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New energy-efficient UN offices in Kenya serve as model for future – Ban



New UN office complex in Nairobi, Kenya

31 March 2011 – [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today officially opened the new energy-efficient United Nations office [complex](#) in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, calling it a model for environmentally sustainable architecture in Africa and beyond.

“This building is beautiful, comfortable and efficient. But more than any of that, this building is a living model of our sustainable future,” Mr. Ban [said](#) at the opening of the facility at Gigiri, which houses the new offices of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) and the UN Human Settlements Programme ([UN-HABITAT](#)).

[According](#) to UNEP, buildings are responsible for more than one third of global energy use and are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in most countries. The Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that emissions from buildings will rise to 11.1 billion tons by 2020.

The manufacture of building materials contributes a further 4 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually, a figure that is increasing with the continuing rise in construction globally, most of it in developing countries.

“If our growing population is going to survive on this planet, we need smart designs that maximize resources, minimize waste and serve people and communities,” said Mr. Ban. “This facility hits all of these targets.”

From the 6,000 square metres of shimmering solar panels to the environmentally-friendly paint on the walls, the new UN offices – which comprise four buildings that can accommodate 1,200 staff – boast myriad environmental features, while capitalizing on the natural benefits of Nairobi’s climate.

The features of the energy-neutral complex include automated low-energy lighting for workspaces, energy-efficient computers and water-saving lavatories. Rainwater is collected from the roofs to feed the fountains and ponds at the four entrances, and sewage is treated in a state-of-the-art aeration system and recycled to irrigate the landscaped compound.

“This facility embodies the new, green economy I have championed for years now. An economy that can usher in a cleaner future, create jobs and spur economic growth,” said Mr. Ban, who was joined at the inauguration ceremony by Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner and UN-HABITAT Executive Director Joan Clos, as well as other UN officials and dignitaries.

Calling the facility a “model for green architecture in Africa and beyond,” Mr. Ban said he hoped all UN offices will reach the very high bar set by those in Nairobi.

He added that the Organization is aiming to make its Headquarters complex in New York, which is currently undergoing major renovations after 60 years of existence, one of the cleanest, greenest buildings in the world.

While in Nairobi, Mr. Ban also held separate meetings with Mr. Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga. He also had a range of meetings with senior UN officials either based in Nairobi or visiting for the Chief Executives Board (CEB) gathering. That meeting, held twice a year, brings together the heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes in the UN system.

Also today, he launched his report on HIV/AIDS ahead of the high-level meeting on the topic at the General Assembly in June.

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