

The future we want – the UN we need

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- Good afternoon, it is a pleasure to participate in this webcast organized by the Government of Sweden and the Global Challenges Foundation.
- I thank my dear Swedish colleague and friend, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ann LINDE for inviting me to lend my voice to this event. I would have loved to be with you in Stockholm today. I hope we can meet again very soon.
- Dear colleagues, dear viewers, as the longest-serving foreign minister in the European Union, I have seen my share of global challenges over the last 15 years; but I have never seen a challenge like the COVID-19 pandemic, which is heavily affecting all the peoples of the United Nations.
- This is not only a global public health crisis. It is a much more fundamental, systemic crisis as it interacts and interlinks with the climate crisis, global hunger and poverty, conflicts, and the dangerous trend towards undermining human rights, the rule of law and the rules-based international order.
- The challenge is unprecedented, but it also entails unprecedented opportunities for the international community to come together as one, in the face of a common existential threat.
- I could not put it better than the Permanent Representatives of Qatar and Sweden to the UN, who are facilitating the intergovernmental negotiations on the Declaration for the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, and I quote from their letter of 9 April: “We are facing a common threat that knows no borders. Rarely before has there been a greater need for multilateralism and international cooperation. Let us rise to this opportunity and strengthen our cooperation and the leading role of the UN”.

- Today we are celebrating for the second time the 24th of April as the international day of multilateralism and diplomacy for peace.
- When we look back at the first 75 years of the UN, we should acknowledge the achievements and pay tribute to UN staff and UN officials who have lost their lives in the line of duty. One of those officials who gave his life for the cause of peace and security was none other than the second UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden. He famously referred to the saying that “the United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell”. And he was right!
- When Luxembourg served on the UN Security Council in 2013-2014, for the first time in its history, we did our best to help the UN save people from hell. We worked hard to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, and to ensure humanitarian access to all people in need throughout Syria. Sweden worked with the same commitment on those issues during its term on the Security Council in 2017-2018. You also invested a lot of efforts to help stop the war in Yemen.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to exacerbate conflicts and constitutes therefore a clear threat to peace and security. We regret that, so far, the UN Security Council has not been able to address the pandemic in a meaningful way. This links to a broader concern about the functioning of the Security Council. In recent years, the Permanent Representatives of Luxembourg to the UN have worked on Security Council reform. Maybe the current global crisis will give new impetus to make the Council more representative and to improve its working methods, in order to make it more transparent and more accountable to the general membership.
- We do not know if it will be possible to convene the UN General Assembly high-level week as usual in September for its 75th session. I certainly hope we will be able to meet in New York. In any case, it is clear that the General Assembly needs to play its role in the reshaping of global governance.
- Now is the time to work together to strengthen **the UN we have today** in order to bring about **the UN we need for tomorrow**.

- In a global health crisis, this means supporting the World Health Organization as best we can, and learning the lessons from the pandemic. The WHO plays a crucial role in coordinating the international response to the pandemic. It needs our full support.
- In times when human rights are violated and human rights defenders are under attack, this means supporting and strengthening the UN human rights system, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- In times of rising inequalities, rising unemployment, and in the face of an increased risk of famine, this means supporting and strengthening the UN humanitarian system and the UN development system so that we can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
- We have to recommit to the vision of the UN Charter and find new ways to mobilize the good will of all, Member States, public entities but also the private sector, in order to generate the resources we need to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Luxembourg is doing its part by dedicating 1% of its gross national income to official development assistance and by supporting the UN wherever we can.
- It is in our collective interest to strengthen international cooperation. We are stronger together as allies for multilateralism. I know many countries in all regions of the world share this view. I know many of you who are with us today share this view as well.
- Thank you for your kind attention and for your action on behalf of our United Nations, the United Nations we need for the future we want for our children and the following generations.