



**Address by**

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

M. le Président de l'Assemblée Générale,  
M. le Secrétaire Général des Nations-Unies

Excellences,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

L'avancée de la démocratie, qui s'est faite par grandes vagues successives depuis la création des Nations Unies, cette avancée connaît une nouvelle accélération, dont nous pouvons tous nous réjouir.

Sans sous-estimer les difficultés et mauvaises fortunes ailleurs, je pense notamment aux développements positifs au Myanmar, en Somalie, aux jeunes démocraties de par le monde, telles le Timor-Leste. Mais avant tout, c'est naturellement aux transformations à l'œuvre dans le monde arabe que je pense aujourd'hui.

*Mesdames et Messieurs,*

Ladies & Gentlemen,

When these historic changes swept through the Arab world, they stirred a mixture of deep emotions from those watching, both within the region and beyond. There was fear: of bloodshed and regional instability, of a rise of extremism, and uncertainty about what was yet to come. But overwhelmingly the world looked on with solidarity, understanding and hope.

We in Europe, geographically so close, and with our societies so deeply involved with those in the countries experiencing these upheavals, we were also acutely aware that the changes – and the risks and opportunities that lay ahead – would directly affect us, as neighbours.

Of course expectations ran high. It was tempting to read the events in Tunis or Cairo as the opening pages of a *fairytale*... But this is the book of history. It contains dark pages too – some of them tragically being written at this very moment. And we are bound by a simple truth: achieving lasting change takes time. New democratic institutions don't run smoothly by magic. Turning economies around or creating jobs for millions of young men and women doesn't happen at the wave of a wand. Deep tensions don't suddenly dissolve once a dictator has gone.

The long path of transition lies ahead. There will undoubtedly be disappointments along the way; there will be wrong turns, hurdles and setbacks. But I firmly believe that despite the difficulties, this journey is heading in the right direction.

And there is no going back. Whatever the future brings, the Arab Spring will remain a turning point. The movement is irreversible. Once the voices of the people have been set free – *an unforgettable experience for all those who were never heard before* – these voices cannot be silenced.

It is each country's responsibility to chart its own course and to do justice to the aspirations of its people. The European Union is committed to staying by their side every step along the way. We are in it for the long run. I want to reaffirm: we still believe in the message of the Arab Spring.

Europeans are well-placed to recognise that political change is not painless and does not happen overnight. We know about long transitions. When European integration first started, within my lifetime, a majority of the countries that are now its members were not yet democracies. For us, a transition of such magnitude should not be judged by its speed but by its direction, and by progress achieved through countless steps forward.

The starting point is free and fair elections, and we therefore salute the achievements of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and of other countries in successfully organising democratic elections, in which many citizens voted freely for the first time in their lives – elections for which we were happy to lend expertise to national and local authorities.

In order to ultimately bring jobs, social justice and freedom of expression to all, this gigantic democratic process will have to overcome, every single day, the obstacles of corruption, of red tape, of economic privileges, and maintain the political determination to ensure inclusiveness. An important effort, to which many contribute.

For our part, across the region, we offer advice to entrepreneurs and officials, we help train judges and policemen, we support journalists and civil society groups.

In our experience societies are stronger when women are fully able to take part in the political and economic lives of their countries, when their voices are heard, their choices respected.

There may be temptations, once power is gained, to refuse to grant to *some* the rights that until recently were withheld from *all*. But a democracy can only flourish when it gives all its people -- *whatever their gender, religion, language or ethnic identity* -- an equal say and equal rights, guaranteed in law and in practice.

Finally, neighbours can achieve more when they work together -- and that is why we share experience from our own European Union on issues like connecting energy networks or removing regional obstacles to trade.

Mr President,

Bringing together and reconciling former enemies in a common desire for peace, democracy and prosperity has been one of the European Union's great achievements.

Respect, tolerance and non-violence are the core values without which living together harmoniously is not possible.

These are fragile values: sustaining them requires constant attention, especially in a global, digital world, in which messages of all kind can spread faster than ever and can easily be exploited.

Tolerance is the ability to withstand criticism, to offer dialogue, to refrain from violence; as such it shows self-confidence. At the same time respect for the faith and beliefs of others is a key value for living together. Tolerance and respect acquire their full meaning in an open society that protects freedom of expression. Each and every one of us in this room has a responsibility in defending and promoting tolerance, in and between our countries as well as respect. Violence, killings as that of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens, can never be justified, regardless of their motivations.

Mr President,

Today I join the voice of Europe to those who have spoken to deplore the civil war raging in Syria. Confronted with the massacre of tens of thousands of people, the world has united in horror and condemnation, but -- *we must be frank* -- so far we have not been able to stop the brutal violence.

*Of course*, Europe and others provide humanitarian support to refugees, *of course* we support the individuals who risk their lives collecting evidence of the massacres, *of course* our diplomats in Damascus do their utmost to support the UN's efforts for a peaceful

solution, but we will remain powerless unless the international community unites in a common determination to end this senseless violence, which threatens to wreak havoc in the whole region.

Mr. Secretary General,

I should like to commend your excellent work and strong commitment as well as that of Special Envoy Mr. Brahimi to find a solution to overcome this tragedy. I also welcome the initiatives aimed at bringing together the main regional players, in a coherent international approach. Earlier this year, European leaders called upon all Members of the Security Council to work together in an effort to stop the violence. Today this call is even more urgent. The country needs to advance quickly towards a Syrian-led political transition, meeting the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people, while fully respecting the civil and human rights of minorities. It is the only way out. Those responsible for the repression have no place in the future of Syria and must step aside.

The longer this conflict continues, the more radicalised people will become, the more blood will needlessly be shed, and the longer it will take for the wounds to heal.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

The security situation remains complex and fragile in many parts of the world.

The events of the Arab Spring should not distract us from the urgent task of achieving peace in the Middle East -- *quite the contrary*.

And other issues are pressing, including:

- Addressing instability and the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region.
- Bringing peace and stability to the region of the Great Lakes;
- Convincing the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons and missile programmes.
- Finding a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, a matter to which the European Union is directly committed.

We must address all these concerns, knowing that lasting solutions requires political will from the countries involved. In the same spirit it is important that tensions in East and South-East Asian maritime areas subside and that disputes are settled peacefully in a spirit of cooperation and in respect of international law.

There are many *global* challenges that we have to tackle together. But from fighting climate change to reducing poverty around the world, without multilateral cooperation we will not succeed.



This is why the European Union fully supports a stronger more effective and more efficient United Nations

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Citizens in all our countries want jobs. Here also, global cooperation is indispensable and is the best way to ensure the world's economic recovery.

Our economies have become completely interdependent: no country can solve its own issues alone; no country can afford to ignore the problems of others.

Do we know this? Yes. Do we act upon this knowledge? Not enough.

In 2008, at the start of the global financial crisis, there was a brief moment of global awareness, a sense of urgency which led to new forums, joint pledges and coordinated action.

Today, although the crisis is still with us, this post-Lehman resolve seems to have waned, and we must revive it.

All major economies need to do their part in putting the world economy back on the path of growth. Global growth depends on structural reforms in each of our countries and on reducing the macro-economic imbalances between them.

Within Europe, we are doing our part of this work. No effort is spared to overcome the current difficulties in the Eurozone.

We have been setting up stronger firewalls to guarantee the stability of our common currency; we are reforming our economies to become more competitive and create jobs for the future. We have started building a banking union to better manage and contain financial sector risk; and in the coming months we will be defining the perspective for where we are headed, where we want our economic and monetary Union to be in ten years time.

We have come a long way already, and today we are seeing the first results of this collective endeavour. Although there is still some way to go, I am confident that these efforts will be met with success and that Europe will come out of this experience stronger, economically and politically.

Monsieur le Président,

Monsieur le Secrétaire-Général,

Excellences,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

C'est cela que je suis venu vous dire, et j'ajoute ceci:

Pour nous Européens, dans la gestion de cette crise financière, il ne s'agit pas juste d'opérations monétaires, d'équilibrer des budgets: il en va de l'avenir même de notre projet européen.

Ce projet est né afin de surmonter les guerres et les dictatures qui ont pendant longtemps hanté notre continent. Depuis soixante ans, notre Union nous a permis de venir à bout de la haine nationaliste entre pays, et de nous constituer en un continent unifié dans la paix, dans la quête de la justice sociale et de la prospérité. Cela demande des efforts quotidiens pour préserver ces valeurs et approfondir leur ancrage. Rien n'est jamais définitivement acquis.

A un niveau global, M. le Secrétaire Général, c'est à cette Assemblée, aux Nations-Unies, qu'il revient d'œuvrer, sans relâche, dans la poursuite de ces mêmes objectifs, qui nous concernent tous, pour ouvrir la voie à plus d'harmonie et de progrès dans le monde.

Merci.