

Above the Arctic Circle, Ban sees first-hand view of climate change's impact



Secretary General Ban Ki-moon with Norwegian officials on their way by plane to the North Pole

1 September 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has travelled above the Arctic Circle today to experience first-hand the impact of climate change on the fragile region, as fewer than 100 days remain before the start of the United Nations conference where countries will aim to reach a new agreement on curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

Having departed the Norwegian capital, Oslo, yesterday, Mr. Ban made his way to the Svalbard archipelago off the northern coast, where today he visited research stations and met with scientists, who updated him on the latest science regarding ice-melting.

He stopped at a Norwegian Zeppelin station, a research centre where air in the Arctic region is monitored for various purposes, including determining the effect of greenhouse gases.

The Secretary-General also saw the state of local glaciers, noting that the effects wrought by climate change were visible and alarming, according to UN spokesperson Farhan Haq.

"I will try to deliver a clear strong message from my visit to the North Pole," Mr. Ban **told reporters** yesterday, underscoring that only 15 days of negotiations remain before the start of December's climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, where countries are expected to wrap up negotiations on a new pact to go into effect when the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period ends in 2012.

"Now is the time for decision-making," the Secretary-General stressed. "We must seal a deal in Copenhagen for a global, equitable and comprehensive deal for the future of humanity and the future of Planet Earth."

While in Oslo yesterday, he met with Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, as well as with King Harald V.

Mr. Ban also **attended** a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial of Trygve Lie, a Norwegian who was the first elected UN Secretary-General.

Tomorrow, he is expected to visit the Global Seed Vault in Svalbard, which was established early last year to protect seed samples from the threats of climate change, disease and disasters.

Located near the village of Longyearbyen – some 1,120 kilometres from the North Pole – the vault houses duplicates of unique varieties of the world’s most important crops. Permafrost and thick rock ensure that even without electricity, the genetic material stored in the vault will remain frozen and protected.

The last leg of Mr. Ban’s trip will be in the Swiss city of Geneva, where he will participate on Thursday in the opening of the high-level segment of the Third World Climate Conference of the World Meteorological Organization (**WMO**), the UN agency dealing with weather, climate and water.

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