

11 June 2010

**Acceptance Speech of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President-Elect of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,**

-- The mission of the United Nations is to protect the dignity, security and well-being of all human beings.

This honour for Switzerland gives me great joy and represents a personal challenge for me. I would like to thank all members of the General Assembly, and in particular the members of the Group of Western European and other States, for the trust that they have placed both in my country and in me. I promise one and all that I will be worthy of the mandate of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, with which the Assembly has just entrusted me.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the President of the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for his enlightened leadership of the Assembly and the generous spirit with which he has introduced me to my new position. Finally, I would like to thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts on behalf of the ideals of the Organization. I assure him of my full cooperation and of my loyalty.

The United Nations was created almost two thirds of a century ago thanks to the determination of its founders to prevent the recurrence of the suffering and hatred that ravaged the world in two horribly deadly conflicts. The community of peoples that they founded is very different today from what it was at San Francisco. It is global, first of all because the representatives of its 192 Member States are far more numerous than they were then and now exemplify all the diversity of the world's States.

It is also global because it is interdependent. The progress made in information technology, which we could not even have imagined just a few decades ago, and the increasing flows of persons, goods, services and capital, create a network that underpins this interdependence. Everything is moving faster and is closer by. In that environment, new global challenges have emerged: climate change, the economic and financial crisis, terrorism, international crime and extremism of all sorts have now joined war and poverty and demand urgent collective efforts. More than ever before, we must act together in order to be effective.

Therefore, despite those changes, the message that I would like to underscore is that the values that the United Nations embraced at its founding are as relevant as ever in overcoming the challenges facing humankind today. I therefore invite members to turn once again to the founding of our great Organization to breathe new life into the purposes and principles set out in Article 1 of the Charter: peace and security, friendship among nations and international cooperation. Peace, friendship and cooperation must remain the keywords of our work and of our action— words which our determination will fill with meaning.

I am sure that members understand that the terms of the Charter mean that our purpose here is not merely to defend our particular national interests. We are also called upon—and the Charter is absolutely clear about this—to be friends who work together to find constructive solutions for the dignity, security and well-being of all. It is with that in mind that I will gladly accept the leadership of the General Assembly and extend my commitment to its members.

My country, Switzerland, which the Assembly has just honoured with its trust, has a paradoxical United Nations history. It is one of the oldest and most reliable pillars of the United Nations—I am thinking especially of Geneva—while here, in New York, it is known for being one of the most recent Members. We are quite proud of being one of the oldest democracies in the world. A mountainous, poor and landlocked country when it was founded, the Helvetic Confederation has now become prosperous and is the result of the solidarity of the 26 member states and of their declared determination to accept their diversity and to live together.

In 1848, after several centuries of cooperation, our states adopted a federal Constitution that has weathered every challenge to date. Its updating some years ago has made it possible to further strengthen its fundamental principles. The preamble to our Constitution was enhanced by a phrase that I would like to quote here: “Knowing that ... the strength of the community is measured by the well-being of the weakest of its members.” I hope that will also be our motto in the course of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I assure the Assembly of the loyalty and the tireless commitment of Switzerland to further the ideals of the United Nations.

It is customary for the President-elect to announce the themes and focuses that will be his or her priorities and that will mark our work. The sixty-fifth session will open with a debate on a fundamental issue, namely, making progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Those goals remind us that poverty is multifaceted and requires wide-ranging action.

The commitment of the international community is particularly important today. How can the progress made just prior to the economic and financial crisis be consolidated? How can implementation be accelerated in areas such as maternal health and infant mortality, which have been lagging behind? In addition, how can we prevent new economic and financial crises and ensure lasting economic growth whereby the most vulnerable enjoy decent living conditions and natural resources are utilized in a prudent way? Climate change, food security and the reconstruction and strengthening of fragile post-conflict States are other major issues confronting us. However, finding lasting solutions to those challenges requires governance that better reflects new global balances. It also requires a United Nations that functions more effectively and serves the interests of every individual.

Lastly, human rights, the ideals underlying the Red Cross, humanitarian assistance and disarmament are all values close to my country's heart that are highlighted in Geneva, and that we will address during the sixty-fifth session.

I would like to conclude with some more personal reflections, while confirming my absolute commitment and great motivation. I also wish to assure the Assembly that I intend to be accessible to

every member and to ensure the effectiveness of our work. In doing so, I will respect all members, whose rights are equal. I will do everything I can to make sure that Swiss sobriety guarantees that relationships are based on specifics, on a positive approach and on friendship.

The world is facing great challenges that it must overcome. But I accept my mandate with great hope and steadfast conviction. Recent decades have seen remarkable economic growth that has lifted millions of human beings out of poverty. The unparalleled solidarity shown in response to the recent natural disasters is proof of the generosity of each and every one of us. But why wait for the next earthquake or other natural disaster before acting? I am convinced that it is in this forum that we can find the energy needed to set in motion a movement of peace, altruism and friendship between peoples.

Our mission is to do our utmost as we work together for the well-being of our planet and of humanity. The whole world looks to us with hope, and we do not have the right to let the world down.