

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great respect that I stand at this podium for the first time as Austrian Foreign Minister.

Many eminent world leaders stood here before me and laid out their visions on international challenges and crises.

As you can tell - probably even from the last row - I look a bit younger than most of the other speakers before.

Indeed, I believe I am the only person under the age of 30 who has the privilege of speaking here this week.

So while I cannot speak from many years of experience, what I can offer is the **perspective of a young generation.**

My generation is the post Cold-War generation. The Iron Curtain collapsed 25 years ago when I was 3 years old.

For us in Europe, the years after the collapse of the Iron curtain were years filled with hope and new opportunities:

- We could travel freely, study in foreign countries and meet people from all over the world.
- We grew up in a society where human rights were respected, where the rule of law was a given and where religious freedom was practised.
- We communicate without borders on Facebook and Twitter, we have our entire lives stored on our smartphone and we consume the news online.

While the world after the Cold War offered fascinating new opportunities, it also proved to be not orderly at all, but quite messy and more uncertain than many had predicted.

Just two years after the wall came down, war returned to Europe in the Western Balkans. Thankfully, these horrors came to an end and these countries have a clear European perspective now.

2. Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the fall of the Iron curtain, we believed that the world would move forward and that more and more people would benefit from the same opportunities that my generation in Western Europe enjoyed.

But the word today seems to be shifting into reverse.

We are facing situations and horrors we thought we had overcome many years ago.

For young people like myself who only learned about the cold war through history books it seems unbelievable that the thinking in terms of confrontational blocs could return to Europe.

The crisis in Ukraine is probably the most serious challenge to peace and security Europe has had to face in decades.

Looking back it is easy to claim that this development should have been predictable, that we should have foreseen it.

But let's be honest.

- Who would have predicted that after 3 years of negotiations President Yanukovich would refuse to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union?
- Who would have predicted that after this, the Maidan movement would be strong enough to force him to leave the country?
- And who would have predicted that Russia would react by annexing Crimea, actively supporting separatist movements?

We cannot accept that international law is broken and that recognized borders are challenged in Europe once again.

At the same time, we need to find a political solution reaching beyond a mere ceasefire.

We need a solution offering a perspective for a free, stable and united Ukraine, a Ukraine, which enjoys strong economic ties with both the European Union and the Russian Federation.

Let us not return to Cold-war-thinking where two blocs face each other. Our political guideline must be to move from a policy of "either Europe or Russia" to a logic of "both, Europe and Russia".

3. Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some people have claimed that Ukraine would not be in this situation, had it not given up its nuclear weapons.

This kind of thinking is dangerous.

And we have to ask ourselves: Where would this lead us?

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use – on purpose or by accident – remains real.

Let us be clear: nuclear weapons have the potential of ending life on this planet more than any other human action.

And let us not forget that 69 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki the humanitarian consequences of a single nuclear explosion are terrifying and long-lasting.

The desire to prevent the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons should unite us all. We therefore hope that the next Conference on this subject – to be held in Vienna in December 2014 – will mark a real change of direction in international discussions on nuclear weapons.

4. Mr. President,

Looking beyond our region, we are currently witnessing a further rise of extremism in the name of religion with a new development:

foreign terrorist fighters who come from Western countries and travel to the Middle East in order to join the fight.

There is no time to lose: we must actively address what is happening in Northern Iraq where the so-called Islamic State is attempting to wipe out entire religious communities.

Where children are being beheaded, mothers raped and fathers hung because of their beliefs.

In Europe, we estimate that there are thousands of foreign fighters with European passports. In our case, there are more than 140 people from Austria fighting in the name of a so called "holy war".

We all know that these terrorist organizations operate worldwide.

They get their terrorist fighters by global recruiting.

They finance themselves through global networks.

They buy arms and other resources on a global scale.

And they use – or rather abuse – the global communication networks to their benefit.

How is it possible that terrorist organizations have access to financial and economic resources that allow them to operate so effectively?

How is it possible that we allow terrorist organizations to abuse the right to freedom of expression by showing their barbaric acts on social media?

And how is it possible that they are able to recruit new fighters within our societies?

We all, governments and private sector, have the duty to develop preventive measures within our societies to stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, to cut off financial support to their organisations and to put an end to the abuse of social media networks by developing forms of voluntary self-restriction in these networks. The adoption of the Security Council resolution this week was an important first step. Now we have to implement it. And we must always remind ourselves that the battle lines in the confrontation are not limited to Iraq or Syria. These battle lines run through our very own Western societies.

5. Ladies and gentlemen,

My generation in Austria was privileged to be able to grow up in freedom from fear and freedom from want.

There are of course other stories to be told of young people, growing up for example in Afghanistan or the Central African Republic.

Today half of the world's population is under 25 years of age.

Many of them lack nutrition, health care, education, and jobs – all in all not much perspective in life!

Therefore, the United Nations' work on **development** is crucial, to lift millions of people out of poverty, to help the hungry and the sick and to educate new generations throughout the world.

The United Nations needs and deserves our support and I can assure you that Austria fully stands behind the post-2015 development agenda.

But we also need to ensure that respect for human rights and the rule of law will receive proper attention.

Only a society that respects the rights of its citizens will be a society that allows the potential of each individual to develop.

We are therefore very glad to organize the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna in November this year.

And we are honoured that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has agreed to attend the conference.

6. Mr. President,

I am aware that the list of challenges that the international community and the UN are facing is long. Iraq, Ukraine, Syria, Gaza, Central African Republic, Mali and the outbreak of the Ebola disease, just to name a few.

In view of these challenges the United Nations needs and deserves our full support. And I want to specifically thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts at the helm of the UN.

I can assure you that Austria remains committed to working actively together within the UN and its organisations to support your work and to address these global challenges be it as

- peacekeepers,
- president of the ECOSOC
- or as a member of the Human Rights Council.

We are particularly proud to host the United Nations Office in Vienna, which has become a landmark in Austria.

Austria has a long tradition of building bridges and serving as a place for international dialogue. We will continue to do so in the future and offer our contribution to making our world a little bit safer and better for the generations to come.

Thank you.