

Renewed multilateralism order of the day, Ban tells graduates in Seattle



Ban Ki-moon (second row, right) with students inside the Seattle Center Monorail

26 October 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today highlighted the need for greater collaboration among nations to address common challenges, including the global economic slowdown, the flu pandemic and climate change, adding that the United States is central to these efforts.

“Such challenges demand full and better collaboration – all nations working together for common solutions – rich and poor, big and small, north and south, developed and developing,” Mr. Ban said in Seattle during a special convocation held at the University of Washington.

“If ever there were a time to act in a spirit of renewed multilateralism... a moment to create a United Nations of genuine collective action... it is now,” he stated. “We must be united in purpose, united in action.”

The Secretary-General, who received an honorary degree of doctor of laws at today’s ceremony, told the gathering that the US is central to the renewed multilateralism.

He welcomed US President Barack Obama’s vigorous engagement within the framework of the UN, adding that a major test of the new cooperation will take place when nations meet six weeks from now at the Copenhagen climate change conference.

“Copenhagen does not need to resolve all the details, but countries must agree to a deal that establishes an ambitious framework for progress on fundamental issues,” he said, referring to the need for targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and funding to help developing countries limit the growth of their emissions.

Mr. Ban also highlighted the need for urgent action in **remarks** to the World Affairs Council of Seattle, in which he called climate change the leading geopolitical and economic issue of the 21st century.

"We will continue to see growing pressure on water, food and land. It will reverse years of development gains... exacerbate poverty... destabilize fragile States and topple governments," he warned.

"Some say tackling climate change is too expensive," he added. "They are wrong. We will pay an unacceptable price if we do not act now."

The Secretary-General delivered a similar **message** at a lunch with business leaders, telling them failure to act on climate change will have devastating consequences.

"But we also know that this crisis presents an opportunity to retool our global economy," he stated, adding that a successful agreement in Copenhagen can help to unleash a clean energy revolution that will deliver economic growth and lower carbon emissions.

Yesterday, Mr. Ban attended an event hosted by the City of Seattle dubbed the "Shrinking Bigfoot," a programme to raise awareness among local students about climate change, conservation, and the responsibility to protect the planet.

Speaking to children between the ages of five and 16, he called on all people, young and old, to consider the well-being of the planet, and to shrink their carbon footprints with easy, everyday actions such as turning off the lights and recycling.

Following the meeting with students, Mr. Ban and the children participated in a commemorative tree-planting ceremony, where they gathered to plant a ginkgo biloba to celebrate Seattle's contributions to protecting the global environment.

He also met yesterday with the CEO of Microsoft, Steve Ballmer, and expressed gratitude for the corporation's support for the efforts of the UN. In addition, he commended Microsoft for its work in introducing new energy-efficiency standards in its buildings and offices, as well as increasing the use of renewable energy, including solar, wind and hydropower.

Today he met with Bill and Melinda Gates, who, he said, are using their wealth to make the world a better place.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

Climate change the focus as Ban kicks off visit to Seattle