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LUXEMBOURG

Déclaration de S.E. Monsieur Xavier BETTEL

Premier ministre, Ministre d'Etat

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Xavier BETTEL

Prime Minister, Minister of State

69th ordinary session of the General Assembly
of the United Nations

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Mr President,
Mr Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address this august Assembly for the first time.

Commitment, solidarity, responsibility: these are the three key words that have guided and will continue to guide my country's action at the United Nations.

As a founding member of the United Nations, Luxembourg has based its foreign policy upon an active participation in multilateral cooperation. This multilateralism is founded on the respect for international law and the cooperation between sovereign and equal States to work collectively for peace, development and respect of human rights.

For us, the United Nations is at the heart of multilateralism. We are committed to making the UN as effective as possible, so that we can solve together, in solidarity, the problems which go well beyond our capacities as States but which it is our responsibility to overcome for the sake of future generations.

Commitment, solidarity, responsibility: this is also the approach that should guide our response to the challenges we face on the 2015 horizon.

Mr President,

With your choice for the theme of this 69th session of the General Assembly, you call upon us to deliver on a transformative post-2015 development agenda and to ensure its effective implementation.

This post-2015 development agenda must be bold and ambitious, if we are to live up to our collective responsibility to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development. It must build upon the Millennium Development Goals and go further. This agenda must be holistic, action-oriented and universally applicable. It must benefit both developing and developed countries. It must be human rights-based. It must give the social sectors, health and education, all the importance they deserve. The issues of governance, justice, peace and security must be part of this agenda, as must be the protection of the environment, sustainable consumption and production patterns and sustained economic growth.

Luxembourg welcomes the important work accomplished by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Its report and the list of goals it proposes are a useful basis for the negotiations that are due to culminate, in a year's time, in the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and a new model of sustainable development, which "reconciles the ambitions of humanity and the needs of the planet", to quote our Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

My country has a longstanding commitment to development, motivated by the will to show solidarity with the poorest and conscious of its international responsibilities. Since the year 2000, Luxembourg belongs to the group of five industrialized countries, which devote at least 0.7% of

gross national income (GNI) to development cooperation. In 2009, our development assistance reached the level of 1% of GNI and the government commits to maintaining this high level. This aid can open up perspectives for the next generations, it can give them opportunities for the future, and it can therefore, I hope, prevent certain conflicts.

Mr President,

The fight against climate change is an integral part of any global partnership for development. Allow me to welcome, in this context, the holding of the Climate Summit this Tuesday. Without a doubt, this Summit has fulfilled the dual objective set by the Secretary-General: to demonstrate the indispensable political will to reach a global agreement in 2015 and to catalyse concrete action on the ground to reduce emissions and increase resilience.

During the second semester of 2015, my country will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. We shall spare no effort in order to find, at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, an international agreement on climate, which is applicable to all countries, with the objective of keeping global warming below 2° C.

With its partners in the European Union, Luxembourg has made binding commitments to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. Before the upcoming meetings, in accordance with the timetable we agreed upon in Warsaw, the European Union will present additional contributions to rise to the challenge.

We are also making commitments at the national level. I would like to mention our support to the statement on carbon pricing, which was presented at the Climate Summit, as well as the new contribution of 5 million Euros to the Green Climate Fund, which we announced at the Summit. These funds are new and additional to our official development assistance.

Mr President,

“There will be no development without security and no security without development. And both development and security also depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law.”

We all know Kofi Annan’s saying.

Luxembourg has made it the guiding principle of its action in the Security Council since 1st January 2013, by devoting its undivided attention to the root causes of conflicts, to their humanitarian and economic impact as well as to human rights, in particular the rights of children affected by conflict.

To illustrate this approach, I will talk about the conflict in Syria.

This conflict has been raging on for three and a half years now. It shocks the conscience of humanity.

More than 191,000 dead; 10.8 million Syrians, over half of them children, in need of urgent humanitarian assistance; more than 4.5 million Syrians trapped by the fighting, surviving in areas that are difficult to reach for humanitarian actors; more than 3 million Syrians forced to leave their country, over one million of them refugees in Lebanon.

Those figures rarely make the headlines nowadays. However, behind those figures, how much suffering, how many shattered lives!

This cannot continue.

We must put an end to indiscriminate attacks against civilian populations, schools and hospitals, to the bombardment with barrel bombs, to the denial of humanitarian assistance, to the use of famine as a weapon of war.

At the initiative of Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg, the Security Council has adopted unanimously two resolutions on humanitarian aid access to Syria. It is my strong hope that those resolutions will have a real impact, a decisive impact on the ground.

Yet humanitarian action cannot be a substitute for political action.

A lasting settlement of the Syrian conflict will only be reached through a political solution, a political transition that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with the Geneva communiqué of June 2012.

Mr President,

Today, we cannot prevaricate in the face of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by terrorist groups, first among them the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This group is neither a State nor Islamic. It tarnishes Islam and seeks only to spread its terror regime, to destabilise Syria and Iraq and the entire region.

My country fully supports the measures that have been adopted to counter individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaeda, to cut off their channels of financing, to prevent radicalisation and to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. We are doing this in line with the resolution we have adopted the day before yesterday at the Security Council Summit, which was chaired by the President of the United States, Barack Obama, and in which I had the honour to take part.

Beyond the fight against terrorism, we must tackle the root causes of the grave crisis Iraq is going through. We welcome in this context the formation of the new Iraqi government of national union, under the direction of Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi. We encourage him to follow an inclusive approach, which is respectful of all ethnic and religious components of Iraqi society and responsive to the needs and aspirations of all. The Iraqi people must regain trust in their country's democratic institutions.

Mr President,

For the third time in six years, we have witnessed this summer bloody fighting in the Gaza strip.

The cycle of violence must stop.

The actions that fuel hatred and discord must stop.

Israelis and Palestinians must finally be able to live in peace, in security and in dignity.

The two-state solution, the peaceful coexistence of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, within secure and recognised borders, remains the only possible way forward in this regard.

A political solution must be sought as soon as possible, in order to avoid that extremists from all sides prevail and that measures are taken which would make the two-state solution impossible.

With its partners in the European Union, Luxembourg is ready to contribute to a global and sustainable solution.

Mr President,

The time allotted to me does not suffice to do justice to the manifold crises that we are facing today. I would however like to state that they all bring one duty to light: the duty to protect civilians. This duty is at the heart of the mandates entrusted to the peacekeeping and stabilisation missions of the United Nations and regional organisations like the African Union, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Somalia, in Mali, in South Sudan and now in the Central African Republic.

On the African continent, our credibility and our responsibility to protect are at stake. 20 years after the Rwandan genocide, indifference is no longer an option.

A word about my own continent, Europe.

The crisis in Ukraine has turned step by step into a conflict. This conflict unfortunately shows that the times when we thought peace on the European continent had become self-evident are over. This conflict has already cost the lives of more than 3,000 people. It must end and it must end now. Dialogue and diplomacy are of the essence.

Mr President,

From Syria to the Central African Republic, from Iraq to South Sudan, the list of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on a daily basis becomes longer each day.

The perpetrators of those crimes, of grave violations and abuses of human rights, of violations of international law and international humanitarian law must be held accountable before justice for their acts. The fight against impunity must cease to be an abstract objective and become a tangible reality.

The International Criminal Court has an important role to play in this context.

Speaking about grave violations of international law and war crimes, I would like to draw your attention to the violations and atrocities committed against children.

Children are often the first victims of armed conflicts: they are killed and maimed, they are abducted and recruited, and they are abused sexually. They are deprived of their right to education and healthcare. They are cruelly denied access to humanitarian assistance.

As Presidency of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Luxembourg is working in a determined way to strengthen and to implement fully the "Children and Armed Conflict" agenda. And it will continue to do so, beyond its mandate on the Security Council.

Children are the hope and future of every society. All together, we must do everything we can to save this hope and this future from the horrors of war.

The fight against sexual violence calls for the same commitment. Sexual violence in conflict spares no one. It affects adults and children, women and men. We must resolutely tackle this scourge.

Mr President,

The prevention of conflict is a core purpose of our Organisation.

Spotting early-warning signs of a conflict is of crucial importance if we want to take the most effective measures at the right time and if we want to prevent a situation from escalating into open conflict.

We know that most conflicts are preceded by a significant deterioration of the human rights situation. It is on that basis that the Secretary-General has launched the "Rights Up Front" initiative. Its aim is to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to act as a smoke detector before it is too late to prevent the fire from spreading, or to alert the fire brigade before the fire gets out of control, to use this metaphor. Luxembourg welcomes this initiative. It is a forceful reminder of our collective obligation to protect and promote human rights. It rightly places the protection of human rights at the centre of the action undertaken by the United Nations system to prevent conflicts.

Tackling the root causes of conflict, poverty, discrimination, the absence of the rule of law, to name just those few, is part of the same preventive approach.

I also have to recall that in certain countries, being different is not accepted. The rights of minorities must be respected. It is unacceptable that to this day, a religion or a sexual orientation, for example, prevents you from living freely in certain societies.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As I am addressing you now, there are numerous threats to peace and security we must face, which call for a holistic response.

I have already addressed terrorism and our common struggle to eradicate this scourge.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constitutes another clear threat.

The joint plan of action agreed in Geneva on 24 November 2013 was an important milestone towards solving the Iranian nuclear issue. Here I would like to reiterate Luxembourg's full support to the efforts of the E3+3 group to arrive at a comprehensive settlement that restores trust in the exclusively peaceful purpose of the Iranian nuclear programme. I urge Iran to engage fully and in good faith, in order to allow these discussions to lead to the expected result as soon as possible.

In Africa as well as in Latin America, small arms are the real weapons of mass destruction. The devastating consequences of the unregulated arms trade are well documented. I am therefore particularly pleased that the Arms Trade Treaty, which has been approved last year with a very

broad majority by this Assembly, will enter into force this year, on 25 December 2014. Luxembourg was honoured to be among the first States to sign and ratify it. It is our strong hope that we will be able to achieve our shared objective and make it a universal Treaty.

Mr President,

Under the chapter of threats to international peace and security, allow me to touch upon the serious crisis caused by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. This is not a simple humanitarian emergency, far from it. It is a multidimensional crisis, which threatens the institutions, societies and economies of the three countries affected by the outbreak and the region as a whole. It calls for mobilisation at every level: national, regional and global. Our Secretary-General fully appreciates the magnitude of the challenge. We support wholeheartedly the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. There is not a moment to lose. Beyond the contributions we have already made, notably to WHO and WFP, to MSF and to the Red Cross, we stand ready to do more, in close consultation with the countries of West Africa, many of which are Luxembourg's partners, with the United Nations and civil society organisations on the ground.

Mr President,
Mr Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to come back to the three keywords, which guide our action: commitment, solidarity, responsibility.

It was the eagerness to work for strong and effective multilateralism and the resolve to serve the United Nations that motivated Luxembourg to aspire to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council, for the first time in its history, for the 2013-2014 mandate.

During these past 20 months, Luxembourg has worked hard every day to show that it is up to this responsibility. It has worked hard to show that it is worthy of the honour bestowed upon it by this Assembly when it was elected to the Security Council. We are exercising this mandate in your name, in the name of all Member States of the United Nations. We are well aware of this. Today, I would like to seize the opportunity to thank you very warmly, in my personal name and in the name of the government of Luxembourg, for the trust you have placed in us.

Rest assured that we will continue to serve the United Nations to uphold our common values, the values of humanity.

I thank you for your attention.