

Nous devons choisir ensemble la voie sur laquelle nous désirons désormais nous engager. Allons-nous continuer à galvauder nos efforts en nous occupant de questions secondaires ?

Je suis d'avis que nous devons agir, ici et maintenant.

Mettons-nous tous ensemble au travail afin de réaffirmer et mettre en œuvre les valeurs défendues par les Nations Unies !

Nous devons travailler à l'avènement d'un monde pacifique, dans lequel les êtres humains et les pays bénéficient des mêmes droits et ont tous la même importance. Un monde dans lequel le droit l'emporte sur la force.

C'est à nous tous et à nous toutes, réunis dans cette salle, d'entreprendre tout notre possible pour atteindre cet objectif.

Attelons-nous à cette tâche sans tarder !

Unofficial translation

President of the General Assembly,
Secretary General,
Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The world changes, but whether it changes for the better is another matter. That is up to us. Every so often there are promising steps towards a better, more peaceful future. But unfortunately those hopes experience disappointing setbacks.

I would like to recall an important step that was made a hundred and fifty years ago. For it was in 1863 that the International Committee of the Red Cross, the ICRC, was founded in Geneva, giving rise to a global movement. Thanks to their humanitarian spirit, delegates of the organisation work to provide humanitarian help worldwide for people affected by conflict and armed violence.

The humanitarian work of the ICRC is based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. All victims of conflicts deserve the same treatment and help is granted to all vulnerable persons. All human beings are valued equally.

Alongside the humanitarian tradition, which Switzerland and the ICRC have in common, my country is proud of a further tradition dating back to centuries: Neutrality.

For centuries Switzerland's foreign policy has been anchored in peaceful cooperation between States. Thanks to our neutrality we foster relations with all. We never take sides, but we can provide support or propose our mediation.

Our neutrality is expressed through our good offices. Humanitarian efforts are part of our history. It is an honour for us to make our neutral soil available for peace talks. And we will continue to do everything we can to contribute to peace in the world, for instance through our good offices.

This impartial work is based on our belief that there are differences between people as well as between nations; these differences are intended to be. Moreover, all human beings must have equal rights.

The protection of human rights is a key element of Swiss commitment. These rights are obligations set out under international law and should be protected. Switzerland is concerned by widespread excesses of violence and numerous human rights violations. It calls on all State and civilian actors to renounce violence.

In the Middle East violent conflicts are causing unacceptable suffering for the civil population. In particular, the situation in Syria is now so dramatic that humanitarian organisations are unable to cope. The serious and systematic violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights must not be tolerated under any circumstances.

These crimes must not go unpunished, regardless of which side is responsible. It is for that reason that in January of this year my country, together with fifty-seven like-minded states, called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

The use of chemical weapons is a particularly despicable crime. It is imperative to shed light on all facts. With this in mind, Switzerland welcomes the recent developments.

It is crucial to end the violence in Syria in order to protect its civilian population from further suffering. I therefore appeal to the permanent members of the Security Council to overcome their differences in order to finally find some common ground for a political solution to the conflict in Syria. I reiterate the need for the international community to spare no effort to pave the way for another conference in Geneva. This conference should take place shortly and aim for a negotiated and lasting solution that would take into account the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian in all its aspects.

Equal rights of people and nations

It is not only Switzerland that is bound by this principle of equal rights. It is given universal validity in the Charter of the United Nations. The preamble states that "faith is reaffirmed in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women."

And what applies for all human beings also applies to nations. That is why, in the same sentence, the Charter refers explicitly to the equal rights of nations "large and small".

Under Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Charter, the United Nations aims "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples".

And Article 2, paragraph 1 of the Charter states: "The Organisation is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members."

I believe that these principles provide promising foundations for peaceful cooperation of all people and populations of this world.

But are we still sufficiently aware of this? Or are we prone to lose ourselves in fantasies and minor details? I have the impression that in international politics much is said of how things should be. And too little is said about how things actually are.

I cannot help feeling that a pervasive bureaucracy is in the process of designing an isolated parallel world. At the end of the day, we are faced with increasingly higher costs and fewer concrete results.

Global problems not only need global discussions, but collective solutions. The UN should be the place where that happens. But in order to live up to that role, the UN must be efficient, innovative and effective. Only then will it be able to make progress in ensuring equal rights of people and nations. Switzerland is willing to play its part.

Return to power politics?

I speak of developments which affect the shared values set out in the Charter. I have come here to address these issues because I am concerned.

As the representative of a neutral state with a longstanding humanitarian tradition, it is with some concern that I observe the increasing return of power politics. It is apparent to me that large states are

once again choosing to exercise their power and strength. Smaller states are accepted less and less as equal partners.

I sincerely hope that this trend will be corrected. Otherwise, the fundamental values of the Charter, which unite the international community and to which its members feel committed, are placed in doubt.

The tendency towards international power politics unnerves me, for we all believe that nations should be free to choose paths of their own design, as long as they are mutually considerate of others and respect the rules of peaceful coexistence. We believe in peaceful competition among economies. We believe in the diversity of this world; in peaceful diversity of sovereign states, which treat one another fairly and as equal partners.

People are free to draw up their own constitutions, determine their own economic order, their own system of law. No country imposes its law over that of another country. Problems are not solved by diktat, but through negotiation. Common norms and rules, international law, are there to ensure that it is not simply the law of the strongest that applies. Sovereignty and equal rights provide peace, stability and friendly relations between all peoples.

Those are the convictions upon which the Charter of the United Nations is based. Do we still share these convictions today?

What future will we choose?

The way in which large nations have acted in dealings with small nations recently has unnerved me because power has often been placed above law.

The UN is active in a vast range of areas. There is perhaps a risk that it has taken on too much and lost focus. The UN, but also we, its Member States, often seem at a loss when the principles upon which the Organisation were founded, are at stake.

Let us not forget what lies behind these principles of equal rights of people and the equal rights and sovereignty of nations. They are borne of lessons from history; of a painful history of oppression, foreign domination and conflicts.

Together we must decide which path we want to take: do we want to deal with all manner of topics of secondary interest? That would be a missed opportunity!

I believe we should strive, here and now, to live out the values of the United Nations!

Let us commit ourselves to a peaceful world in which people and nations enjoy equal rights and are of equal value, one in which law is placed above power.

It is down to us, to all of us here in this chamber, whether we achieve this goal – let us make an effort!

Let us start now!