



WFUNA SECRETARY- GENERAL STATEMENT

COMMEMORATION OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS
IN CELEBRATION OF THE FOUNDATION OF WFUNA IN
LUXEMBOURG IN 1946



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Excellences, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today to celebrate with you this important landmark for our organization. Let me begin by thanking our gracious host, the United Nations Association of Luxembourg, and in particular the President of the Association, Mr. André Rollinger and Vice-President, Mr. Paul Frank, for their long-standing commitment to the World Federation of United Nations Associations. I would also like to acknowledge H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, Ms. Deborah Seward, Director of the United Nations Regional Information Center, Ms. Simone Beck, President of the National Commission of Luxembourg for the cooperation with the UNESCO, Ms. Renalde Urbain, Director of the Secondary School 'Fieldgen' and M. Amir Vesali, President of the Youth Parliament of Luxembourg for their presence here today.

The World Federation of United Nations Associations was founded in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg - 70 years ago - by representatives from twenty-two United Nations Associations who decided to combine efforts to champion the ideals of the UN Charter in their respective countries by forming an international organization that would promote peace, human rights, education, and the principles and values of the United Nations.

Today, WFUNA represents the largest network of civil society organizations supporting the United Nations. Delegates from a few amongst the founding United Nations Associations are present with us today: Alongside our founding UNA and host, (the UNA of Luxembourg), let me acknowledge the representatives of the United Nations Associations of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy and Switzerland. WFUNA's founders had extensive experience in international cooperation and were aware of the importance of fostering public understanding of the role of the United Nations in shaping international relations. Following their lead, United Nations Associations have been established all over the world as new nation states were formed and joined the UN. Today, we count 100 national associations with an outreach to hundreds of thousands of people in all regions of the world. Representatives of our WFUNA family from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, and Sweden are also present to celebrate with us today.

Since its inception, WFUNA has worked to build bridges and to bring together people of divided countries, working as peace messengers, human rights defenders and pushing forward global dialogue and action on sustainable development. The fight against apartheid, the establishment of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the creation of regional Economic Commissions, the promotion of an organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, our

active stance on disarmament issues and mediation role during the Cold War, along with WFUNA's recent efforts towards ensuring more transparency and accountability of the Security Council are only some examples of the contribution of WFUNA to a more peaceful, just and equitable world.

During all these years, WFUNA and United Nations Associations worldwide have represented and worked to promote the engagement in the United Nations of people who share a global mindset and support international cooperation – global citizens. While global citizenship is now an accepted and much coveted concept, WFUNA and UNAs have been well ahead of their time in promoting a sense of ownership in individuals over the challenges that we all face as citizens of the world. We continue on this path today, constantly expanding our outreach and empowering ever more individuals so that they can take responsibility and action in their communities and bring forward the values of the United Nations.

We gather here today at a crucial time for the United Nations. Over the last year, we had the opportunity to celebrate some successful United Nations processes. We have adopted the most comprehensive development agenda that the international community has ever had. The 2030 Agenda - which has given us 17 new Sustainable Development Goals - was agreed universally last September, after several years of open, inclusive consultations, between Member States, the UN System, civil society and engaged citizens worldwide. We have adopted the Paris Climate Agreement – a vital document that many thought would never appear.

We have also seen some important progress in increasing transparency and accountability at the UN. WFUNA recently began a successful initiative to contribute to changing the Security Council, an institution that was put in place in a very different world than we are today and that needs reform. Early this year, we host Election debates for candidates running for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council. For the first time in the history of the UN, Ambassadors from the competing countries had to present their platforms and respond to questions from their peers and civil society representatives; A small step on a long road towards Security Council reform.

WFUNA, and our UNAs, together with civil society actors around the world, have pushed very hard for a change to the way the UN traditionally selects the Secretary-General. For the first time, the candidates had to apply for the job, had to be "interviewed" for the job, and have had to engage with civil society in open public debates. We believe that the outcome of this process was very successful. The incoming UNSG, Antonio Guterres, availed himself to the openness and transparency of the new process, engaging in a number of civil society debates and dialogues. We acknowledge the experience that makes him a highly qualified individual for this job.

Mr. Guterres will move into the top floor of the Secretariat building on 1st January with the largest inbox of any incoming Secretary-General: The conflict in Syria still rages, violence in South Sudan, Yemen, Burundi, DR Congo, Libya, Mali, continues; Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by peacekeepers across the globe has shaken the United Nations peace-keeping system at its core, and nuclear threats are furthering tensions in the Korean Peninsula. All of this, together with the largest ever refugee flow - and still no real global response to the problem - create a hefty to-do-list for the next Secretary-General.

Let me take this opportunity to share with you our own wish – list, our vision, for a stronger United Nations under his leadership:

- The reconstitution of United Nations mandates and priorities to place the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the core work of the entire system
- The introduction of a time-bound, clearly defined roadmap with benchmarks to achieve full gender and regional equity for high-level positions in the United Nations system
- The commitment by the United Nations system as a whole to ensure that there is no impunity for UN forces and staff who commit sexual exploitation and abuse, and the prioritization of the protection of civilians for all UN Peace Operations
- The integration of human rights system-wide, a continuation of Ban Ki-moon's Human Rights up Front initiative, and an institutional recommitment to mass atrocity prevention
- A complete institutional commitment to the Sustaining Peace agenda and a recommitment to preventative diplomacy at the highest political level
- A new approach to foster serious responsibility and burden sharing to deal with the unprecedented refugee crisis the world is currently facing
- Further protection for civil society around the world and for their access and inclusion to all United Nations processes
- A commitment to the role of youth as agents for change, with the acknowledgement that Youth should be involved in decision-making at all levels

An attitude of independence throughout his tenure as UN Secretary-General to ensure that the international community can be supported to best deal with the many crises and issues facing the world today.

Mr. Guterres campaigned on a platform of unity, stressing that the values of peace, justice, human dignity, tolerance and solidarity enshrined in the UN Charter are central to all cultures and religions in the world. This platform fully mirrors WFUNA's vision since our creation 70 years ago. We trust that this approach will

underpin all of Mr. Guterres' endeavors. His to-do list will be long, but with the support of a large community of actors, he can lead a UN that is a powerful force in meeting global challenges and opportunities. We stand ready to support him and the United Nations for the next 70 years and beyond.