



Belgian authorities congratulated the UN on its 67th birthday at a UN Day discussion today with Belgian, UN and UNA officials, in the Belgian Federal Parliament on the theme "The United Nations and the international community facing global challenges".

In his opening remarks André Flahaut, President of the chamber of representative welcomed the UN's many accomplishments but challenged the organisation to be more representative of the modern world. He said that a Security Council with no permanent representation "for entire geographical regions and some of the world's most populous nations such as India and Brazil," did not reflect the reality of the 21st century.

Willem Van de Voorde, Deputy Chef de Cabinet spoke on behalf of Didier Reynders, Belgian Vice Premier Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. He pointed out that Belgium, the organisation's fifteenth largest financial contributor, had recently served on the Security Council and was a current member of the Human Rights Council.

He welcomed the progress already made towards fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals on such important issues as maternal health, universal primary education, child mortality, malaria and HIV/AIDS. He stressed that with a coordinated effort, "malnutrition can disappear, poverty can be eliminated, quality of education can be improved. "

Antonio Vigilante, the head of the Brussels office of the UN and the UNDP, delivered the UN Day message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, where he declared that the UN United Nations must "keep pace across the spectrum of its activities — peace, development, human rights, the rule of law, the empowerment of the world's women and youth."

Mr. Vigilante added that the United Nations was not only a venue for the meeting of diplomats and politicians but - among other things - fed 70 million people in 73 countries, helped 36 million refugees and ran 16 Peacekeeping missions on 4 continents with 120,000 peacekeepers.

After interventions from the two Belgian UNAs, a toast was drunk in honour of the world organisation which, in the words of one of the guests, "still had the energy of a teenager despite having – today - reached official retirement age."

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