacific or elsewhere.

Ladies and gentlemen, for Germany, Putin's war of aggression in the middle of Europe has become a historic turning point in our foreign and security policy. We call it the *Zeitenwende*, a tectonic shift that reaches far beyond our support for Ukraine. We have launched significant new investments in military equipment and we'll increase our national defence spending to 2% of our GDP.

We are realigning our armed forces towards collective defence, including enhanced operational readiness and intensified military cooperation with our partners. And we commit ourselves to taking on more responsibility for our own security and the security of our allies and partners. This includes rethinking our arms export policy, in particular when it comes to supporting partners, partner nations with a legitimate interest of self-defence.

We must defend the rules-based international order no matter where it is challenged. And we have to stand up for the freedom of navigation and the respect of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). To a large extent, this can and should be done via non-military means.

In 2021, Germany joined ReCAAP, the Agreement on Combating Piracy in Asia. We contribute to the International Fusion Centre (IFC) here in Singapore, which I had the honour and pleasure to visit on Friday.

Germany also stands ready to support all efforts to promote bilateral or multilateral confidence-building measures such as pre-notification of exercises, mutual invitation to participate in exercises, mutual site visits, inspections of military installations or arms control agreements. In this vein, we welcomed yesterday's offer of the US administration to enter into negotiations with Russia and China on nuclear arms control without pre-conditions.

At the same time, we will not get very far if we are not ready to stand up for the rule-based international order, also by contributing with military capabilities, for example, when it comes to enforcing sanctions adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations against North Korea or the protection of our sea lines of communication.

To this end, the German federal government sent a frigate to the Indo-Pacific in 2021 and will, again, in 2024, deploy maritime assets – this time a frigate and a supply ship to the region. These deployments – I want to make that very clear – are not directed against any nations. To the contrary, they are dedicated to the protection of the rules-based international order that we all signed up to and which we all should benefit from – be it in the Mediterranean, in the Bay of Bengal or in the South China Sea.

Ladies and gentlemen, since I went into politics, I have witnessed how many countries of the Asia-Pacific have stepped up their cooperation with a unified and peaceful Europe. And many governments represented here today stand up against Russian aggression, united in the clear commitment and dedication to fostering cooperation, peace and stability.

Such dedication and commitment are more important today than ever before. The global challenges we are all confronted with are manifold. None of us can succeed alone and we certainly cannot succeed when working against each other. We need to keep engaging with each other, even more so when the going gets tough, when interests and positions diverge and when differences threaten to turn into serious confrontation.

What the world needs today is multilateralism instead of unilateralism, multipolarity instead of bipolarity, cooperative security instead of confrontation. We need the rule of law instead the rule of force. Germany will remain committed to this endeavour, together with our partners in Europe, in America, in the Asia-Pacific and across the globe. Thank you.