



**Address by**

**H.E. Mr. Herman Van Rompuy  
President of the European Council**

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**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

Monsieur le Président de l'Assemblée générale,

Monsieur le Secrétaire Général,

Excellences,

Chers collègues,

Le monde est aujourd'hui bien plus dangereux que lorsque l'année passée nous étions ici réunis;

l'effroi plus fort que l'espoir.

Des événements tragiques ont marqué les esprits.

*Plus de deux cents jeunes filles enlevées au lycée, réduites en esclavage.*

*Un avion de ligne – empli de parents, d'enfants, de scientifiques, de vacanciers, de personnel de bord – fauché en plein vol.*

*Un peuple sur une montagne, poursuivi, pris au piège, massacré.*

*Et la semaine dernière, en pleine mer, un demi-millier de naufragés, victimes de passeurs assassins.*

Ces sombres épisodes inquiètent, aussi en ce qu'ils semblent annoncer des mouvements plus profonds.

Nos opinions publiques craignent que le monde nous échappe, qu'il change en mal.

Ce qu'elles voient contesté, ce sont les fondements politiques mêmes de notre vivre-ensemble.

Comment l'on se comporte, entre personnes et entre Etats.

Nos concitoyens voient la montée de l'obscurantisme, de forces fanatiques, ils voient resurgir les frontières d'un monde d'hier, d'avant-hier, d'un monde fou.

Oui, comme disait mon compatriote Paul-Henri Spaak il y a 66 ans à la tribune de cette même assemblée, "*Nous avons peur*", "*pas la peur d'un lâche, [non,] la peur que peut avoir, (...) la peur que doit avoir un homme quand il regarde vers l'avenir et qu'il considère tout ce qu'il y a peut-être encore d'horreur et de tragédie, et de terribles responsabilités dans cet avenir.*"

Dear colleagues,

When the values we share are under pressure,  
when the order of things seems to be unraveling,  
we must act.

We must 'bring back our girls' and free them from Boko Haram.

We must allow the families of the victims of flight MH17 to pay their final respects to their loved ones, and keep the memory alive of the drowned hopefuls of the Mediterranean.

And we must mobilise – all of us – against the barbaric group that is ISIL.

Together, we can make the world a safer place again.

Excellences,

When looking back upon the past year, for us in Europe the most bewildering act in our region was the abrupt and illegal annexation of Crimea, this March.

This violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity triggered the gravest threat to the European security order in decades.

It matters beyond the European continent.

It is about rejecting the use of force, about defending the rule of law that upholds our society of nations.

Dear colleagues, this General Assembly assumed its responsibility by adopting Resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

You defended those very values the UN Charter was built upon.

The European Union welcomes this strong message that the breaking of the rules will not be tolerated.

When you tamper with borders, you tamper with peace.

The European Union stands firm in its solidarity with Ukraine; it is the Ukrainian people's right to decide their own political destiny.

Europe responded to aggression and the violation of international law with a wide range of sanctions – political, economic and financial.

We knew this could hurt our own economies in return, but  
together with our international partners,

we did not relent,

since the stability of the European house itself was at stake.

Now all of us must ensure the peace process launched in Minsk advances, and that all parties respect the ceasefire and abide by the Peace Plan.

The sanctions are not a goal in themselves; and they can be revised, provided there is tangible progress.

We can rebuild trust if commitments are met.

At the same time, it is essential that Ukraine's authorities move firmly forward on the path of reforms. Those reforms – economic, political, constitutional – will determine the success of a lasting political solution.

The country's political life and prosperity shall belong to all its citizens. An inclusive Ukraine, with a new social contract and a fair balance between the parts and the whole, is the best way to secure the country's future.

European Union countries and institutions are fully committed to supporting Ukraine along this path.

The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement – *ratified just last week by the Ukrainian Rada and the European Parliament* – is a **compass**, an opportunity to help Ukraine transform into the dynamic, modern and open democracy its people deserve.

The steps ahead in this cooperation will take place within the wider picture of the peace process.

With Russia,

our biggest neighbour,

we are ready to engage and re-establish a basis of trust,  
of promises kept.

Excellences,

There are nearly 200 countries in this world, but many thousands of minorities worldwide...

Clearly, there is no other way than inclusiveness, than respecting identities, than giving people a voice.

As a Belgian, and a European, I know it can be a real effort to stay together, it requires constant attention, openness, empathy – a willingness to adjust. Countries do not have to break up to allow for multiple, often multi-layered identities to co-exist. Unity in diversity can work.

Dear colleagues,

The most pressing concern on all our minds today is **Iraq, Syria, the wider Middle East**.

I needn't sketch the bleak outlook, the sinister deeds, the unspeakable suffering in the region.

What we have seen this summer has nothing to do with Islam: it is the return of barbaric ghosts from a long forgotten past... Horrendous deeds rejecting that we are one humankind, denying the very basic values of civilisation.

As the Grand Mufti of Egypt said to me two weeks ago: ISIL is abusing the name of Islam, the very values of Islam and of every religion.

I welcome the words and measures by the Arab League, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, and Muslim nations against ISIL.

It is essential that the parties and neighbours most concerned are at the frontline in this common fight.

But all of us must do our share to confront and isolate **ISIL**. Block financial flows and weapon flows, cut off illegal oil revenue and stop the influx of foreign fighters. European Union governments are working hard on all these fronts.

As we know in our countries also, **radicalisation** can strike anywhere. Take the young jihadi fanatic from France, who turned torturer in Syria, and – back in Europe – murdered four innocent victims – in the Jewish Museum of my home town of Brussels.

We need urgent collective action to stop these foreign fighters from joining ISIL's ranks – *as we were many to underline in yesterday's special Security Council session*.

We also must work together to help the affected countries.

**Iraq's** new government, aiming for inclusive leadership, deserves everybody's full support – and certainly has ours.

But the crisis cannot be resolved without a political solution for **Syria**. We owe it to the close to 200.000 victims, to the millions who have had to flee their homes.

It is quite simply a catastrophe, one of the international community's biggest failures.

What is needed is a comprehensive **regional solution**; it must include, as *this summer's tragic events in Gaza underline once again*, a two-state solution with an independent, democratic, viable Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace with Israel and its other neighbours.

The violent dynamics are spreading instability in all directions, into the **Sahel** region and as far south as **Nigeria**, but also to the East.

These dynamics are fostering terrorism, organised crime, arms flows, drugs trafficking, human smuggling and radicalisation – as we also see in **Libya**.

And I want to pay tribute to France for the efforts to help, upon their request, the governments of **Mali** and of the **Central African Republic** restore the rule of law, and instil inclusiveness and reconciliation – in close collaboration with the African Union, the United Nations and the whole of the European Union.

We are ready to take our responsibility, knowing that we Europeans have no self-interested geostrategic objectives in the area. We turned this page of history decades ago.

A collective approach is important to deal with another tragic symptom of an imploding Middle East: dramatic **migration** in the Mediterranean.

We've seen millions fleeing the war in Syria, into countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey; European lifeguards rescue up to a thousand of people a week – people who are risking their lives on small boats across the Mediterranean, looking for a life free from fear. Many come from countries where state structures have crumbled, where violence is endemic, where people's most basic needs cannot be met.

Chers collègues,

La seule réponse durable au désespoir, c'est le développement.

Je souhaite saluer l'engagement inlassable des Nations-Unies et de leur Secrétaire Général pour promouvoir les **objectifs du développement**, aussi post 2015, pour maintenir un niveau d'ambition pour nos actions à la mesure des défis.

Et de même pour le défi **climatique**, où l'Europe reste engagée en première ligne et le démontrera l'année prochaine dans les négociations de Paris. J'espère que toutes les nations – grandes et petites, riches et pauvres – y assumeront leur responsabilité.

La crise de l'**Ebola** nous rappelle cruellement comment l'avenir d'un pays dépend aussi de ses structures de santé, que de ces dernières peut dépendre, *en définitive*, la santé de tous.

L'**Ebola** est la peste des temps modernes.

Ce sont les équipes de médecins, d'infirmiers, de volontaires qu'il faut renforcer.

Et l'Europe est là, avec d'autres, pour aider, pour soulager, pour guérir.

Monsieur le Président de l'Assemblée,

Monsieur le Secrétaire Général,

Excellences,

Chers collègues,

En cet automne 2014, nous commémorons le centenaire d'un grand conflit qui fut le premier à entraîner le monde entier dans sa spirale destructrice. Il fallut une seconde grande guerre pour que nos Nations se ressaisissent et tentent de construire la paix ensemble, permettant l'émergence de notre Union des Nations.

Nous avons certes, depuis, su éviter une nouvelle guerre mondiale, mais n'avons point mis un terme à la violence entre pays ou au sein des Etats.

Nous sommes réunis ici non pas pour déplorer l'impardonnable mais pour nourrir l'espoir, réaliser l'indispensable – agir ensemble.

We must overcome fear.

We must overcome fear by fighting danger, by restoring justice, by striving for peace.

So that next year, when our society of nations meets again in New York, we can say:

"The spell of that dreadful summer of 2014 has been broken; step by step we are making progress, patiently but relentlessly we reconquer a place for hope."

Thank you.