



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE  
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## **Strengthening the international legal order**

*Preserving peace, protecting freedom, promoting prosperity*

Address to the United Nations General Assembly:

His Excellency Dr. Uri Rosenthal  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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Mr President, Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Last month, I visited a refugee camp at the border between Turkey and Syria. I met children, women and men who told me how they had escaped the violence and suffering in their home country. They had fled the bloodshed of a regime which is using indiscriminate violence against its own people. They had fled a country where children are being tortured, women raped and innocent civilians killed. They had lost their friends and family. They had lost their homes. But they had not lost hope for a better future.

One of the people I met near the border was Medya, the 25-year-old mother of a five-year-old girl. She had fled the city of Homs eight months earlier. Now, she travels back and forth between Homs and a refugee camp in Turkey, at great personal danger. She risks her life to report to the world on the situation in Syria. Her reports are broadcast on major international networks.

Medya told me about the terrible events she had witnessed. I was touched by her sorrow and impressed by her determination. Her strong desire for freedom is something we can all relate to. Those who have struggled for freedom do not give it up easily. But it is also clear that these refugees need the support of the international community. They need food, shelter and security. And ultimately, they need an effective United Nations and a strong international legal order.

## **Strengthening the international legal order**

Promoting the international legal order is enshrined in the Constitution of the Netherlands. This is a mission we share with many in this Assembly. Together with 49 other countries we are helping to establish legal order and security in Afghanistan. I want to pay tribute to the Dutch men and women, soldiers and civilians, currently serving there.

The Hague, city of peace and justice, is known for its contribution to the international legal order. It is home to the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, both based at the Peace Palace. Next year, we will proudly celebrate its centenary. Former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali recognized the Netherlands' role in the international legal order by naming The Hague the 'legal capital of the world'.

We need international law to protect people, societies and nations. Or, as former Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently wrote: 'The UN Charter was issued in the name of we the peoples, not we the governments.'

So we need a stronger international legal order.

First, to preserve peace and security.

Second, to protect freedom.

Third, to promote prosperity.

That is the task we face.

## **Preserving peace**

First, a strong international legal order helps to preserve peace and security. To achieve this goal, we need greater unity. I regret the persistent disagreement in the Security Council. It has prevented the United Nations from taking decisive action on Syria. The world needs a strong, united and determined Security Council.

Mediation, arbitration and judicial settlement are indispensable for peaceful settlement of conflicts. We should cherish and develop these tools, as Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson has rightly said.

Better implementation of existing treaties on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament is of paramount importance. An effective international legal order means that countries are bound by their promises. Iran must completely fulfill its IAEA obligations and abide by the Security Council resolutions. The burden of proof is on Iran. As I said to my Iranian colleague Minister Salehi earlier this week: "You need to convince the world of the peaceful character of your nuclear program."

The international agendas on nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons must lead to concrete results and new treaties. The UN and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva need to do better.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague this year celebrates its fifteenth anniversary. It should stand ready to assist in addressing the chemical weapons problem in Syria.

The Netherlands will host the next Nuclear Security Summit in 2014 as part of our efforts to enhance security and fight nuclear terrorism.

Negotiations on a robust and effective Arms Trade Treaty should recommence as soon as possible.

## **Protecting freedom**

Second, a stronger legal order promotes freedom. It promotes human rights, reinforces the responsibility to protect, and helps prevent atrocities.

Greater freedom means equal rights for men and women. Women make up fifty per cent of humanity. And we need the full one hundred per cent of humanity. It is in every country's own interest to make sure that women are actively involved in society, economy, and politics. They must be part of the power structures – as leaders of the world.

Human rights cannot be imposed from the outside. But governments carry the responsibility for observing their international human rights obligations and commitments. So there is a need to communicate about these obligations and commitments constantly.

The role of the Human Rights Council in promoting freedom is crucial. We need to improve the way it functions. Countries that aspire to join the Human Rights Council should be genuinely committed to respecting human rights. I am proud to reiterate our genuine commitment and to announce our candidature for the Human Rights Council from 2015 to 2017.

People should be free to live their lives in peace and security. Every state therefore has an obligation to prevent aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Prevention is key. But if countries cannot or will not act, the international community has a responsibility to protect.

## **Promoting prosperity**

Third, a stronger legal order promotes prosperity and economic growth. Trade, investment, innovation and economic development all benefit from a stable, predictable and rule-based business climate. The economy cannot thrive in societies where human rights are violated, corruption is rampant and government revenues are wasted. This is one of the lessons of the Arab awakening. Sustainable prosperity and sustainable economic growth depend on a strong, legitimate and reliable legal order.

Free trade agreements and a well-functioning World Trade Organization are crucial for stimulating growth. According to the World Bank, a new global trade deal would increase global welfare tremendously.

A good way to promote foreign direct investment is by enhancing arbitration and conflict resolution mechanisms. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague has an increasingly important role to play.

Protecting intellectual property rights effectively will foster innovation. So we should strengthen the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Finally, our Millennium Development Goals need a new agenda. With bold ideas to end poverty. To promote sustainable development. And to foster economic growth. The private sector is crucial to attaining this goal, especially when it comes to unlocking the potential of small and medium-sized enterprises. To quote renowned economist Paul Collier: 'We cannot make poverty history unless the countries of the bottom billion start to grow.'

## **Reinvigorating the United Nations**

The UN is indispensable for this agenda of peace, freedom and prosperity. The widening gap between the increasing expectations we have of the UN on the one hand and the UN's capacity to deliver on the other is a cause for concern. So we do need a more effective, efficient and coherent UN.

The Security Council must act decisively when serious crimes are involved and international peace and security is at stake.

All the UN organizations should deliver as one. The Secretary-General's reform proposals must be implemented.

Emerging powers rightly ask for more influence referring to new political and economic realities. The Security Council should be reformed taking these realities into account. At the same time their larger share in the world economy should be reflected in the relative contributions member states make to the UN budget.

The members of the United Nations need to take action in five areas.

First, countries should respect universal human rights without distinction. This key principle also applies to lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders.

Second, the rights of religious minorities should be guaranteed all over the world. Governments should protect religious groups against violence.

Third, countries should recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, as the Secretary-General has requested.

Fourth, countries should adhere to the principle of Responsibility to Protect. This applies to prevention, protection and prosecution.

Fifth, countries should join the International Criminal Court. This will ensure that civilians are protected and the perpetrators of atrocities prosecuted.

This brings me back to Syria. The Syrian crisis also highlights the mounting challenges of the United Nations and its member states. I applaud the active stance the Secretary-General has taken with regard to Syria. OCHA, The World Food Programme, UNHCR and many other organizations provide crucial assistance to victims of the violence.

And I want to pay tribute to the governments of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan for their invaluable efforts to alleviate the suffering of the thousands of refugees.

### **In conclusion**

For me, meeting Medya, that courageous Syrian journalist and mother, has given a voice to those refugees. I hope that I will meet Medya again in the near future, in Homs, in Syria.

I want to see her live in an inclusive and prosperous Syria, where democracy and human rights have replaced terror and violence.

A Syria where jobs and economic opportunities have replaced poverty and despair.

Medya has already shown the courage and the will to contribute to Syria's future.

Together, we, the peoples of the United Nations, should show the same courage.

Together we must preserve peace, protect freedom and promote prosperity.

Together let us build a stronger international legal order.