

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS TO THE PARLIAMENT OF SWITZERLAND

Berne, 11 September 2012

Your Excellency Mr. Walter Hansjorg, President of the National Council,
Your Excellency Mr. Hans Altherr, President of the Council of States,
Your Excellency Ms. Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, President of the Swiss Confederation,
Distinguished Members of the Cabinet,
Distinguished Members of the Swiss Federal Parliament,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bonjour. C'est un honneur d'être ici. Merci pour cette invitation.

Buonjorno. E' un onore essere qui. Grazie per questo invito.

Gruetzi. Es ist mir eine Ehre hier zu sein. Danke schön für diese Einladung.

Caras dunas. Chars seniurs. Es pacific, es un grond honur, da stai in Berne. Grazie fitg par quest invitatiun.

Distinguished Members of the Parliament

It is a tremendous, extraordinary privilege and honour to address this chamber and to be to be the first United Nations Secretary-General to be invited and to speak to the representatives of the people of Switzerland.

I am particularly honoured to join you to celebrate a ten years as a valued member of the world Organization.

On behalf of the United Nations system, I extend my most sincere congratulations to the people and government of Switzerland on your achievements and your commitment on the 10th anniversary of your joining the United Nations.

In that time you have made your mark in so many ways, on so many challenges.

Ten years ago today, Switzerland raised its flag for the first time at the United Nations.

At that time, the Swiss President, Mr. Kaspar Villiger, I was told, spoke movingly about that moment and its meaning. He said “Flags were originally used as battle standards”, but “military campaigns had been replaced by a peaceful forum - the United Nations.” And he stressed that Switzerland would contribute actively to that forum.

Switzerland has kept that pledge.

I met him briefly before coming here and I know he is here, and I thank him very much.

And if I may speak more personally for just a moment, it was Switzerland that held the Presidency of the General Assembly in the year that I was elected to a second term.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During that short period of ten years you have made your mark in so many ways on so many challenges.

You have been instrumental in establishing the Human Rights Council. And you have contributed to the peace-building process, particularly as a Chair of the Burundi configuration. And you have been extremely generous with humanitarian assistance. And you have been a champion in promoting and protecting human rights.

I am grateful as the Secretary-General and I extend my great gratitude to all of the people of Switzerland.

Dr. Joseph Deiss, he was known as the ‘Swiss watch’ as the President of the General Assembly. Time-keeping is a well-known Swiss characteristic. After all, you are the world watch-makers.

But it would be a mistake to think of the Swiss preference for precision as coolness, or to interpret your country’s famed impartiality as indifference.

I have seen, from the seat of the Government here in Berne to the great international city of Geneva, that beneath the calm and orderly exterior lies a passion - a passion for doing the right thing - a passion for compassion.

Your devotion to the relief of poverty and suffering around the world is so powerful that it has been incorporated into the Federal Constitution.

And the Swiss people chose to join the United Nations by popular vote.

They did so because it was the right thing to do.

But Switzerland was an important centre of United Nations activity long before the country joined the organization.

Switzerland is the global home for health and human rights, for refugee assistance and disaster preparedness, for labour rights and fair trade and so much else.

The Palais des Nations is itself a monument to the ideals that the United Nations and Switzerland share - a living monument where thousands of staff bring those ideals to life.

The Palais des Nations, once home to the League of Nations, is also a reminder that Switzerland's place at the heart of the international community pre-dates the United Nations itself.

I would like to thank again the Swiss parliamentarians for so quickly approving a very generous financial donation for the renovation of the Palais des Nations. The United Nations highly values your commitment to preserving our history while making the complex a model of sustainability and energy use in serving new generations.

Switzerland is also forever linked with two of the world's most powerful symbols of principle and compassion.

The Geneva Conventions enshrine in law the idea that even when barbarism seems all around, human rights and dignity must prevail.

And all over the world, the sign of the Red Cross says simply: "we are independent, we are neutral, and we care."

This same spirit of cooperation and care is woven into the fabric of your society of Switzerland and your democracy.

The people of Switzerland speak several languages. Yet you are one nation. You encompass diversity and make it as your strength.

The Latin proverb, written on the ceiling of this very Hall speaks volumes: *Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno*; "One for all, and all for one".

This is also the spirit of the United Nations.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Depuis plus de 60 ans, notre organisation œuvre en faveur de la paix, du développement et des droits de l'homme.

Chaque jour, son personnel s'efforce de maintenir la paix et de trouver un refuge à ceux qui fuient les conflits.

Nous nous employons à nourrir ceux qui ont faim, à réduire la pauvreté et à améliorer la santé des plus vulnérables.

Nous promouvons le respect des droits de l'homme et aidons les peuples à défendre et à renforcer la démocratie.

Telle un couteau suisse, l'Organisation est un outil qui a de nombreuses fonctions.

Elle tâche d'être polyvalente, fiable et efficace.

La Suisse se révèle experte en la matière et vous, les parlementaires, y êtes pour beaucoup.

Vous avez amené votre pays à s'associer aux autres membres du Groupe des cinq petits États pour promouvoir la réforme du Conseil de sécurité, car vous savez aussi bien que nous que la composition et les méthodes de travail du Conseil doivent évoluer avec le temps.

C'est vous qui ratifiez les accords et les traités internationaux, et je vous félicite d'avoir récemment adhéré au traité interdisant les armes à sous-munitions, faisant ainsi un pas en avant dans la lutte contre un type d'armes inhumain.

Au niveau législatif, vous continuez de veiller à ce que les normes internationales soient traduites dans la législation interne, notamment les lois sur le commerce et les droits de l'homme.

De surcroît, votre marge de manœuvre financière et votre générosité ont fait de la Suisse l'un des principaux donateurs d'une aide au développement qui est absolument indispensable.

Alors que presque tous les autres pays diminuent le budget de l'aide, risquant d'annuler des gains pourtant difficilement acquis en matière de réduction de la pauvreté, la Suisse y consacre au contraire des fonds supplémentaires.

Je vous remercie d'avoir si judicieusement décidé d'investir dans l'humanité et fermement pris le parti de la solidarité internationale.

En bref, la Suisse est un pilier de la démocratie, la réponse aux attentes d'innombrables personnes remplies d'espoir.

Vous avez le pouvoir de faire une différence en contribuant non seulement au développement de la société suisse, mais aussi au progrès de la planète entière.

Honourable members of the Federal Parliament,

So let us look ahead together.

We need this Parliament to stay committed to the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

Work with us, with the United Nations, to ensure that fiscal austerity does not undermine the global fight against poverty.

Help us intensify our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as the deadline of 2015 draws near.

Help us to guide climate change negotiations to a successful conclusion by 2015 so that we can have a legally-binding international agreement on climate change which will be effective by 2020. This is the pledge of Member States and we need your support.

Help us to rid the world of the threat of nuclear weapons, including by breaking the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, which has remained stalemated even as the risks of proliferation grow.

Help us make the Human Rights Council a strong and principled force, building on your leadership in creating the Council in the first place.

Help us assist the countries in transition in the Arab world, and others where transitions are under way, to realize their aspirations for security, dignity and opportunity.

And help us end the situation and the violence in Syria. Let the people of Syria enjoy genuine freedom and democracy. Their legitimate rights and aspirations should be realised.

Mr. President of the National Council,
Mr. President of the Council of States,
Honourable Members of the Swiss Federal Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The bonds between Switzerland and the United Nations are strong and growing stronger.

Through you, their representatives, I thank the people of Switzerland for being such good global citizens, and for being such wonderful hosts to so many United Nations organizations and United Nations staff.

At this time of uncertainty and unease, it is good to know that the United Nations can count on your support, on your friendship, on your commitment and on your leadership of Switzerland.

My sincere congratulations again on this very historic milestone.

Thank you. Merci Beaucoup, Grazie Mille, Danke Schön.