Video message from Dr Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, on the occasion of the UN High Level Week in September 2020

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(after the video podcast)
Mr President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations was founded 75 years ago. It was preceded by the Shoah, the betrayal by Germany of all civilised values, and the Second World War, which was likewise unleashed by Germany. After these horrors, a new world order was needed – a community for preserving peace in the future. This order was created with the United Nations.

Its remit has expanded ever further over the decades as it has helped and continues to help around the world not only with respect to post-conflict peacebuilding – e.g. in Afghanistan and Mali – but also in bringing war crimes to justice. Moreover, it has played a pivotal role in ensuring that only half as many people today live in extreme poverty compared with 20 years ago, and
also in helping to eradicate smallpox around the world.

However, the United Nations has, too often, been forced to lag behind its ideals as the interests of individual members have, time and again, prevented this order from functioning as it was intended. But those who believe that they can get along better alone are mistaken. Our wellbeing is something that we share – our suffering too. We are one world.

This is something that is evidenced not least by countless international city twinning projects. After all, it is, first and foremost, in cities and communities, in daily life on the ground, that we will determine whether and how we can do justice to global challenges.
The COVID-19 pandemic is just one example which shows that global problems call for understanding and cooperation beyond national borders and at all levels.

At the end of the day, the United Nations can be only as effective as its members are united. Particularly when it comes to the most intractable security issues, such as the situation in Libya and the tragedy in Syria, it is vital, despite all the setbacks, to do everything in our power to find common and thus viable responses. This was particularly important to Germany during our non-permanent membership of the Security Council.

However, the Security Council is all too often deadlocked when clear decisions are called for. We need reforms. The United Nations must continue to develop in order to be in a position to master the global
challenges of the 21st century. Germany stands ready to continue to shoulder responsibility, and would be pleased to do so in an expanded Security Council.

I wish the United Nations and its members the courage, stamina and sense of community that are required in order to tackle these shared tasks together.

With this in mind, permit me to thank all of you for your commitment and to wish you a successful week in this anniversary year. My best regards to you all in New York.