



**Welcome address by H.E. Mr Jean Asselborn,
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
28th Annual session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE,**

Cocktail Reception at the Abbaye de Neumünster, Luxembourg

6th July 2019, 20h20

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you here in Luxembourg, at the Abbey of Neumünster, which was built in 1606 after a fire had destroyed the original Abbey of Altmünster. It is a landmark in the history and culture of Luxembourg!

I am truly honoured to be among such a diverse and distinguished audience tonight, hailing from over 50 States and 4 continents. It is a testimony to our determination to work together for our common security.

It is the first time that Luxembourg has the honour and privilege to host the annual session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE!

Situated in the heart of Europe, Luxembourg is host to a very diverse international and multicultural community, and we are proud to demonstrate every day that over 160 nationalities are able to live and coexist in harmony and mutual respect. I hope it can inspire us all to continue striving for sustainable peace in the OSCE area and to protect our people from threats to their security.

This 28th annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is an opportunity to demonstrate our common willingness to resolve our differences in order to get back on track and reinvigorate our common security project. Because, in the end, the persistence of deep differences and tensions between the participating States of our Organization does not serve the interests of any of us.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Only by working together, by rediscovering the spirit of solidarity that marked the end of the Cold War and brought closer together the Eastern and Western parts of Europe, will we succeed in making Europe safer, more stable and more prosperous.

The link between sustainable development and security, which has been chosen as the main theme for this annual meeting, is more relevant today than ever before: our world is increasingly interconnected but at the same time also divided. Conflict and poverty contribute to strengthening an already unequal system and create a climate of violence and insecurity. We cannot enjoy sustainable peace without sustainable development, and there can be no sustainable development without peace and security.

A key method to achieve sustainable security is effective multilateralism. However, we are seeing a rise of unilateral approaches. The foundations of the international system based on the respect for the rule of law are being undermined.

For democracies, multilateralism and respect for the rule of law are guarantees of their ability to play a role at the international level. They are even a condition for the exercise of their sovereignty.

Nowhere is the need and evidence of the merits of multilateralism more present than in common projects to establish and maintain peace.

The OSCE is a such a common project whose main objective is the establishment of comprehensive and indivisible security. Unfortunately, our Organization is facing an increasing number of challenges. It is therefore imperative that all of us, together, redouble our efforts to achieve global and indivisible security for the benefit of future generations!

Mr President,

We continue to face serious security challenges within the OSCE area. Dialogue is ongoing but we do not see tangible results as we seek to resolve the open conflict in Donbass as well as the “protracted conflicts” in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria. These conflicts continue to pose a serious challenge to peace, security and, of course, to sustainable development. And they continue to have a devastating impact for millions of citizens on the exercise of their human rights.

I have just come back from the “Ukraine Reform Conference” hosted by our Canadian friends in Toronto, where we could not discuss the important

process of reforms that is going on in Ukraine without referring also to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine as well as the illegal annexion of Crimea.

In Donbass, less than 3,000 km from here, more than 147 children have died since the beginning of the war, already 5 years ago! Nearly 200,000 children have been displaced! Nearly 13,000 people died, a quarter of them civilians!

The destabilisation of Ukraine does not serve anyone's interests in the long term. We must spare no efforts to achieve comprehensive and indivisible security!

I welcome the commitment of the OSCE as well as the efforts of the Heads of State and Government and the Foreign Ministers of the Normandy Format countries to reach a political and lasting settlement of the conflict in Donbass. It is imperative that all parties fully implement the Minsk Agreements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me also briefly address the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in the OSCE area.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing a decline in the protection of human rights: the space for civil society is being increasingly limited, authoritarianism, radicalism, xenophobia and intolerance are spreading.

Discrimination against vulnerable groups is on the rise and we are witnessing a demonization of minorities, migrants and refugees. This is not acceptable. We must take a firm stand against those nationalist and racist tendencies.

We also have an obligation to support civil society, whose space is dangerously shrinking in a growing number of countries.

And we must not forget the journalists whose work is becoming ever more dangerous. Violations of press freedom are on the rise and an increasing number of journalists are being imprisoned, harassed or even killed. These attacks of all kinds must stop!

I am glad that, with the adoption of the Milan Ministerial Declaration on the Safety of Journalists, OSCE participating States have demonstrated their willingness to address this major challenge. And I am looking forward to attending the Global Conference for Media Freedom that will take place in London next week.

Mr President,

Luxembourg has spared no effort in the past to contribute to the achievement of a free, democratic, united and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community, based on shared commitments, common objectives and respect for the inherent dignity of each individual, and we will continue to do so in the future!

I welcome the many efforts the Parliamentary Assembly is making to facilitate dialogue between parliamentarians in the OSCE area. Against the backdrop of multiple crises and tensions, it is indeed absolutely necessary to strengthen dialogue at all levels, between all participating States. Parliamentary diplomacy plays a fundamental role in preventing and resolving conflicts.

That is one of the reasons we are pleased to host you in Luxembourg this week. I wish you will all be inspired by the Luxembourg spirit of dialogue, openness, tolerance and mutual respect.

Thank you for your kind attention.