



## Pressezentrum

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Sperrfrist:	6. Juni 2015 11.00 Uhr
Projekt:	Hauptvorträge
Veranstaltung:	<b>Die Welt ist aus den Fugen</b> <i>Wer übernimmt Verantwortung in Krisen und Konflikten?</i>
Zeit, Ort:	Sa. 11.00 – 13.00, Hanns-Martin-Schleyer-Halle, Arena, Mercedesstraße (324   Q31)
Referent/in:	<b>Dr. Kofi A. Annan, Generalsekretär Vereinte Nationen a.D., Genf/Schweiz</b>

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### **The world is spinning out of control: who takes responsibility in crises and conflicts?**

My good friend Franck Walter Steinmeier, asked me to be with you today at this wonderful event, a gathering that celebrates the virtues of dialogue and tolerance. The theme of this year's Kirchentag is taken from psalm 90, which prays, "that we may become wise". The gift of wisdom is needed now more than ever as we grapple with the many uncertainties of a rapidly changing world.

Last November, Germany celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. That highly emotional and symbolic event was hailed as the end of the Cold War and even as "the end of history". Hopes were high for a more peaceful era and there was a feeling that Western liberal democracy would gradually become universal.

Today, there is a far more pessimistic outlook. In Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, lawless armed groups spread terror and chaos that threatens the entire Middle East and North Africa. The annexation of Crimea and the armed stalemate in eastern Ukraine have revived memories of the Cold War. In Africa, the murderous campaigns of Boko Haram and Al-Shabab have devastated whole communities and regions. In the Mediterranean and the seas of South East Asia desperate people are risking everything to escape deprivation and persecution. Closer to home in Europe, we see widespread disenchantment and disillusionment with the European project after years of economic crisis and the attendant high unemployment, particularly among young people. This is driving the politics of identity and the resurgence of nationalism. And we cannot ignore the existential threat posed by climate change and the persistence of abject poverty in many parts of the world.

With all these developments, who can avoid the feeling that things are falling apart, that the world is spinning out of control? And how did we get here in just 25 years?

To my mind, three factors stand out.

First, the scale and speed of economic, demographic and technological changes are upending the political status quo. The globalisation of markets has helped lift millions out of poverty and created untold opportunities for clever entrepreneurs and successful corporations. But it is also generating great disquiet among people who fear that their lives are determined by forces beyond their elected leader's control. As a result people have less trust in their leaders and in their public institutions.

The second factor is the experience of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, which has highlighted the limits of military power and the use of force.

A third element is the failure to modernise global institutions to reflect the changing balance of power in the world. The United Nations Security Council, the IMF and the World Bank still largely retain their original governance mechanisms, created in the aftermath of World War II. Today, emerging powers do not feel sufficiently represented. The world has changed and these institutions should adapt and change with it. They should be reformed and made more democratic.

Clearly, with the world in such a state of flux, there is anxiety about the future and what it holds for our children. We should not dismiss those anxieties. Nevertheless, I do not believe that we are living in a world that is spinning out of control. We have made great progress with the Millennium Development Goals even though not all of the eight goals will be accomplished by the end of this year. Significantly, just a few days ago, the UN announced that the number of people suffering from acute hunger has dropped by almost 45 percent over the last twenty-five years. The current international system does allow states to settle most of their disputes peacefully and this is a huge achievement in human history. There is an encouraging downward trend in the number of people who die in armed conflict, thanks to the near disappearance of conflict between major powers. And yet we seem powerless to prevent ghastly atrocities and terrorism, which still disfigure our world. But in the past we often did not hear about them. And we certainly did not see them on our TV screens. Fortunately, the globalisation that is re-shaping

our world order also means that news and images of war and massacres quickly go “viral”. Social media have turned the owners of more than one billion smart phones into potential citizen-journalists. We can no longer say that “we didn’t know”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Despite this progress we cannot afford to be complacent. I see three immediate challenges that we must tackle with vigour and urgency. A first challenge is to make the principle of the *Responsibility to Protect*, a reality. In 2005, UN members declared that all states must protect their own populations from war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and genocide. And if they fail to do so, the Security Council has a responsibility to step in to provide that protection. Recognizing the *Responsibility to Protect* was a defining moment for the United Nations and one that I count among the high points of my time as Secretary General. The *Responsibility to Protect* is not necessarily about military intervention. There are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the pursuit of peace but it is much better, from every point of view, if action can be taken to resolve or manage a conflict before it reaches the stage of armed intervention. [But the responsibility to protect is not limited to governments alone. All of us – whether as officials in government, in business, in the media, as voters or simply as human beings – have an obligation to do whatever we can to correct injustice at home and abroad.] A second challenge, I would want to stress is climate change. I am glad to see that Germany has already taken a leadership role through its increasing use of renewable energy and I would urge you to push for an international agreement at the UN climate conference later this year. The third point, I would like to touch on is the challenge of migration. This is a highly sensitive issue everywhere –not only in Europe. But we will not solve it simply by building higher fences or adopting protectionist policies. Globalisation has brought many benefits in terms of wealth creation, technology and travel, but it has also ended the ability of countries to insulate themselves from the wider world. I know that Germany has been among the countries that have been most open on this question, receiving many migrants, fleeing violence, poverty and misery. So I urge you to continue along that humane path. Ladies and Gentlemen, In closing my remarks, allow me to remind you of the words of Pastor Martin Niemöller who told us:

“First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Socialist.  
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Trade Unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.”

Solidarity is what makes us human. But solidarity starts with the individual, with you and me. In our global and interdependent world, we are all in the same boat. We cannot be prosperous at the expense of one another. The UN Charter was written in the name of “we, the peoples”. It is we, the peoples, who have both the power and responsibility for crafting peace, and extending justice to all. Each of you is a potential leader. To lead means to take responsibility and to set the example. As I often say: You are never too young to lead or too old to act. So let us make a pledge for solidarity. For if we all show solidarity with our fellow human beings, regardless of their gender, color, creed, or orientation, we can help to deliver on the central promise of the United Nations Charter, which calls on us to reaffirm “our faith in the dignity and worth of the human person”. I am relying on you – the leaders of the 21st century – to deliver on that promise.