

Opening Speech – International Finance Tournament Luxembourg 2026

Distinguished Guests,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by excusing my Minister, Gilles ROTH, Finance Minister of Luxembourg.

He can unfortunately not be here today as he has been heavily involved in negotiations within the domestic framework that we call Tripartite with representatives of trade unions and employers' organizations.

So, I will do my best to be a worthy replacement.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 69th International Finance Tournament here in Luxembourg.

I am especially pleased that you get to discover the north of Luxembourg, more specifically the village of Hosingen, in the heart of the “Our” Nature Park — one of the most beautiful regions of our country.

On behalf of the Organising Committee, I warmly welcome all delegations from Germany, France, Austria, Hungary and Luxembourg.

This tournament has a long and remarkable history. Its origins go back to a French initiative launched in 1954. The idea was simple, yet powerful: to bring together colleagues from financial administrations across Europe. Not around regulations, procedures or institutions, but around human encounters, friendship and mutual understanding.

To unite people.

More than 70 years later, that original vision remains as relevant as ever. While preparing for this tournament, I came across a photograph of Pierre Werner taking the ceremonial first kick in 1970. It is a reminder of the rich tradition behind this event. Yet this tournament is above all about the people gathered here today.

Over the coming days, you will compete in football, chess, tennis and table tennis. And while we all enjoy competition and are all doing our best to win, this event is about far more than sporting results.

In many ways, sport and finance have something important in common: both are ultimately about people. In our daily professional lives, we work across administrations and countries, contributing to cooperation, stability and the common good. But successful cooperation does not depend solely on procedures, agreements or legal frameworks. It also depends on human trust. It depends on whether people know each other, understand each other and are able to work together in a spirit of mutual respect.

Put simply: cooperation works better when there is a good chemistry between people.

Civil servants are, first and foremost, human beings. Before representing institutions, we are persons who build relationships, exchange ideas and learn from one another. And even in the world of public finance, behind every figure, there are people whose lives are affected by our decisions. This is why the human dimension matters.

Europe is often discussed in terms of institutions, regulations and policies. But Europe is not an abstract concept. Europe is, above all, about people. In that sense, gatherings such as this tournament represent a return to the roots of our European spirit. The European project was never only about markets, rules or administrative structures. It was about reconciliation, understanding and bringing people together across borders.

The International Finance Sports Tournament embodies precisely that idea. Every match played, every conversation shared and every friendship formed contributes to strengthening the bonds that connect us. In a fragmented world, this message of unity in diversity is more important than ever. So, Luxembourg, at the heart of Europe, is proud to welcome you and to host this unique event.

We hope that, beyond the competitions, you will enjoy discovering our country and its people.

I express my deep and sincere gratitude to the Commune of Parc Hosingen, to the members of SISPOLO, to all volunteers, officials, local clubs and partners whose dedication and hard work have made this tournament possible.

Dear friends,

As hosts of this year's edition, we also hope to give this tournament new momentum and fresh energy for the years to come.

As my Minister, Gilles Roth, emphasizes: Europe is, above all, about bringing people together.

That is exactly what this tournament has been doing since 1954.

It is in this spirit that I wish us all a successful, enriching and unifying tournament.

I wish you exciting competitions, memorable encounters and an enjoyable stay here in Luxembourg.

May this tournament be a celebration of friendship, fair play and European togetherness.

For this spirit of working together is the key expression of Europe's smart power.

Enjoy your time together here in Luxembourg!

Thank you very much!