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LUXEMBOURG

Déclaration de S.E. Monsieur Jean ASSELBORN,
Vice-Premier Ministre, Ministre des Affaires étrangères

devant la 66^{ème} session ordinaire de l'Assemblée générale
des Nations Unies

New York, le 24 septembre 2011

Statement by H.E. Mr. Jean ASSELBORN,
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs

66th ordinary session of the General Assembly
of the United Nations

New York, September 24th, 2011

Candidat au Conseil de sécurité
2013-2014
Candidate for the Security Council

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Luxembourg is very pleased that the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, could for the first time address this Assembly on behalf of the European Union. I align myself fully with his statement.

Never before have the United Nations been so indispensable, never before have the expectations of it been so great.

We are going through a period of great turbulence. A period, as stated by our Secretary-General, burdened by great difficulties, but also rich in opportunities for the progress of humanity.

We must respond to the expectations placed on us by all those, across the world, who are longing for peace, security and dignity.

Mr. President,

On July 9th, 2011, a new State was born, under the eyes of the entire world. In January, during the referendum on independence, the people of South Sudan spoke loud and clear: more than 98% of the electorate voted for independence to which the southern part of Africa's largest country had aspired for so long. Luxembourg is proud to have recognised the Republic of South Sudan on 9 July, even before the historic moment of its admission to the United Nations.

The independence of South Sudan is a testimony to the will of the two parties to the protracted Sudanese conflict to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It is now up to both parties to show the same willingness to implement the new agreements to address issues of good neighbourly relations between Sudan and South Sudan. The two Sudans, and their peoples first and foremost, will benefit if the relationship finally becomes constructive and allows for socio-economic development on a new basis.

The international community stands ready to support the two Sudans. The development of Sudan and the accompaniment of the new State of South Sudan on the way to viability, stability and prosperity are tasks that we need to tackle all together, in a coherent manner. The European Union is actively engaged. Luxembourg fully supports these efforts and is also committed on a bilateral level, in particular in demining activities, in order to help remove the vestiges of a war so long that it has marked several generations of Sudanese.

Mr. President,

A few days ago, when it recognised the full powers of the National Transitional Council, this Assembly has in a certain way consecrated the end of the dictatorial regime of Colonel Gaddafi.

A regime that has oppressed the entire Libyan society for 42 years and did not hesitate to use heavy weapons against its own population without discrimination, trampling its people's aspirations for freedom.

The international community had to react, to recognise its responsibility to protect Libyan men, women and children who were under fire. We could not stand by and admonish ourselves later on for having hesitated too long, for having neglected our responsibility to protect defenceless people from the cruelty of their own authorities. We did not want, once again, to be the powerless witnesses of large-scale violence.

Our Organisation was able to react and demonstrate its capacity to act in a decisive, timely and just manner. The General Assembly suspended Libya from the Human Rights Council. Acting within the remit of Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council authorised all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack. The Council could act so decisively because the international community and the region in particular supported its action. The Arab League played a very important role in this regard that I would like to salute in particular.

Today, thanks to its courage and the resolute support of the international community, the Libyan population is free to choose its own future.

Together with our European Union partners, we stand ready to accompany Libya on its way to democracy and to support the National Transitional Council in its gigantic task to put into place a new State, respectful of human rights and in which all walks of society can find their place.

As President Ping put it so fittingly in Paris on September 1st, "Africa will benefit enormously from the emergence of a democratic Libya, at peace with itself and with its neighbours."

We shall all benefit from it.

In Tunisia and in Egypt, the peoples have also prevailed in their quests for liberty and the rewriting of the social contract, against the supporters of the former regimes. In other countries in the region, the peoples must alas continue the struggle for the respect of their fundamental freedoms.

In Syria, the regime continues to lead a brutal campaign against its own population. All appeals, including that of our Secretary-General, to halt violence and repression have so far remained unanswered.

I salute that the Human Rights Council has decided on August 23rd to urgently dispatch an independent international commission of inquiry to Syria, but the Security Council must also take its responsibilities.

The credibility of the United Nations as a moral force, as a force to protect civilian populations and their rights is at stake. Equally at stake is the UN's capacity to be present in crises, revolts, catastrophes, which are an attack on the dignity of populations and threaten their very existence.

Mr. President,

Peace, security, dignity; these are also the key words when talking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The right of two peoples to live in peace, in security and in dignity.

A solution to this conflict, which has lasted too long and has poisoned the entire region, must necessarily come through a recognition of the right of both these parties – and not only one of them – to live in a sovereign and viable State.

This is unfortunately not yet the case, despite the hope born from the courageous words of President Obama on this very rostrum last year.

On the contrary, we have seen neither a stop to the illegal construction of settlements, nor a significant lifting of the embargo on the Gaza strip. The revival of direct peace talks was short-lived.

We have all heard the vibrant appeal by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas yesterday. An appeal for the recognition of the legitimate right of his people to a State, for acceptance of the aspirations of Palestine to have a seat in this Assembly and to fully assume its place among the Nations of the world.

I can only hope that his appeal be heard. The legitimate aspiration of Israel to live sustainably in security depends on the realisation of the right of the Palestinians to live in dignity in their sovereign State.

However, responding to this appeal will not on its own suffice.

Direct negotiations between the parties must imperatively restart as soon as possible. Only negotiations will allow tackling the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The parameters for a settlement have been known for a long time. I fully support the proposal made yesterday by the Quartet for a strict timetable: one month to agree on the agenda and the modalities of the negotiations and not more than a year to reach a

comprehensive agreement. I appeal to the parties to show political will and the capacity to make the necessary compromises and sacrifices so that by the end of 2012 peace in the Middle East finally becomes a reality.

I would like from this rostrum to repeat once more that the restart of negotiations must not again flounder on cement and stones. I dare believe that the Israeli Government is aware of this.

Today as tomorrow, they may count in these efforts on the Member States of the European Union and among them my country, Luxembourg.

Mr. President,

The events over the past year in North Africa, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa remind us of the importance of a United Nations Organisation with solid tools for prevention and mediation, for peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Conflict prevention is one of the principal obligations enshrined in the UN Charter. The primary responsibility for it belongs to Member States. No State can however act alone. All must be able to count on the support of others.

At the World Summit of 2005, we have all committed to promote a culture of prevention. We have put into place important new tools and mechanisms. By uniting all concerned actors, by proposing integrated strategies, the Peacebuilding Commission is an essential element of these tools and mechanisms.

My country is intimately convinced of the relevance of a broad and multidisciplinary approach to peacebuilding. Luxembourg is proud to actively contribute to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, notably by chairing the Guinea Configuration established this February. Our priority is to accompany the authorities in Conakry in terms of national reconciliation, security sector reform and youth and women's employment. Already in 2010, Luxembourg has supported in its national capacity the mediation engaged by the Community of Sant'Egidio between the main political and civil society actors.

Both on a bilateral level and in its capacity as member of the European Union, Luxembourg sees conflict prevention and accompanying post-conflict situations at the heart of its external action; primarily through multilateral instruments, first and foremost, of course, the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The challenges we face are not limited to political conflicts, but also concern economic, social and environmental transformations. As we remember, the Arab Spring was started by an act of social protest.

We therefore share entirely the priority that you intend to give, during your mandate, to sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals.

With our European Union partners, we shall do everything in our power to contribute to a true success of the “Rio+20” Summit, which is going to take place in less than a year, in June 2012 in Brazil. “Rio+20” needs to set a number of ambitious goals to allow us to stay on track for sustainable development and preserve the capacity of coming generations to live on our planet.

Sustainable development, in its three components of economic, social and environmental development, has for a long time been at the centre of Luxembourg’s development cooperation policy. It is my pleasure to be able to say that Luxembourg has managed to maintain and even increase its effort in terms of official development assistance, which in 2010 reached 1.09% of our gross national income.

The interrelationship between security and development no longer needs to be proven. For Luxembourg, the link between security and climate change is equally obvious.

As noted by our Secretary-General, it is necessary to see climate change as a « threat multiplier ». Luxembourg’s commitment to fight climate change, including in the Group of Friends created here in New York to this effect, is also a part of our strategy to prevent conflicts before the evolution of the climate exacerbates them.

In this context, my country offers support and technical assistance to Small Island Developing States, in particular in the Pacific, whose existence is threatened by climate change.

Since the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, Luxembourg has taken binding commitments together with its European partners to reduce its carbon emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. Luxembourg also contributes to the Fast Start Finance mechanism. I would like to stress that these resources are new and additional to our official development assistance.

Among the numerous other challenges that require coordinated and collective responses, allow me to raise another one in particular: the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

Non-communicable diseases cost 36 million human lives every year. They also provoke important losses of national revenue and drag millions of people below the poverty line. These diseases affect all of us and have an increasingly greater impact on developing countries.

The response to this challenge of epidemic proportions must be global and universal.

I salute therefore the initiative taken by the CARICOM countries to bring this subject to the agenda of our General Assembly and to make the scope and impact of the crisis of non-communicable diseases, also in terms of development, known beyond the medical community alone.

Without a doubt, the debates in the plenary, the roundtables and the different side-events held over the course of the last days have allowed us to reach this goal.

It is now necessary fully to implement the commitments taken in the Political Declaration.

I can assure you that Luxembourg will pursue its efforts to this effect on the national, regional and international level.

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, which we have commemorated for the tenth time, were attacks not only against the United States, the host country of our Organisation, but against all of us, against our values and principles, our convictions and our beliefs.

Our Organisation itself has become the target of cowardly attacks.

These despicable acts must however not lead us into an inward-looking retreat. On the contrary, they must exhort us to step up our efforts to further the ideals and values of our Organisation and its Charter, to fight together against terrorism and for a better and safer future for the coming generations, for development, the respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

This is our joint responsibility: the responsibility to prevent, to preserve and to protect.

Luxembourg stands ready to assume its responsibilities and continue to work for an effective multilateralism, including, if this Assembly gives us the opportunity to do so, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2013-2014.

Thank you for your attention.