

Eröffnungsansprache
des Staatsministers
im Auswärtigen Amt

Dr. Werner Hoyer MdB

beim Treffen der

"Freundesgruppe des Jemen"
(englisch)

– Es gilt das gesprochene Wort –

Berlin, 04.06.2010

Dear Co-Chair, dear Khaled Al Ghaith,
dear Mohy Abdullah Al Dhabbi,
Excellencies,
dear Colleagues, dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you here in Berlin at the second meeting of the Working Group on Economy and Governance of the Friends of Yemen. The challenges this Working Group has been asked to address are formidable ones.

For me and for my country, Germany, it is an honour and a privilege to host and to co-chair this meeting together with our Emirati partners, in close collaboration with our friends from Yemen, and building on the active participation and contributions of an impressively large number of countries and organisations gathered around this table today.

All of you are well aware of that.

Yemen faces a serious risk of destabilization.

If not properly addressed, several stress factors can easily impact negatively on the prospects of development for the country and also have consequences beyond the borders of Yemen:

Yemen is facing severe interior conflicts, up to the point of threatening the unity and integrity of the country. The armed conflict with the Houthi rebels in the North was put on hold with a truce in February this year. This was an achievement which was greeted by all of us. But the root causes of the conflict remain to be addressed. Yet, on another front, a separatist movement in the South is rallying support. This is a threat which we have to take seriously. Again, healing the rifts between North and South will only come if there is an opportunity to tackle the root causes of the divide. As a German politician, I am fully aware of the challenges of what we have labelled the necessity to accomplish the unity of a country after unification.

An increasingly deteriorating economic situation is another area of serious concern. With dwindling revenues from the oil economy, the Government lacks more and more the funds it needs to ensure fulfilment of its basic functions for the people. Changes towards a more sustainable and broader economic basis are desperately needed. Yemen is one of the poorest nations in the Arab world. Much of the population lives on less than a few dollars a day. With unemployment

widening and the population growing, today's perspectives for making a living tomorrow are slim. Yemen therefore knows it needs to invest in education and job opportunities to give its people a perspective for the future.

In view of this situation, the "Friends of Yemen" have gathered in London early this year in order to try to address the challenges in a joint effort.

Allow me to take the opportunity to briefly share with you my personal reading of what the „Friends of Yemen“ process is about.

The starting point of the "Friends of Yemen" is the understanding that the challenges Yemen is facing are challenges to all of us - to Yemen and its people first and foremost, but also to the Region, in particular to the neighbouring countries, the countries on the Arabian Peninsula, and also to the International Community in general.

Stabilizing Yemen, so the core message, is primarily about Yemen and the Yemeni people. But it is also about preventing the spread of instability and its negative impact into the region and beyond the region. "Friends of Yemen" is not about money. It is not yet another donor conference. It is mainly about generating political commitment in Yemen and outside Yemen to address and to try to resolve the most pressing issues in a joint effort.

"Friends of Yemen" have based their work on a common understanding of a couple of guiding principles.

First, Yemeni ownership and Yemeni responsibility. Yemen is in the drivers seat for its own reform agenda. International partners stand ready to encourage, advise and support, but should by no means attempt to impose a foreign agenda of whatever kind or nature. It is Yemen, its leadership and ultimately its people who have to grasp the opportunities offered in that process for more stability, prosperity and legitimacy. International support will have to build on and to rely on progress in implementing reform by Yemenis within Yemen.

That means on the other hand that the "Friends of Yemen" process will go nowhere unless there is a firm commitment by the Yemeni leadership to implement necessary reforms, even in the face of possible popular rejection.

Whoever carries the burden of political responsibility in times of crisis knows how tough the choices can become eventually.

Even in wealthy Europe, the effort of stabilizing ailing economies within the Eurozone comes with the implementation of reform, occasionally with austerity measures which are all but popular with the electorate and which require political courage and determination for those who bear responsibility in the political arena.

Allow me to point out in this context that we heard with a certain degree of concern the news that the recent round of consultations between Yemen and the IMF has apparently not produced an agreement on how to proceed with regard to a possible IMF programme for Yemen. As you all know, such a programme has already been identified in London as being of particular importance. Let me express my hope that Yemen and the IMF will continue their efforts to come to terms in order to conclude an agreement on a possible programme.

Second, regional cooperation and integration. We all acknowledge the paramount importance of the direct neighbours of Yemen with regard to the stabilization efforts. „Friends of Yemen“ have from the start reserved a very special role for the regional actors, mainly for the neighbours of Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula. Their perceptions, their recommendations, their contributions are of critical relevance for the success of the process.

I would also like to add a very personal remark, at the risk of being accused of continuing to foster a hopelessly romantic and eurocentric world view: For me as a politician, whose home base has been Europe and the political project of European integration, I firmly believe in the beneficial effects of closer regional integration for peace and prosperity of those involved. Europe is a very telling example that in politics, the logic of zero-sum-games is certainly not the most fruitful perspective at hand. Far-sighted politicians in Europe understood the message of two World Wars which started on the European Continent: That less can become more, that integrating, giving up on the right to exercise sovereign decisions can become the most prominent avenue to peace and to prosperity.

It is also against this background that we support the Yemeni quest for closer regional integration and that we are heartened by the efforts of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council to identify sectors and areas where integration of Yemen into GCC structures can be reinforced. We would like to encourage you to continue to explore this avenue further.

Third, the support of the International Community.

"Friends of Yemen" are, not to a lesser extent, the "Friends of Yemen" within the international community. In our much too often media-driven political agendas, intricate challenges like the ones we are facing in Yemen, are in danger to be overlooked. They are simply too complex for simple narratives or for quick fixes. "Friends of Yemen" is in my view also about mobilizing political attention and political commitment for the political, economic, social and governance challenges Yemen is facing within the international community.

The Working Methods this Working Group has given itself tell a story worth noting: Partners and Friends have agreed to join hands, to join forces and to contribute, each one in the field of their foremost expertise, to a process shared by all.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude and the gratitude of my government, and I am confident to speak also on behalf on my co-chair, the UAE, for the readiness of the participants of this Working Group to make significant contributions to the work of the Group.

In this spirit of a joint endeavour and a shared responsibility, I wish you fruitful exchanges. We all need a successful outcome of your deliberations.