



**Address by
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"Truly United Nations, drawing inspiration from the youth, for the youth"

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The youth of today – their hopes, our duty

"A world in which people know how to solve their problems in peace, without violence; a world of freedom and mutual respect; a world where all young people can look forward to finding work that allows them to live a happy life."

That, in his own words, is the world that a young man from my own country would like to see. His name is Damian Vogt. He represents Switzerland's youth at the UN (*Youthrep*). This week, we meet here together to work towards making that world a reality.

A little more than a year ago, another young person stood in this very place, and addressed this world assembly. She said: *"I speak – not for myself, but for all girls and boys (...) so that those without a voice can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights. Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated."*

The entire world still remembers the words of Malala Yousafzai. The entire world still remembers her courage.

What a difference in the lives that Malala and Damian have known! What a difference between going to school only at the risk of your life and going to school as a right, the right to a better life. And yet, Malala and Damian, like millions of other young people around the globe, want exactly the same thing: peace, human dignity, freedom and equality, an education, and an opportunity to work.

The youth of today have a right to expect from all of us, we who represent the *Nations*, that we be truly *United* in our commitment to do everything within our power to place in their hands tomorrow a world **where humanity is synonymous with security, freedom and prosperity.**

Strengthening international security and reforming the UN

It is a century now since the outbreak of the First World War, 75 years since the beginning of the Second World War. The memory of those cataclysmic events imposes a duty on mankind to work towards greater security and freedom, to bring about the conditions for prosperity; to become an effective and committed *organisation* of genuinely *United Nations*, a true assembly of States at the service of the people born out of the ruins of world conflict; to encourage the search for common solutions to our common challenges; to lead the dialogue between nations, a dialogue that is indispensable if we are to avoid the worst and strive for the best.

Here at the heart of the United Nations, Switzerland wishes to do its part, by making the following twin **objectives a priority: strengthening international security and reforming the UN.**

Security challenges of immense proportions

On the issue of security, the challenges we face are immense. At no time since the Second World War has mankind seen so many people displaced or exiled: more than 50 million men, women and children have been torn from their homes.

In certain countries, nearly half of the population has been displaced, destabilising entire regions. The story of each and every one of them is a human tragedy.

Caught up in the current of this vast torrent of insecurity are also 75 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24, who, without work, face a future without prospects. We are talking about one young person in 10 in the world; in certain regions, one young person in two!

Worse still, in ever more regions around the globe, there are waves of instability, assailing the rule of international law and in particular the principles of humanitarian law, which are being ignored, violated, swept away in the deluge. This is an intolerable assault on all that humanity succeeded in building up on the ruins of two world conflicts.

Particularly worrisome are developments in the Middle East, above all in Syria and Iraq. Switzerland condemns in the strongest terms the brutal acts of the self-proclaimed “*Islamic State*”, and the groups that have allied themselves with it. These groups deny the very existence of human rights and international humanitarian law, they trample on the notion of human dignity.

But Islam, like other religions, can – and must – be a messenger of peace, humanity, and fraternity. And as for the *Nations*, they can – and must – be truly *United*, as a constant reminder, at all times and in all places, of the **supremacy of law over force**.

Where serious violations occur, investigations must be carried out. Here, the Independent Commissions of Inquiry of the Human Rights Council or of regional organisations, in particular, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria, have an essential role to play. A role that is essential both today, for the victims, and for the future, in order to make possible genuine reconciliation and a lasting peace.

It is with this in mind that Switzerland has taken the step, along with some sixty other States, of requesting that the Security Council refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. We have also committed ourselves to an increase in our humanitarian aid in the region.

Switzerland calls on the Iraqi government to ensure accountability for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It joins the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in calling on Iraq to consider accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In order to build sustainable peace, root causes of the conflict have to be addressed. The challenge related to the self-proclaimed “*Islamic State*” cannot be overcome if the crisis in Syria is not dealt with comprehensively. Switzerland calls on the parties to return to the negotiating table and to work towards a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

With regard to all forms of extremism that can lead to acts of terrorism, it is important also to address their root causes, to show young people that violence holds out no promise for the future. The establishment in Geneva of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) is one important step in this direction. The Fund will provide support for projects by local organisations to strengthen education, civic engagement, women's rights, and to build the capacity of local communities to provide alternatives to violent extremism.

Responding to multiple crises

The world has witnessed in 2014 a conjunction of multiple and diverse crises – in the Middle East, in the Maghreb, in Africa, and also in Europe, where war returned this year with the crisis in Ukraine. This is a situation that weakens the security of the entire continent.

Violations of the Helsinki Principles and of international law, whether in the form of an illegal annexation of territory, such as that of Crimea by Russia, or of military incursions in East Ukraine, demand a firm response by the International Community.

But such a response must also be balanced, leaving room for dialogue and cooperation, so that an open discussion of existing differences remains possible. To simply isolate Russia from the rest of Europe will not solve any problems, but will only create more, in Europe and beyond.

Stability can be restored in Ukraine and in Europe if we succeed in resolving this crisis by working with Russia – not against it; and that stability will be all the more sustainable if the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – of which Switzerland this year holds the Chairmanship – is able to re-establish a firm basis for security cooperation between the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions.

Switzerland, in its capacity as current chair of the OSCE, fully supports the vital work of the contact group for Ukraine and Russia; we are currently taking steps to increase funding for the special civil monitoring mission, which will also require additional support from the participating States; and we welcome the excellent cooperation with the United Nations.

Switzerland and conflict prevention

In today's unstable world, the *Nations* must be truly *United* in their willingness to take action. Switzerland has taken an active commitment to achieving greater security, focusing its efforts there where it can make the greatest contribution: **the prevention of conflicts.**

The prevention of violence means, first and foremost, making certain that a **proper education is available to all**, that there are opportunities for every young person. “We want schools and education for every child's bright future” were Malala's words.

We welcome the Secretary-General's Global "Education First" Initiative. The *Nations* must be *United* in their efforts on behalf of education. Switzerland is working to promote education through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) and seeks to encourage the development of dual vocational training, combining school studies with on-the-job apprenticeships. This is a model that can open the way for opportunities in skilled professions, and one that calls for a joint commitment from the public and private sectors.

In addition, preventing tensions from arising requires knowing how to **give everyone a voice, inclusion**. At the heart of Switzerland's history, and of the secret to its proverbial stability, lies a willingness to **share power**, to **engage in direct dialogue with minorities**, and to **distribute authority** between central and local government. An emphasis on consultation rather than on confrontation.

In order to better prevent and manage tensions in the world, we must strengthen the **mediation capacities** both of the UN and of regional security organisations, particularly those of the largest among them, the OSCE.

We must also join our various capacities and strengths together, working in cooperation for peace. Crises, tensions and wars can also grow out of missed opportunities and dialogue that has failed to take place.

Switzerland has decided to augment its contribution to **international development and humanitarian cooperation**.

In the coming year, we will be allocating funds for this purpose amounting to the equivalent of 0.5% of our gross national income. In other words, to help the neediest inhabitants of our planet, each person in Switzerland will be contributing a little over one dollar every day.

The Post-2015 process provides us with a unique occasion to act in unison, to transform the world's challenges into opportunities. There must be a single agenda for universal sustainable development, with clear and measurable shared objectives. And we must all act to ensure that they are truly achieved.

If all of the *Nations* are genuinely *United*, it lies within our power to make certain that no one in the world need face a future of destitute poverty.

It is within our power to make certain that the creation of jobs and wealth, and thus also companies doing business, contribute to the development of human rights and help foster respect for the limited resources of this earth.

The Post-2015 Agenda is a key to obtaining greater command over the destiny of our planet and of generations to come.

Switzerland and emergency crises

Today, there are crises that arise that cannot wait for the outcome of discussions on an agenda, however sustainable it may be.

Thus, like other countries, Switzerland has decided to increase its **humanitarian commitment in the fight against the horror of Ebola**. Swiss-based research centres, among the best in the world, are working to arrange for the clinical testing of vaccines the development of which the World Health Organisation (WHO) would like to accelerate.

Similarly, we must also do all we can, every day, to protect the world's youth from the horrors of war. The place of children and young people is in school and with their families, not on the battlefield. Here again, all of our Nations must be truly United in their willingness to act, for it is far too often that children are made victims or even participants in conflicts. Children deprived of their right to be just that, children.

Switzerland is intensifying its efforts to provide better health protection for women, especially young girls particularly in the domain of sexual health. It has also launched an action plan for combating the involvement of young people in conflicts and the phenomenon of child soldiers.

The UN: listening to and serving the people

In order to meet these challenges, we will need not only the common will of the United Nations, but also an organisation that functions in an effective, transparent, and democratic fashion.

“We the peoples of the United Nations”: these are the opening words of the UN Charter; they are a reminder that the UN, in order to fulfil its purpose, must first listen to and serve the people of this world.

In concrete terms, this means that it must strengthen bodies that are devoted to the **prevention of conflicts**. Switzerland applauds the initiative of the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations commitment to human rights, particularly in sensitive regions. On behalf of 55 countries, my country has launched an appeal for the allocation of additional funds for such activities.

There is also a need to strengthen the UN's **special political missions** for the prevention of conflicts and reinforce the activity of the **Peacebuilding Commission**.

The United Nations must devote all its energy to its work in the field, to serving the people; it must avoid getting lost in a maze of administration. For this reason, together with eight other countries, Switzerland has commissioned a group of experts to draft recommendations for **reform of planning and budgeting processes**.

Lastly, the UN's ability to be effective in dealing with the challenges it faces in the world also depends on the legitimacy it enjoys, on its ability to be transparent and inclusive, also in the Security Council.

It is our view that the permanent members ought not to use their veto to block action designed to prevent or put an end to genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes. Switzerland welcomes the French initiative for a voluntary agreement by the five permanent members of the Security Council to **restrain their veto power in cases of mass atrocities**.

Switzerland, Geneva and humanitarian law

One day, many years ago, a young man travelling across the north of Italy was horrified at the suffering he witnessed on the field of battle between European powers. This was at Solferino, in 1859.

The young man's name was Henry Dunant. With the help of local women, he cared for the wounded soldiers. Later, when he returned home to Geneva he dedicated himself, body and soul, to raising public awareness of the tragedy that had taken place.

It was thanks to his dedication that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was born. And it was thanks to his persistence that exactly 150 years ago this year, the First Geneva Convention was signed, on 22 August 1864.

With this document, a facsimile of the original preserved in Geneva – which I will be handing over in a few minutes to the President of the General Assembly – the States parties committed themselves for the first time to providing assistance and protection for wounded soldiers. Each State took on a duty *to respect and ensure respect for* humanitarian principles. International humanitarian law was born.

And yet, today, 150 years later, international humanitarian law is still too often ignored, violated or deliberately flouted. Switzerland and the ICRC were given a mandate at the last Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to conduct consultations with the States and to issue recommendations.

We will be presenting our conclusions next year in preparation for the next Conference, along with a concrete initiative for strengthening respect for humanitarian law. The idea is to establish common mechanisms and an institutional framework specifically dedicated to humanitarian law, which will make it possible for us to work together to ensure its respect.

For 150 years now, not only the Conventions, but also the spirit of Geneva has shone forth throughout the world as a beacon of peace, a place where conflicts are put to rest; a home to humanitarianism and a place for humanity.

Geneva is a gift, for Switzerland and for the world. We would like to further strengthen its role in helping humanity find the solutions it seeks by uniting the Nations in dialogue. Switzerland will thus be working to bolster the existing structures in Geneva and to promote a network of exchange for the wide range of skills united there in one place.

Working together to realise the dream of today's youth

Like Malala and Damian today, a century and a half ago Henry Dunant had a dream of peace, freedom and prosperity for the world.

His story, that of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions, is a message of commitment for all young people in the world:
what each of us does can make all the difference!

In a few days, Switzerland will be renaming one of the highest mountain peaks in the Alps, at 4,632 metres, which will henceforth be known as the “Dunant peak”. Henry Dunant, who was the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, will thus take his place at the summits of Europe.

But it is not enough just to rename mountains. Here, where the Nations come together, we have the power to *move mountains*. As long as we stand united, working together to make the dream of Malala, the dream of Damian, the dream of all young people in the world, a reality.

We owe them a better world. We are *capable* of building that world together, if we find the *will* to work as *Nations* truly *United*, in dialogue and in action.

United Nations, whose governments draw their strength from the people, for the people; *United Nations* who draw their inspiration from the youth, for the youth.