

# Deutsche Schule Athen – Model United Nations Opening Ceremony

Welcome Address by Stefan Estermann  
Ambassador of Switzerland to Greece

Friday, 20 October 2023

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Dear President of the General Assembly  
Dear Secretary General  
Dear Deputy Director of the German School of Athens  
Excellencies, dear Colleagues  
Esteemed Participants

It's a great honor for me to be invited this year again to speak at the opening of the Model United Nations of the Deutsche Schule Athen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As long as I have been in the business of diplomacy (30 years), the “crisis” of multilateralism has been repeatedly declared. It is true: The UN System is not always the most efficient, and multilateral negotiations are slow by design. International Organizations are reflecting the geopolitical tensions and the varying and often contradicting interests of their members.

Numerous multilateral organizations are struggling to maintain their capacity to act because of growing divergences between their member states. The *law of the strongest* is gaining ground, especially in security and trade relations. The US historian and foreign policy commentator Robert Kagan encapsulated this trend in the title of his 2018 book “The Jungle Grows Back”.

However, there is no alternative to tackle the common challenges on a global level, be it climate change, be it the fight against pandemics, be it poverty. Especially small and medium sized countries such as Greece and Switzerland have an eminent interest in a functioning, rules based system of global governance, because we cannot rely on power politics to preserve our interests.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies play a special role in the multilateral system. Their strength lies in the *universality of their membership*, their *convening power* and the *high legitimacy of their decisions*.

The UN is also unique because, in addition to political dialogue and normative work, its tasks include comprehensive operational action on the ground. For example, around 70,000 blue helmets are currently deployed.

Switzerland has a strong multilateral profile, which is enhanced by its current seat in the Security Council as a non permanent member. It enjoys trust in the UN and demonstrates its willingness to play an active role there. As a bridge builder, it mediates global solutions and promotes dialogue and peace.

Dear Students:

Even in today's world that is more unpredictable and unstable than ever, we need a strong United Nations, negotiated common solutions and a rules based international system, and you are our future Diplomats.

I wish you a fun and rewarding Model United Nations experience!