

World leaders make progress on climate change and disarmament, Ban says



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses press conference

29 September 2009 – The meetings of world leaders at the General Assembly over the past week have made progress on major issues including climate change, nuclear disarmament and the global financial crisis with the United Nations playing a pivotal role, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today.

“It is still early days, of course, but this has been one of the most engaged GA [General Assembly] sessions in years,” he **told** a news conference at UN Headquarters in New York, summing up the opening of the Assembly’s 64th annual General Debate and the meetings that took place on the sidelines.

“There is a broad recognition of the UN’s pivotal role in rising to the exceptional challenges of the coming year.”

He said the summit meeting he convened on the climate crisis last Tuesday with 101 heads of State and government present laid a “solid foundation” toward December’s Copenhagen meeting, where leaders will seek a new treaty to control emissions of greenhouse gases.

“All leaders said they wanted a deal and are prepared to work for it. This gives the negotiations vital political impetus,” he said, citing the leaders’ confirmation of the need to limit the global average temperature rise to a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius with most vulnerable countries pushing for an even more stringent 1.5-degree limit.

He also noted that on the mitigation front, Japan announced a “bold goal” of 25 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2020 and China said it would be prepared to take additional actions to reduce energy intensity in the context of an international agreement.

On adaptation, he noted that the European Union (EU) announced support for a fast track funding facility for adaptation and their readiness to provide €5 billion to €7 billion to get it started.

“At long last, leaders focused on climate change financing and got more concrete, with many expressing support for the proposal for \$100 billion annually over the next decade for concrete adaptation and mitigation actions,” Mr. Ban said.

“We need to maintain the new momentum and solidify progress in the run-up to Copenhagen.”

Turning to disarmament, Mr. Ban said that the issue, along with nuclear non-proliferation, is “now front and centre” as a result of last week’s Security Council summit meeting.

“Not long ago, few challenged the idea that nuclear weapons were here to stay,” he added, but the resolution the Council unanimously adopted on Thursday “is an important step. We continue the march for a world without nuclear weapons.”

On recovery from the financial crisis, he noted that markets may be bouncing back, but incomes, jobs and people are not. “That is why we have put forward a Global Jobs Pact,” he said. “We are also creating a new Global Impact Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS), giving us real-time data and analysis on the socio-economic picture around the world, so that governments can reach those who most need it.”

He also cited the summit meeting in Pittsburgh of the G20 group of industrialized nations and major economies, which again promised to help the poorest countries. “They pledged more balanced and sustainable growth in the future. Now we must hold them to their word,” he declared.

Mr. Ban also cited the meeting he hosted together with United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on food security, designed to build on the announcement by the G8 group of industrialized countries in July of a \$20-billion food security fund.

“For much of the past year, we have focused on immediate needs – saving people from starving,” he said. “Today we are moving more firmly toward a longer term Phase 2 – working a revolution in the way we do agricultural development. We are focusing particularly on small farmers, most of them women. Our approach is about more than feeding the hungry. It’s about empowering the poor.

Turning to the flu pandemic, Mr. Ban said the UN system had completed an assessment to help countries prioritize their needs.

In recent days, he noted, nine countries agreed to make 10 per cent of their pandemic vaccine supply available to countries in special need – approximately 50 million vaccines; two vaccine manufacturers have agreed to donate 150 million vaccines; and a number of donor-countries have pledged financial and technical support, while others are exploring how they can help.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

World leaders demonstrated energy, dynamism on climate change, says Ban