



BELGIUM

**Statement
by
H.E. Mr. Yves Leterme,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium**

**64th General Assembly
of the Organisation of the United Nations**

New York, 26 September 2009

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Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yves Leterme, to
the UN General Assembly, on 26 September 2009

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Mr. President,

Nothing can be created without men. Nothing can last without institutions. These words by Jean Monnet, one of the founders of the European Union, remain as valid as ever.

Security, climate change, impacts of globalization constitute some of the challenges the world is facing today. This is why a global response, with a central role for the United Nations, is needed.

However, this role needs to be earned by the UN. As President Barack Obama said here, we cannot complain about American unilateralism while expecting the US to solve the world's problems alone.

It is in this spirit that I would like to call for a new multilateral commitment.

The reform of our international institutions is crucial to enhance their legitimacy, representativeness and capacity for action.

Nothing can be created without men. Nothing can last without institutions. This means that these institutions should work efficiently, starting with the United Nations. It is of utmost importance to achieve rapid progress in the reform of the Security Council and in the performance of the General Assembly.

Strict management and accountability

There is an urgent need to improve the efficiency of our own operations. One glance at the organizational chart of the UN allows us to realize not only the overlaps but also the gaps existing in the system.

It is because of its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations that Belgium, one of the founding members, urges for the implementation of a stricter management system. In order to more efficiently use the limited resources available, Belgium calls for more accountability in the performance of the organization and in the UN budget.

Inclusive multilateralism

In addition to the fragmentation of the UN system, two other trends stress the need for an enhanced multilateral commitment.

The first is the multitude of regional and sub-regional organizations, almost everywhere in the world. Although this enhances multilateral cooperation, it sometimes leads to a lack of harmonization between the regional and global institutions. A better cooperation has to be sought so as to guarantee the best possible use of the limited resources of all.

The second trend may be summed up by the words "incomplete multilateralism". Countries get together on an informal basis to discuss international issues, such as the economic-financial crisis. These informal groups may initially speed up the decision-making process within the international multilateral organizations but they cannot replace those organizations.

Rather than being exclusive, multilateralism should be inclusive and transparent.

Violence: the worst international upheaval

Nothing can last without institutions. But even the best organized institutions cannot function in the absence of human will and inspiration. Even the best organized institutions are powerless when men prevent their functioning. The economic and financial crisis has been given a great deal of attention, which is only normal. This crisis is most severely affecting countries in the developing world.

More than ever, it is important that donors realize their public assistance objectives of 0.7% of the GNP. Belgium has planned to achieve this goal in 2010.

But the worst international disorder is that millions of people are still being killed, maimed, raped in violence that occurs between and within states. The worst international disorder is that millions of people are denied a decent existence because of war, civil conflict, inter-ethnic fighting or harsh repression.

This is our first and foremost challenge, because without peace, without security there is no development, let alone sustainable development. Without peace, without security, there can be no fair distribution of the wealth of our Earth.

As written in the introduction of the UNESCO Constitution, “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses for peace must be constructed”. Consequently, conflict prevention begins with the banishment of all hate speeches attacking the dignity of human beings, of nations, communities, or the right of states to exist. Far too often, we have witnessed what terrible blood baths were caused by incitement of hatred. That kind of speech can have no place in this hall and in this organization whose key task is to promote peace and security by constructive cooperation.

Respect for human dignity

To function efficiently, our multilateral institutions need leaders and representatives of States who share basic approaches established on the unique dignity of each human being. National sovereignty implies responsibility. Belgium wholeheartedly supports the principle of the "responsibility to protect", which requires governments to safeguard their citizens against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Belgium would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, for the excellent report on this topic and we fully support his efforts in this area.

The primary victims of violence and indescribable suffering are citizens, particularly women and children.

Women constitute half of the world's population, but too often it is forgotten that human rights also apply in full to them. In situations of war and violence, women are frequently twice victims, because of the sexual violence inflicted upon them.

My country is determined to pursue its action against sexual violence and any kind of violence against children.

Fight against proliferation

Wars are caused by men, not by weapons. Nonetheless, the arms control issue has to be high on the international agenda. Belgium welcomes the meeting of the Security Council at the highest level on the subject of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. This meeting was undoubtedly one of the highlights of this week. The resolution adopted yesterday represents a milestone for a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

Unfortunately, the latest news coming from Iran is not headed in this direction. My country urgently calls on Iran and North Korea to cooperate with the international community on this issue and to implement the Security Council resolutions on this matter. Otherwise, they will place themselves in ban of the international community.

At the same time, in our efforts for non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction we should not forget the weapons that currently cause death on a massive scale. I am particularly referring to the anti-personnel mines. Belgium is hoping that the 1999 Convention on the prohibition of these weapons will be strengthened during the review conference scheduled to take place in Cartagena, Colombia, at the end of this year.

Belgium also spared no efforts to push for the conclusion of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Environmental protection

Human rights in all their aspects are a major concern for Belgium. This is why our country plays an active role in the UN Human Rights Council. In this regard, I would like to thank the members of the Council who entrusted us with the responsibility and honor to chair this important institution. I see in this recognition of our commitment.

Finally, human rights also concern the rights of future generations. We do not own this Earth, we have it on loan from our children. This heritage is threatened and this is why environmental protection should be our main shared concern. The Climate Summit scheduled for the end of this year in Copenhagen is an occasion that cannot be missed. In this summit, we will have to adopt concrete and binding commitments. The European Union is showing the way with the ambitious package of measures adopted in late 2008.

An international legal order and the rule of law

The institutions, as I have already said, cannot function without the input of men. Consequently, those who undermine the performance of these institutions should be

held accountable. This is why Belgium has been particularly active in the fight against impunity.

An international legal order is required. But that order can only function if it is based on states governed by the rule of law. So I come back to the need for common positions which are necessary for a world that is safer, fairer and more prosperous.

In the words of the former Secretary-General Kofi Annan : There is no development without security, no security without development and both depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law. Strengthening this rule of law, both on the national and the international level, is more vital than ever for achieving a fairer form of globalization.

Collective results

Peace and security, sustainable development, a fair distribution of the wealth of the Earth— these are the challenges we face, challenges which are global in scope. To meet those challenges, we need solid international institutions. But multilateralism of the institutions is not enough. We also need a multilateralism of the minds, And men with convictions able to carry it. This desire, this belief, this ambition motivates my country, a founding member of the UN, to present as a candidate to chair the 65th session of the General Assembly, our compatriot Louis Michel,

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former Minister of Foreign affairs of Belgium, former Commissioner in charge of development. We are convinced that the strength of his conviction and dedication are likely to bring the international community closer together.

It is indeed only when the men and women who take the floor here will be fired by a shared vision of human rights, peace and development that our institutions will be able to deliver what we need: collective results rather than individual achievements.

Thank you for your attention.