

# **General Assembly**

## **67<sup>th</sup> Session**

**27 September 2012**

### **The general debate of the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**H.E. Mr. Espen Barth Eide  
Minister of Foreign Affairs**

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Mr. President,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

Leadership is about making choices.

It is about the ability to make the right decision at the right moment as well as the stamina to deliver accordingly.

It is about the will to help shape the future of individuals, nations and of the planet. And it is about the courage that comes with seeking peace with your enemies, as Yitzhak Rabin once taught us.

Leadership is also about creating the conditions for people to choose how to live their lives. Freedom is more than the mere absence of physical or legal obstacles.

Mr. President,

The very purpose of this United Nations is to promote freedom for all people;

- Freedom from want

- Freedom from fear

- And the freedom to live in dignity.

People are only truly free when they are able to choose the way they want to live their lives.

Regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation.

It is the freedom of a woman to choose when to have children but also when not to have them. It is about her freedom from intrusion, of her physical integrity and right to think and say what she wants.

It is the freedom that allows mother and child to survive birth. The freedom that allows every child to live a healthy life, to receive education and to walk to school without fear of land mines or cluster munitions.

It is about the freedom of every man and every woman to organize, to speak out and to have their say when society progresses.

These freedoms lay the ground for development and prosperity. That give men and women a chance to build a better future for themselves and their families.

Some people can only dream of these freedoms.

But when they *do* exist, they are often the results of collective action - in families, communities, regions and states, and at the global level.

This is why we are here... in this assembly.

In Syria mass atrocities are continuing. The crisis in Syria started with a call for freedom and dignity through peaceful protests.

The Syrian Government bears the primary responsibility. The privileges of the few should no longer stand in the way of the aspirations of the many.

The regime of Bashir al-Assad has lost all legitimacy and must cease power.

The violence in Syria must stop.

Even in war, there are rules. All parties have clear responsibilities under international humanitarian law. To any party that commits violations of these principles, I say this:

You are all individually responsible. When justice prevails, you *will* be held accountable for the crimes you have committed. Do not expect to be pardoned by stating that your opponent did the same.

Mr. President,

When the United Nations was formed in San Francisco in 1945, we decided to establish a Security Council to act on our behalf.

The permanent members were entrusted with the right to veto.

My country's delegation at the time was led by Mr. Trygve Lie, later to become this organization's first Secretary General. On behalf of my country, he cast his vote in favor of the right to veto.

So did many other small and medium-sized countries.

They did so to reflect the world order of the day, but also to ensure that the council would actually have the authority to make decisions and to act on our behalf.

They did not do so because they held certain states to be superior to others.

Therefore, and in light of the Syrian drama, my message to the members of the Security Council is this:

People in the Arab world, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in the Americas are watching with horror how history repeats itself.

Once again, the permanent members of the UN Security Council are divided and unable to protect the people on the ground. In its absence, extremists on all sides are free to kill, maim and rape.

Now - we expect you to act. We expect you to put away outdated ideas of zero-sum games and spheres of influence and to strive to seek a common position.

Enough blood has been shed.

The verdict is harsh on he who chooses the wrong side of history.

Do not allow narrow self-interest to block the winds of change that the vast majority of this Assembly applauds...

President Assad of Syria was not forced to go down the path of conflict and confrontation – he could have opted for compromise and cooperation.

Elsewhere in the world, other choices are being made.

Mr. President,

Today, in this assembly, we heard how Myanmar's reformist President Thein Sein is opening the door for a free and democratic Myanmar. I commend the courage shown by the Myanmar government.

I also commend the courage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She has chosen to talk to the very people who held her in confinement.

Today, in Addis Abeba, the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan have made the choice to end a bloody conflict which has marred their peoples' lives for decades.

Sudan and South Sudan have been on the brink of a war - but by signing today's agreements they have opted for peace. We salute the African Union, that in close partnership with the Security Council, has helped make this choice possible.

Mr. President,

As Norway's foreign minister, I am the Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for support to the Palestinian authorities. On the eve of this General Assembly, the Committee met.

I want to share my deep concern about the state of play in the Israel-Palestine relationship.

Exactly one year ago, we agreed, here in New York, that the Palestinian state-building process had reached a level where the institutions of state are in place.

Great expectations were created, and then frustrated.

Time is running short. Shorter than many seem to understand.

There is significant fatigue among the Palestinian population. They may be inspired to look for alternative options, options that would severely hamper the prospects of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

I see a similar fatigue emerging among the countries that are funding the Palestinian authorities.

The two-state solution is the only path to sustainable peace. But the prospect for realizing a Palestinian state based on the two-state solution is diminishing as the expansion of Israeli settlements continues. These actions remain the main obstacle to peace and must stop.

To get the peace-process back on track we need to break the impasse and re-install the trust in a political horizon based on the final status issues. Negotiations remain the key to achieve this. They must start now.

Mr. President,

Leadership is also about trust.

To achieve our goals, we need a strong United Nations Organization. I applaud the Secretary General's tireless efforts in reforming the internal workings of this organization.

We have elected a Secretary-General to lead. But then we must allow him to do so. Intergovernmental micro-management of what would have been the Chief Executives' prerogative in any modern organization is the opposite of making the UN work.

Mr. President, to conclude

Leaders have real choices. Leaders have real responsibilities.

Mankind shapes its own future. Failing to solve the most critical challenges of our time not only harms those who suffer under poverty, war, or oppression. It also deprives people of the conviction that they too can shape their future.

And that very conviction, that belief in oneself and each other, is what will make freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom to live in dignity, possible for all. That is the purpose of our leadership.

Thank you