

Video Podcast No. 11 by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel on the deployment of troops to Lebanon

The Federal Government has this week taken an important decision. We are now asking the lower house, the German Bundestag, for its approval to send members of the German navy to the Middle East to protect the Lebanese coast.

We did not take this decision lightly, because we know that many people are asking if it is really necessary, and if it is not too dangerous for our soldiers. Let me tell you that we have made sure when agreeing the mandate that the risk is calculable, that we are sending our soldiers on a mission that is useful and can really accomplish what it sets out to do – namely prevent arms smuggling.

When you ask if this is really necessary, we should remember that we all inhabit the same world, in which distances are diminishing, and that security in Germany also depends on security in other world regions. The Middle East is a region that neighbours ours, and therefore it is in our interest to see peace reign there, rather than armed conflicts such as we have witnessed this summer.

I think that you, too, were relieved when we finally succeeded in agreeing a ceasefire. Now we have to make this ceasefire permanent, and I know that military operations can only be one of many contributions. But without the help of our soldiers, and soldiers from other countries, it will be impossible for the ceasefire to be maintained. What will now follow, of course, is the complementary political process. In other words Germany will, together with other countries, do its utmost to see that the conflicts in the Middle East are brought to a genuine solution. In my opinion, these conflicts include first and foremost the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

We want to strengthen Israel's right to exist, and we also want to achieve a two-state solution, so that the Palestinian people, too, can live in prosperity and peace.

We know that unresolved political problems remain between Israel and Lebanon, and we know that there are still enmities with other neighbouring states in the region. For this reason a peace process must be launched, in which Germany will play an active role, especially when our country assumes the Presidency of the European Council in the first half of 2007.

All in all we have come to the decision that a mission such as this, involving our soldiers, is necessary. It can however only be truly effective if we back it up with political efforts, which will occupy us over the coming years. Germany will be certain to contribute to this political process.