



Dossier de presse

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Seul le discours prononcé fait foi

**Visite d'état de LL.AA.RR. le Grand-Duc et la Grande-Duchesse
en république de Finlande**

**Discours prononcé par S.A.R. le Grand-Duc à l'occasion
de l'ouverture du séminaire économique
au Finlandia Hall à Helsinki (10.05.2016)**

President,

Dear Ministers, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Finland-Luxembourg Business Forum in Helsinki, the capital of Finland, "the Land of a Thousand Lakes". During our three-day State visit, we will have the opportunity to visit several sites of great historic, institutional and cultural, economic and scientific value that will undoubtedly provide us with an even deeper understanding of how the Republic of Finland has developed into the innovative and fascinating country that it is today.

As I mentioned yesterday during the State dinner, Finland is a fascinating country in many ways. Some sixty businessmen are accompanying us, reflecting the strong interest that Luxembourg's business community takes in the Republic of Finland.

I am confident that today's business forum and tomorrow's visits to the Technical Research Centre of Finland and Aalto University represent an important opportunity, allowing us to establish new and to reinforce existing partnerships.

While Finland and Luxembourg are geographically different, we share a multitude of common points and values, co-operating in the European Union. Stability, freedom, human rights and democracy are essential characteristics of both our countries and we have seen European integration as a means to secure our future. Europe has offered our countries a strong sense of cohesion and security, but also a way to prosper economically via the principles of its Single Market.

I recall with pleasure the visit of your former president, Mrs Tarja Halonen, to Luxembourg in 2008 and notably the vivid round table discussion on *“Schengen - today more important than ever”*. Now, 8 years later, this topic is even more relevant.

Luxembourg is one of the six founding members of the European Union. Schengen, as the President Niinistö well knows, is a small village in Luxembourg bordering on Germany and France; its name was given to the agreement that was signed in 1985. Considered to be one of the most important achievements of the European integration, the Schengen Treaty is of great importance in securing free movement of people, which is as significant as free movement of goods, services and capital.

Today, the migration crisis, geopolitical tensions and the current terrorist threat require resolute action, a combined effort as well as constructive cooperation between European Member States, supported by a sustainable EU framework and a concerted exchange of information.

Finland has always acted in the “European Spirit” and has constantly shown its solidarity, support and cooperation to solve problems within its region and the European Union.

Our countries are aware of the risks of social exclusion, hitting in particular the young generation; we therefore care to provide them with a solid education and thereby open up genuine perspectives. It are the children and young people that are the drivers of tomorrow’s economy.

In terms of education, I take this opportunity to congratulate Finland on its educational system, which ranks as one of the world’s first in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment, better known under the name of PISA Study. All this illustrates how much we can learn from you, and I look forward to exchanging ideas and best practices during our visit.

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In an ever-changing environment, innovation is the key to the survival of the European industry. We need to encourage our business community to invest in their research, in modern infrastructures, in their production tools and in their human capital.

Confronted with the challenges of an aging population, the competition from emerging markets, climate change, scarce resources as well as political and social crises, European companies need to diversify internationally and to always remain one step ahead in the race for new markets. Developing new niches of economic activity is of vital importance in order to insure a sustainable economy, to guarantee stable employment and to preserve our environment.

In the past few years, Luxembourg has worked very hard on putting together an ambitious framework for research and development, working with both the university and the public research centres as well as the private sector.

I sincerely hope that during our visit - and beyond - we will identify synergies that will allow companies and public institutions to cooperate and foster reciprocal development.

I am pleased that the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT), and the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST) have already identified fields of cooperation and I am confident that the Memorandum of Understanding which the two institutions sign will pave the way for further partnerships.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly invite you to actively participate in today's economic forum, with senior business representatives from both sides. It is my firm belief that there is great potential for cooperation between the Republic of Finland and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It is my sincere wish that our visit will mark an important milestone in our bilateral relations and that this seminar will contribute to strengthen the foundations of our relations.

I therefore would like to thank all the guest speakers, as well as today's audience, for their interesting contributions highlighting the strengths and attractiveness of both Finland and Luxembourg.

Thank you for your attention.