Secretary-General urges expanded understanding of human security

General Assembly Holds panel discussion on human security

20 May 2010 – The protection and empowerment of people worldwide must form the basis of government actions, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed today as he called on Member States to accept a broadened understanding of the concept of human security.

Mr. Ban **told** a General Assembly debate and panel discussion on human security, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, that the interconnected nature of the world meant crises and catastrophes today can transcend borders and threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of people as never before.

Pointing to the recent food, economic and financial crises, Mr. Ban said "no region has been left untouched. No country is immune."

Last year alone, more than 200 million people were affected by natural disasters, while violent conflicts drove a record 42 million people from their homes.

The landmark 2005 World Summit referred to the concept of human security, recognizing that "that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential."

Presenting his report on human security to the Assembly, Mr. Ban stressed that "we must ensure that the gains of today are not lost to the crises of tomorrow," calling

for actions focusing on "people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and preventive strategies at every level."

Such an approach, the publication said, helps address both current and emerging threats, as well as their causes. It would also help to support early warning systems that offset the impact of such hazards.

"The advancement of human security requires strong and stable institutions," the report pointed out, with governments retaining "the primary role in providing a rules-based system where societal relations are mutually supportive, harmonious and accountable."

Mr. Ban said today that "the focus is on building government and local capacities by identifying concrete needs of populations under stress; developing solutions that are rooted in local realities; and building partnerships that are targeted, cost-effective and capitalize on comparative advantage."

The concept of human security, he said, underpins the work of the UN, which seeks to help war-torn societies rebuild; to prevent and respond to natural disasters; and to bolster health care and education.

It also is a critical tool in increasing the cohesion of the world body's efforts, "instead of adding layers to the work of the United Nations," the Secretary-General said, exhorting the international community to press ahead in strengthening "the political, social, environmental, economic and cultural systems that are the building blocks of stability, security and human dignity."

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