

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, let me congratulate you on your election as President of the United Nations General Assembly. You can count on the full support of my country as you assume this major responsibility.

The General Assembly is the central body of the United Nations architecture. Here, all Member States are represented and each has a vote, irrespective of its size, its population or its economic power. The Assembly truly is the concert of nations embodying the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States. To you, the conductor of the concert of States here assembled, we wish inspiration, passion and wisdom.

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

Luxembourg is proud to have been part, since the very beginning, of the peace project of the United Nations.

When he presented the United Nations Charter – signed a few weeks earlier in San Francisco – to the Luxembourg Parliament on 9th August 1945, our then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Joseph Bech, spoke these visionary words: « it is in the work of the United Nations that our country found the hope of rebirth in its darkest hour; it is among the United Nations that it has taken up its place as an independent State, as a free country; it is among these peaceful countries, just united by the Organisation of San Francisco in the wonderful hope of a lasting peace, that it will find the guarantees of a future which are necessary for its renewal ».

History has vindicated him. Determined, with the other peoples of the United Nations, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, Luxembourg found in the United Nations and multilateralism in general the ideal framework to flourish as an independent, sovereign State, free to choose for itself. Luxembourg was able to prosper thanks to the peace it has enjoyed since 1945. In return, we have resolutely committed ourselves in the United Nations to contribute to building peace and to promoting sustainable development for the greatest number.

Mr. President,

You have rightly chosen the peaceful settlement of disputes as the topic of the general debate of the current session.

It is one of the overarching objectives of our Organisation, in order to enable it to maintain international peace and security. To settle disputes peacefully, a major role is ascribed by the Charter to the Security Council, but also to the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice.

The Syria crisis, which has been going on for the last 18 months, keeps getting worse. It has now claimed more than 20.000 victims. Repercussions on neighbouring countries are growing.

This crisis is a challenge to our conscience. It puts our commitment to a hard test. Some are tempted to accuse the United Nations of inaction. But the guilt lies elsewhere. Luxembourg firmly believes that those responsible for the terrifying violence, the war crimes, the egregious human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed in Syria, will one day have to answer for them.

The failure to this day to solve the Syrian crisis through peaceful means must not lead us to neglect the search for political solutions to other crises.

Luxembourg has consistently advocated a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict has been going on for too long. It is essential that the parties start new direct negotiations and negotiate a sustainable peace, with the support of the Quartet. The path will be arduous, no doubt, but the objective is worth it, for the Israelis and the Palestinians and the entire region: an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

For many years, Luxembourg has been supporting the building of the Palestinian State, both on the political and economic levels, by supporting the aspirations of Palestine to assume its place among the nations of the world. We give financial support to the Palestinian Authority, helping its efforts to make public administration and basic social services work, and we are also a reliable contributor to the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In February 2012, we have concluded a multiannual partnership agreement with UNRWA. Under this agreement, Luxembourg will provide assistance in the amount of 15 million Euro to Palestine refugees in the years 2012-2015.

Mr. President,

Let me give a few other examples to illustrate how Luxembourg is contributing to the peaceful settlement of international disputes, through its commitment to effective multilateralism with the United Nations at its centre.

First, as has been recalled during the High-level meeting on the rule of law at the national and international levels, Luxembourg was one of the very first States to recognise the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice as compulsory. The Court can elucidate and develop international law and thereby strengthen peaceful relations between States.

Luxembourg further contributes to the peaceful settlement of conflicts by giving financial support to preventive diplomacy and mediation activities and to the good offices undertaken by the United Nations. Our support also benefits regional organisations like the African Union. Finally, Luxembourg also calls on civil society, as in 2010, when we supported the mediation efforts by the Community of Sant'Egidio between political and civil society actors in Guinea and in Niger.

Luxembourg itself, being a multicultural and multilingual State by its history, its geographical location and the composition of its population, has often played a role of mediator between the interests of its large European neighbours and within the European Union.

Building on a balanced foreign policy, free from the legacy of a colonial past and defined by an unwavering commitment to multilateralism, Luxembourg is at the service of the United Nations when it comes to playing the role of an honest broker and fulfilling the responsibilities associated with this role.

In 2009, Luxembourg has thus had the honour of chairing ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council, at a crucial juncture, marked by the devastating effects of the global economic and financial crisis of 2008.

My country has also been a linchpin of the Peacebuilding Commission since its inception in 2005. Since February 2011, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations, Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, is chairing the Guinea Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. Luxembourg is honoured to be able to marshal the efforts of the international community in support of the authorities in Conakry, who have asked to be accompanied in three priority areas: national reconciliation, security sector reform and youth and women's employment.

Our commitment to the Peacebuilding Commission stems from our conviction that we need to adopt a global approach towards peacebuilding and towards the maintenance of international peace and security: an approach which recognises the intrinsic link between security and development.

To ensure durable peace, one must tackle the root causes of conflicts. Among these root causes, Luxembourg is concentrating specifically on two of them: social inequality resulting from persistent poverty and the increasing scarcity of natural resources, resulting from climate change.

The fight against poverty is one of our stated priorities. Since the year 2000, Luxembourg has reached the objective set by the United Nations by dedicating at least 0.7% of its gross national income to official development assistance. In 2009 and 2010, this aid exceeded the threshold of 1% of our gross national income. The Government of Luxembourg is determined to maintain this effort, despite budgetary constraints. Our assistance is benefitting Least Developed Countries in particular. Here again, we exceed the objective set by the United Nations by dedicating more than 0.2% of our gross national income to these countries, the majority of which are in Africa.

Mr. President,

Beyond simple statistics, these figures reflect our spirit of solidarity towards developing countries. This spirit of solidarity does not just drive our political decision-makers and our development cooperation experts, but also the numerous citizens who are acting through civil society organisations. My family is proud to participate in this movement of solidarity. My wife, the Grand Duchess, invests herself fully in the social sectors as an Eminent Advocate for Children for UNICEF, notably in Burundi. She has been passionate about microfinance for many years and has achieved numerous projects in this field.

As the Secretary-General's report highlights, we have achieved, worldwide, some essential targets of the Millennium Development Goals ahead of time. The effects of global warming are catastrophic and are threatening to undo the progress that has been accomplished. The situation

is particularly worrying in the Least Developed Countries. It is therefore essential that we act resolutely in this area.

Progress has been made at the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Cancún and in Durban. We now need more commitments to be made in terms of reducing carbon emissions. Another major challenge lies in the mobilisation of adequate financial and technological resources to allow the most vulnerable countries, in particular the Least Developed Countries, the Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States, to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Luxembourg is acting to meet this challenge. For example, we have decided to join an important programme of support to the Pacific Small Island Developing States in the area of renewable energy.

I have personally attended the Rio+20 Conference in Brazil, in June of this year, in order to show how high a priority the sustainable development of our planet is for my country. None of us has the means to make it on our own. Our interdependence pushes us to act jointly. It is a matter of survival. And it is in the United Nations that we have to organise our collective survival.

Mr. President,

I would not like to fail to mention another priority for Luxembourg in terms of conflict prevention is in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Luxembourg promotes the constant search for security at the lowest level of armament. It is a party to all global and regional treaties and conventions in this field. Despite the setback the international community has suffered this year, we remain committed to work towards an Arms Trade Treaty, which would help Member states to combat the scourge of uncontrolled arms circulation effectively.

When conflicts break out despite the attempts to prevent them, Luxembourg does not shy away from committing itself either. My country participates regularly and actively in peacekeeping operations. Currently, Luxembourg troops are contributing to operations under UN mandate in Kosovo, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

Through its contributions to European Union missions, Luxembourg also takes its responsibilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia, as well as in the Sahel region, where the international community must redouble its efforts to prevent terrorist groups linked to transnational organised crime from taking root.

Mr. President,

All the areas of action I have touched upon show how indispensable the United Nations are. If we are convinced of the relevance of a multilateral approach founded on the United Nations, we must give the Organisation the means to be at the centre of multilateral action and to be a true catalyst for change. We therefore need to continue to press ahead with UN Reform, including Security Council Reform by allowing new permanent and non-permanent members to serve on the Council.

We are all conscious of the necessity to make the Security Council more inclusive and more representative of today's realities, and to make it more effective and transparent by

continuing to improve its working methods. Africa should at last take its rightful place on the Council, in particular among the permanent members. It is also important to ensure adequate representation for small States, which represent the vast majority of the Member States of the Organisation.

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

Since its accession among the founding members in 1945, Luxembourg's action in the United Nations can be summarised by three key words: commitment, solidarity, responsibility. However, if Luxembourg has consistently proved its solidarity and commitment and has taken on responsibilities at the UN, it has never had the honour to serve on the Security Council.

Eleven years ago, building on its commitment to peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding activities, Luxembourg declared its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2013-2014.

Luxembourg stands ready to share primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, which the Member States of the Organisation have conferred on the Security Council under the Charter.

Mr President,

Size does not matter when it comes to the commitment to effective multilateralism.

During his official visit to Luxembourg on 17th April 2012, addressing Parliament and thus our country, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had this eloquent phrase: « You have shown that it is not the size of a nation's territory that makes the difference. It is the size of a nation's heart. It is the breadth of a nation's vision. It is the depth of a nation's promise to the wider world ».

This recognition honours us. It has further strengthened Luxembourg's resolve to be up to the task and to serve the United Nations.

I thank you for your attention.