

STATEMENT
H.E. Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
Foreign Affairs and European Affairs

at

Reception at The Morgan Library and Museum
23 April 2018

Your Majesties,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

What more do we need to spend a wonderful evening together?

We are in extraordinary company and I warmly thank the King and the Queen of the Belgians for being with us tonight.

And what a splendid location this is. My special thanks go to the Morgan Library and Museum for opening this beautiful hall to us.

And what a display of “Power and Grace”, the title of an exceptional exhibit of masterpieces of the Golden Age of Baroque Art. These painters – Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens – were among the first Ambassadors of my country, combining unique artistic, political and diplomatic qualities.

Belgium is all about connection: connecting Northern and Southern Europe, the Germanic and Latin cultures and languages, a political and strategic crossroad, the capital of Europe. But above all, connecting people, their ideas and ambitions, and building bridges between divergent views and policies.

And this is exactly what Belgium intends to do when elected for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council on June 8th, thanks to your support.

By now, you should be well informed about who we are. We believe that peace and security can only be safeguarded if we adopt a comprehensive approach to the challenges we face. True conflict prevention requires a long term approach as well as a global vision, taking into account the interdependence of facts and figures.

Peace will not be possible without the accomplishment of our sustained development agenda. Neither will it be possible if we disregard the fundamental rights and freedoms of all of our citizens, ignore the root causes of today's violent extremism, or fail to counter the illicit flows of small arms and the reappearance of inhumane weapons. Nor should we accept the further disruption of our environment and allow climate change to fuel conflict and put our very existence at risk.

Our common security agenda is thus quite broad and yet our responses must be focused and concrete. There is no "one fits all" solution. Every conflict has its own cycle and requires tailored responses to be effective and leading to sustained peace, the topic of tomorrow's high-level meeting at the General Assembly.

Together we can learn lessons from the past: the need for timely action, investing in mediation and peacebuilding, defining clear political objectives for UN peace

operations and providing them with adequate funding and means, deepening the collaboration with regional organizations.

The UN faces a credibility gap if it appears incapable of protecting civilians, particularly children in armed conflict, or if it undervalues the essential role of women in peace and security.

Finally, let us not forget that a conflict cycle can only be closed if the question of impunity is adequately addressed and the plight of victims fully recognized. That also is part of the rule of law and respect for the UN Charter.

Belgium will be a constructive, reliable and transparent partner for all of you. We will not shy away from our responsibility to take part in complex and often challenging decisions, but we will always listen to you, respectfully and with an open mind. Compromise is not a dirty word if it opens the door for fair and lasting solutions.

With this I would like to thank you for your presence here with us and express the hope that your feelings towards Belgium will be inspired by the sweetness of the chocolate served tonight. Enjoy!