

Ban urges high-level panel to meet global sustainability challenge



19 September 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today issued a challenge to the newly-created High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability to find a solution to challenge of lifting people out of poverty while promoting sustainable development.

By 2050, the world's population will have grown by almost 50 per cent, and global greenhouse gas emissions will have to be slashed by half by that year if climate change is to be kept in check, Mr. Ban told reporters after the body's first meeting in New York today.

Calling it the “-50-50 challenge,” he stressed to reporters that “we will need to provide a dignified life for nine billion people while at the same time preserving the resources and ecosystems that sustain us,” he said.

Last month, the Secretary-General unveiled the 21-member body, which is co-chaired by Finnish President Tarja Halonen and South African President Jacob Zuma.

Mr. Ban reiterated his call today for the Panel to “think big” in drafting a bold but practical blueprint on how countries can promote sustainable development, voicing his “high hopes” for its work.

“The challenge is considerable, and extends far beyond the timeframe for the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs],” he said, referring to the eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline.

During today's meeting, the Panel discussed its work for the next 15 months, and is set to report back at the end of the year.

Its recommendations on how to meet the so-called “-50-50” challenge and other obstacles will feed into preparations on upcoming conferences on development and climate change.

The Panel's final recommendations will be delivered to the Secretary-General at the end of 2011.

It also comprises Gro Harlem Brundtland, Han Seung-soo, Yukio Hatoyama, Luisa Dias Diogo and Kevin Rudd, former prime ministers of Norway, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Mozambique and Australia, respectively, as well as Barbadian Prime Minister David Thompson, United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdallah Bin Zayid Al Nahayan, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, and Switzerland's Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey.

They will be joined by Alexander Bedritsky, Aide to the Russian President on climate change Hajiya Amina Az-Zubair, Adviser for the Nigerian President on the MDGs, Zheng Guogang, Director of the China Meteorological Administration James Laurence Balsillie, Chair of the board of the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and Susan E. Rice, the United States' Permanent Representative to the UN.

The Panel will be rounded out by current and former environment ministers – Jairam Ramesh of India, Julia Carabias of Mexico and Cristina Narbona Ruiz of Spain – as well as Connie Hedegaard, the European Union's Commissioner for Climate Change and Gunilla Carlsson, Sweden's Minister for International Development Cooperation.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

Development, environment and UN reform the focus of new Assembly session