

Mr. President,

You have placed this 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, as well as this general debate under the theme of “The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage!”.

You have called upon us to be audacious and ambitious, to work together towards the same objective, to prove to the world that we shall not accept defeat, to exert our collective responsibility in order to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development.

Luxembourg is ready to answer this call. We are ready to commit to a new global partnership, based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, on a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual accountability, on coordinated action which embraces security, development, governance, human rights and the rule of law.

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

To live free from fear, conflict and violence is the most fundamental human right, and yet we witness the most atrocious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law every single day.

The use of missiles, firebombs and cluster munitions, the use of chemical weapons, the systematic imposition of sieges, forced displacements, torture, sexual violence, violations and abuses committed against children, more than two million refugees, more than 100,000 dead: this is the chilling balance sheet of two and a half years of brutal repression and conflict in Syria. The list of war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed on a daily basis, continues to grow. Against this horror, I will not tire of repeating that the situation in Syria must be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Allow me to quote the High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres: “Syria has become the great tragedy of this century – a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history”. The Syrian people need assistance, now. And they are entitled to such assistance under the most basic criteria codified in international humanitarian law. It is most urgent that the Syrian authorities meet the demands of humanitarian actors on the ground, and facilitate immediate, free and unimpeded access to all affected civilian populations. It is urgent to remove bureaucratic impediments, to ensure the delivery of medical supplies, to establish humanitarian pauses, to open up humanitarian routes, and to allow access to people in need across borders and across conflict lines.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Luxembourg is working with Australia to amplify the demands of humanitarian actors to the parties to the conflict in Syria, to enshrine them in a unified message of the Security Council. I hope that these efforts will come to fruition very soon.

Indeed, while we have been able to make progress these last days on the issue of chemical weapons, and while we are going to adopt in the next few hours a Security Council resolution establishing a strong and binding mechanism to ensure as soon as possible the control and destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons, we cannot and must not forget the humanitarian crisis which continues to unfold in Syria and in the neighboring countries, in particular in Lebanon and in Jordan, but also in Iraq and in Turkey. For its part, Luxembourg has fulfilled the pledges made in Kuwait City on 30 January last, and we have just decided to increase our humanitarian aid to the populations affected by the Syrian crisis to 7.6 million Euros.

The vibrant appeal made on Tuesday by our Secretary-General should resonate with all of us: let us break our deafening silence; let us live up to our responsibilities, both collectively and individually.

We all agree: a sustainable solution to the conflict in Syria can only be political. Here also, let us live up to our responsibilities; let us seize the momentum created by the agreement on chemical weapons; let us set a date for the Geneva II conference; let us encourage the parties to participate in it in order to initiate a dynamic, on the basis of the communiqué of 30 June 2012, which would lead to a cessation of hostilities and to the necessary political transition in Syria, a transition which meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

Mr. President,

As dramatic as it may be, the situation in Syria must not make us forget the plight of the Palestinian people. It must not make us forget the urgency to see the birth of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living in peace and security, side by side with the State of Israel.

I salute the commitment and determination of the Secretary of State of the United States, John Kerry, with a view to restarting direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. I also salute the political courage and the sense of responsibility of the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, who have accepted to return to the negotiating table. Eight rounds have been held since 14 August. We hope that the negotiations will intensify in October and will lead to a result within the agreed timeframe of nine months.

We all know that this initiative is perhaps the last opportunity we have. We must not let it slip away. The consequences would be dramatic.

The time has come to take difficult decisions, to take the necessary historic decisions, in line with the long-term interests of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The time has come to implement the Two-State solution.

This is not the time for unilateral acts which only feed the logic of mistrust. The building of illegal settlements, the destruction of Palestinian homes and infrastructure in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, must stop. The attacks coming from Gaza must stop. All violence must stop.

With its European Union partners, Luxembourg stands ready to continue actively to contribute to the ongoing efforts, in close cooperation with key stakeholders, the Quartet and the countries in the region. Indeed, there can be no security in Israel without a viable Palestinian state; there can be no security in the region without peace in all the countries of the Middle East.

Mr. President,

We must make a difference. We must break the cycle of violence.

This imperative also applies to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa represents, such is our fervent hope, a turning point for peace consolidation and regional stabilization. The second meeting of the regional oversight mechanism at the level of the Heads of State and Government, held on Monday in New York, resulted in the adoption of regional benchmarks and indicators of progress which will facilitate the implementation of the Framework agreement.

This is an important first step. It must be followed by concrete actions, on the political, security and economic levels.

The parties must implement all their commitments in good faith and with due diligence, including the commitment to neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups, notably the M23, which continue to operate in the East of the DRC.

We must tackle the root causes of recurring violence and lay the groundwork for the revitalization of the regional economy, in order to initiate a virtuous circle which will allow the populations of the region to foster sustainable development.

Mr. President,

The commitment of the international community is also badly needed in a situation which alas is receiving less attention. I am referring to the humanitarian tragedy which is unfolding in the Central African Republic.

This tragedy affects the entire population of this country: 4.6 million people.

Public order and the rule of law have collapsed. Human rights violations have become commonplace: arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, sexual violence against women and children, rapes, extra-judiciary executions. According to our information, Séléka has recruited and used at least 3,500 child soldiers; this figure cannot leave anyone indifferent.

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The prevailing insecurity further reduces access to the affected populations.

We must act with urgency.

The restoration of security and public order must be our first priority. We warmly welcome the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council authorizing the deployment of an International Support Mission to the Central African Republic. The United Nations should give their full logistical and financial support to this African-led Mission. Our credibility is at stake.

Mr. President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all know the disastrous effects of the unregulated trade in conventional arms: violent repressions, armed conflicts, crime, widespread violence.

That is why the Arms Trade Treaty is so crucially important. The Assembly has approved this Treaty by a very large majority five months ago. Luxembourg is proud to have been among the sponsors of this important initiative from the very start; we are proud to have signed the Treaty right at the opening for signature on 3 June 2013. The national ratification procedure has been started, and you can count on us for supporting a rapid entry into force of the Treaty.

In this respect, allow me to congratulate your own country, Mr. President, for having already ratified the Treaty. I also salute the fact that more than 110 Member States of the United Nations, including the United States, have already signed this new legal instrument.

The Arms Trade Treaty is a significant step forward for international law, international humanitarian law and human rights.

I would like to welcome in this context yesterday's important Security Council debate which was dedicated to the impact of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons on international peace and security, as well as the resolution which has been adopted on that occasion. Thus, the Council has rightly underlined the need for an integrated response by the international community: a response which takes into account the negative effects of these illicit activities on security, governance, the rule of law and development; a response which also takes into account the links between these activities and other threats to international peace and security, such as terrorism, piracy and transnational organized crime.

Mr. President,

The recent murderous attack targeting a shopping centre in Nairobi has proven to us once again how important it is that we remain vigilant in the fight against terrorism. This unacceptable act must encourage us to increase even more our support to African efforts aiming at freeing Somalia from the threat of Al-Shabab. During the "New Deal for Somalia" Conference held on 16 September in Brussels, I for one have had the opportunity to reaffirm that Luxembourg remains committed to working alongside Somalia. We are convinced that with the determined support of the international community, the African Union and the United Nations in particular, the government and people of Somalia will be able to continue their journey towards peace, security and prosperity.

The risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains just as real a threat as the threat of terrorism.

Yesterday, the negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the E3+3 Group, led by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, have restarted here in New York. We support these efforts. We want substantial negotiations which quickly lead to concrete results, to a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. Sanctions are not an end in themselves. They are the international response to the refusal by Iran to meet its international obligations and to cooperate fully with the IAEA. We encourage the new Iranian leadership to engage in constructive negotiations and to take the necessary measures in order to prove to the international community that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only, and to open a new page in its relations with the world community.

Mr. President,

When we talk about sustainable development, when we talk about setting the Post-2015 development agenda, we cannot ignore the devastating effects of conflicts and violence on development. The crisis situations and threats which I have just evoked illustrate this clearly.

We must also talk – and more loudly so – about governance which is conducive to development, about institutions which guarantee the rule of law, about freedom of expression, about transparent and accountable governments. We must talk about justice, about the fight against impunity, about respect for international law.

Luxembourg fully subscribes to the appeal by our Secretary-General to base the Post-2015 objectives on the international norms and principles of human rights.

These objectives must apply to all. They must help address the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, building on the Millennium Development Goals; they must set us on course to eliminating poverty and promoting sustainable development. They must be integrated in a single and coherent framework.

The Special Event held the day before yesterday at the level of the General Assembly has given us the opportunity to take stock of ongoing work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, to welcome significant progress made, but also to identify the sectors in which it will be important to redouble our efforts.

The picture before us is indeed only half-finished, as the Secretary-General reminded us. We must therefore speed up the march towards the achievement of the MDGs; we must renew our commitments; we must keep our promises.

My country will continue to do its part. Since 2009, our official development assistance has reached the threshold of 1% of our gross national income. We are determined to maintain this effort.

At the Rio+20 Conference in June 2012, we have reaffirmed our commitment to sustainable development in its three interdependent dimensions: economic development, social integration and environmental viability. We have reiterated our determination to tackle the threats that climate change and environmental degradation pose to humanity.

With its European partners, Luxembourg has taken binding commitments to reduce its carbon emissions and to mitigate the effects of climate change. We are determined to do everything we can to achieve a universal climate agreement in 2015.

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

Last year, at this rostrum, our Head of State underscored Luxembourg's resolve to serve the United Nations. Today, I would like to seize this occasion to thank the Assembly for having elected my country for a two-year mandate on the UN Security Council. This first mandate in our history is an honor. It is also a responsibility we do not take lightly.

Each day since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, Luxembourg is working hard, in concert with its partners, to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security; to assume this common responsibility which is ours: the responsibility to prevent, to preserve and to protect.

No task is nobler, and no task is more urgent in the current context.

I thank you for your attention.