

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

I believe it is fair to say that we have had an *annus horribilis*.

A year marked by the worldwide financial and economic crisis, the worst since the Great Depression of 1929, by the increasing hunger and poverty – we are speaking about some 100 million more people sinking into hunger and chronic poverty due to the crisis, and more than one billion people suffering from hunger in 2009. Through the dramatic rise in unemployment – the ILO indicates that 50 million workers are at risk to losing or have already lost their job. A year marked by set-backs in the hard-won progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and by the outbreak of a pandemic. A year during which questions about the relevance of the United Nations and calls for an overhaul of international governance have been heard.

Hence the need for taking stock and drawing lessons, taking account of the major challenges facing the international community in terms of development, human rights and the rule of law, peacekeeping and security, disarmament and non-proliferation or the fight against climate change. And what better forum to discuss these issues than the General Assembly of the United Nations ?

Mr. President,

The economic and financial crisis that hit the world a year ago was even more devastating as it took place while we were still struggling to cope with the food and energy crises, as well as the acceleration of climate change.

I have just mentioned the particularly negative impact of the crisis on the poorest. To face these challenges, we need concrete actions, coherent actions, global actions, a true global partnership for development, based on the shared responsibilities of donors and recipients.

My country will continue assume its share of responsibility by maintaining its efforts in official development assistance (ODA). Having spent 0.95% of its GNI on ODA in 2008, the government that was elected in June this year has not only confirmed that it maintains the quantitative target of 1% of its GNI, but will also continue to insist on the qualitative improvement of Luxembourg's cooperation in order to further increase efficiency, in the context of sustainable development integrating the economic, social and environmental issues.

Luxembourg calls on all member states to make the necessary efforts to keep all the commitments made in this forum and that we have reiterated at the Millennium Summit, in Monterrey and more recently in Doha.

We must however learn the lessons of this multidimensional crisis and contemplate a more systemic reform of the existing multilateral system, including the financial and economic architecture, and adapt them to the current political and social-economic realities.

As I have stated in this forum in June at the Conference on the World Financial Crisis and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, the United Nations and its principal organs must be at the center of such reflection. The Economic and Social Council, which is the central mechanism for coordination and principal organ of the United Nations responsible for economic and social issues, will have a particularly important role to play in this regard.

Luxembourg, who chairs the Economic and Social Council this year, is taking its responsibilities in this regard and works towards full implementation of the various mandates entrusted to the Council by Member States in the framework of the International Conference.

Mr. President,

All these actions require a strong multilateral framework based on sound rules binding on all member states.

In times of crisis, unilateral tendencies unfortunately tend to recur. While it is important that representatives of the major economies of the world meet to discuss common problems, particularly the economic and financial crisis we have experienced in recent months, such forums should not substitute for multilateral structures and existing intergovernmental mandates.

In order to retain the relevance of our multilateral structures, they must be based on trust and cooperation: trust between the citizen and the state, trust between States themselves, whether they are from the North or the South, rich or poor, and confidence of States in the United Nations, which is our common good.

It lies in our hands to assume our responsibilities, to overcome our divisions, to move the thinking and the decision-making forward, and to ensure consistency. It lies in our hands to undertake the necessary reform efforts required for a Security Council, which reflects the geopolitical realities of today, which is more representative, efficient and transparent; for a revitalized General Assembly, for a stronger and more effective Economic and Social Council. It lies in our hands to demonstrate the continued relevance of our Organization, of its capacity to act and to formulate joint responses, global responses, and legitimate responses.

Mr. President,

In our globalized world, there is no turning away. We are all concerned, and the challenges we are facing are of an ever increasing complexity, including in matters of peace and security.

Yesterday, we commemorated the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, an anniversary that one would somehow have preferred not to have to celebrate: while it allowed us to express our gratitude for the outstanding work done by this United Nations agency at the service of the Palestinian people on a daily basis, it is also synonymous with failure. 60 years later, the situation in the Middle East remains unresolved.

While we welcome that the new U.S. administration is determined to seek a solution based on the coexistence of two states and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and while we, together with our EU partners, are committed to working actively with the U.S. and other Quartet members, including the United Nations, to achieve this goal, at the same time we deeply regret that Israel persists in its policy of colonization. It cannot be repeated too often: the settlements are not only illegal under international law, but also an obstacle to peace. To continue colonization is persisting to humiliate the Palestinians, to dominate the Palestinian people. Without the clear signal of an end to this policy, it is unlikely for serious negotiations to resume.

We fully support the intention of the US President to engage in negotiations, and we will support him in this endeavour. Annapolis has shown that Israelis and Palestinians, when they are alone around the negotiating table, are not able to show a level of commitment commensurate with the fundamental problems that are Jerusalem, the question of refugees and their right to return, security and the issue of borders.

We call on all parties to assume their responsibilities and to create through their actions an environment conducive to the resumption of negotiations in order to reach a solution to end the conflict. The end of divisions among Palestinians and the inter-Palestinian reconciliation around President Mahmoud Abbas, who has demonstrated in the West Bank that substantial progress in terms of security and governance is possible, are just as much a part of this as the adoption of confidence-building measures by Israel and the Arab countries, and at the same time the search of solutions concerning conflicts between, on the one hand, Israel and Syria, and on the other hand, Israel and Lebanon.

In this context, I would like to stress the urgency to find a sustainable solution to the crisis in Gaza through the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1860, and to shed light on the events in Gaza, including the follow-up of the report of the fact-finding mission of the UN, which has just been published and revealed most shocking acts. The credibility of the United Nations is at stake.

Mr. President,

The credibility of the international community is also at stake in Afghanistan and that in a number of respects.

It is at stake as far as the establishment and maintenance of peace and security is concerned, but also in terms of preserving the rule of law and the respect for our fundamental values, as well as economic and social development of the country and the fight against poverty.

It has become clear that eight years after the adoption of the UN mandate, our progress remains insufficient. In light of the bloody attacks and bombings that are increasingly carried out across the country and of the events surrounding the recent presidential elections, given the alarming figures in terms of development objectives, public opinion wonders whether in fact we are not regressing.

There is no easy solution, but there is certainly no alternative to our continued commitment.

I would like to stress that together with our EU partners and NATO, we remain engaged alongside the authorities and the people of Afghanistan. There can be no question of abandoning the people devastated by decades of conflict and violation of their basic rights. The goal has to be a stable democratic state where all forces, including the Taliban, recognize and respect the rule of law and human rights principles.

Another conflict area that has been occupying us for a long period and where our hopes of lasting peace were once more called into question during the last year is the Democratic Republic of Congo. Once again civilians suffer the consequences. We are strongly concerned about the crimes committed against civilians, especially women and children.

In this context I welcome the draft Security Council Resolution that gives a concrete follow-up to resolution 1820 on women, peace and security : Luxembourg fully supports this text. I also welcome the personal commitment of the Secretary General in the fight against sexual violence. It is important that the UN system as a whole address the phenomenon of sexual violence, which is used increasingly as a weapon of war in armed conflict and even after hostilities have ended. It is essential to strengthen efforts to prevent such acts from happening and to bring those to justice who commit these horrible crimes.

While much is left to say about challenges of the maintenance of peace and security, especially in the context of the current debate on the future of peacekeeping operations, which I applaud, allow me to dwell a moment on the encouraging developments currently observed in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

I welcome the initiative of President Obama who engaged the Security Council in a broader discussion of questions relating to non-proliferation and disarmament, beyond specific situations and sanctions issues. Given that in a couple of months the 8th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will take place, it is important to show our determination to carry out this task as regards the three pillars of the NPT, the ultimate goal being a world free of nuclear weapons. The same goes for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the other cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation. As mentioned yesterday at the Conference of States having ratified the CTBT, the call of the Security Council to sign and ratify the CTBT, and the commitment of President Obama to do everything possible to ensure such ratification in the United States, is crucial. The Treaty has to be put into force.

We hope that these encouraging developments, will lead others to adopt a more constructive attitude, respectful of their international obligations.

Beyond the issues of non-proliferation, disarmament must not be overlooked. One can only welcome the decision of the United States and Russia to conduct negotiations for concluding a new global agreement following the expiry of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) in December.

Let me add a few words about an issue which is also relevant to security and defense. I am referring to the decision by the U.S. administration to abandon the proposed establishment of a missile defense shield. It always seemed to me that the way forward in this context could not be the adoption of unilateral measures, but rather discussion and cooperation with our Russian partners to ensure our common security.

Mr. President,

I cannot conclude without saying a few words about climate change, perhaps the greatest challenge to world prosperity in the long term. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General once again for convening the Summit of September 22, which led to the political mobilization at the highest level necessary to make the Copenhagen Conference a success and to set a new course towards sustainable development, towards green growth, and reducing carbon emissions.

The scientific evidence is there, it is in our hands now to respond with determination to face these facts. It is the responsibility of developed countries to set the example by agreeing to ambitious targets to reduce CO₂ by 2050, to set targets above average, taking binding legal commitments, including for the mid-term, in the framework of an effective multilateral regime of global participation, and of contributions based on the means of each country.

Meanwhile, the issue of adaptation to climate change and the financing of such adaptation efforts, which will obviously have to be additional, should be treated as priorities in Copenhagen.

Allow me to note in passing that the disarmament efforts that I have just described should free financial resources that could be put to better use in this context.

Meanwhile, Luxembourg has already committed, together with its partners in the European Union, to reach a goal of "20-20-20" i.e. a 20% increase of energy efficiency in the European Union, an increase of the share of renewable energy to 20% of final energy consumption and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of the European Union by 20% until 2020, compared to 1990 levels. Moreover, Luxembourg's Development Cooperation has started a couple of years ago to systematically incorporate the issue of climate change adaptation into its development programs.

However, climate change has not only a potential impact on development, but also on the full enjoyment of human rights and on countries' security. I therefore warmly welcome the report of the Secretary General following the initiative taken by the Pacific Small Island Developing States, which addresses the problem in all its scope.

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
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Luxembourg remains firmly convinced of the relevance of a multilateral approach with the UN at the center, and will continue to base its policy on this conviction and to contribute to the achievement of a more just, more peaceful and more prosperous world, as enshrined in our founding Charter.

It is also from this fierce motivation to work towards a strong and effective multilateralism that stems Luxembourg's aspiration, as a founding member of the United Nations, to become, for the first time, a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2013 -2014.

Thank you.