

## **LuxMUN 2018 “Hope for Peace”**

**Intervention de Jean Asselborn  
Ministre des Affaires étrangères et européennes**

**Lycée Michel-Rodange Luxembourg  
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Dear Headmaster Jean-Claude Hemmer,  
Dear Students,  
Dear Teachers,

It is a pleasure to be with you today, at the opening of the first Model UN conference your HOPE club is organizing in Luxembourg.

As you know, Luxembourg is a founding member of the United Nations. As a small country, which has endured occupation twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Luxembourg understands the fundamental value of multilateral cooperation and the UN in particular.

In this context, let me say that Luxembourg cannot approve the policy of the current US administration aiming at destabilizing multilateralism, nor approve the policies that undermine the UN by cutting its financial means, as for instance happened lately with UNRWA - the UN agency that is very active in the Gaza strip. This is going in the wrong direction. The world order created after World War II is based on the principles of multilateralism and an effectively functioning UN that is able to fulfil its mission.

The second UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, used to quote a phrase that sums up the essential role of the UN: *“The United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell.”*

The UN may indeed be an imperfect organization, but it is the most inclusive and legitimate international forum for collective problem-solving that we have.

Its four-pillar structure reflects the priorities of its main bodies as well as its operational entities:

- The maintenance of international peace and security is the Security Council's primary responsibility. Most of the topics that you have chosen to discuss concern peace. The Security Council also frames the mandates for the UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions.
- Sustainable development is the main priority of the Economic and Social Council, the ECOSOC; in 2015, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 sustainable development goals, which go from eliminating poverty to creating a global partnership for development. The UN's funds and programs help Member States in reaching those global goals.
- Human Rights and the Rule of Law are the responsibility of the General Assembly and its most important subsidiary body, the Human Rights Council, along with various international instruments for justice, ranging from the International Court of Justice to the International Criminal Court.
- Finally, the UN is the coordinator for humanitarian assistance worldwide.

For the discussion in the General Assembly, you will be debating "The Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar": one of the gravest crises in the world today, with more than 688,000 refugees counted since the outbreak of the violence in Rakhine State on 25 August 2017. There are credible reports of mass atrocities, indeed crimes against humanity, committed by the Burmese armed forces and Buddhist civilian militias. The challenges are enormous: Bangladesh – the poorest country of South Asia – has to deal with almost a million Rohingya refugees and the Monsoon is coming. Despite the promises of the Burmese and Bangladeshi authorities to allow the refugees to go back, you can imagine how difficult it is for those people to return to their land after the traumas and the violence they have experienced. With some of my EU Foreign Minister colleagues, I was in November last year in Nay Pyi Taw where I had the opportunity to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi. In the presence of the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, she promised to ensure the orderly return of refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar. However the promise still has not been kept. This is not worthy of a Nobel peace prize.

In the Human Rights Council context, you will be discussing "The issue of the Kurdish minority in the Near and Middle East". In certain regions, the Kurds are

not a minority in fact. One of the great challenges of international relations is about how to reconcile the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, on the one hand, with the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, on the other hand, as they are enshrined in the UN Charter. After the independence referendum organised by the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq in September 2017, the recent offensive by Turkey in the region of Afrin in Northern Syria has brought the issue of the Kurds to the forefront of international attention.

In the context of the Security Council, you will deal with “The issue of the increasing nuclear threat in a globalized world” – another very topical issue. A few days ago, the large hand of the “Doomsday Clock” of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved to two minutes to midnight: we have not been this close to the end of the world since 1953. We see the risk of nuclear proliferation towards States like North Korea, but also towards non-State actors. What is at stake is nothing less than the survival of humanity. Therefore, it is of the highest importance to keep the nuclear agreement with Iran. The contrary would be a big political mistake and would spur nuclear proliferation around the world.

And finally, in the “Special Historical Security Council”, you will discuss “Le génocide au Rwanda en 1994”, the Rwandan genocide of 1994; the horrible one hundred days starting in April 1994, which cost the lives of between 800,000 and one million Tutsis, as well as many of their fellow Hutu citizens, who refused to take part in the genocide. It was a period in which the Security Council and the UN Secretariat in New York were paralysed, while great powers did little to improve the situation – some indeed poured more oil into the fire. 24 years later, it seems that the international community has still not learned the lesson: too often, we fail to prevent mass atrocities like genocide or crimes against humanity. The ongoing terrible events in Myanmar, Syria, Yemen, South Sudan or the DRC are a daily reminder of this.

Dear Students,

You represent six nations that have participated at many levels in the work of the United Nations. My good friend, Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia is the current President of the UN General Assembly. Luxembourg chaired the Assembly in 1975/1976, as well as ECOSOC in 2009. We served on the Security Council, from 2013 to 2014. At the end of our mandate, we handed the baton to our European partners, Spain and Sweden. Poland and the Netherlands have just begun their

term on the Council. Germany and Belgium are both candidates to the Security Council for the period beginning in 2019.

As Europeans, we are working together at the UN, for peace, development, human rights, and justice. As your compatriots in New York, I am sure you will spare no effort in tackling all these issues here in Luxembourg over the following days.

Let me close by quoting former UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld again: “The day will come when men will see the UN and what it means clearly. Everything will be all right — you know when? When people, just people, stop thinking of the United Nations as a weird Picasso abstraction, and see it as a drawing they made themselves.”

I wish you all the best in this Model United Nations conference in Luxembourg, as you draw the United Nations yourselves!