



World faces 'epochal' change equivalent to that of 1989, UN chief says



President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy (left) and General Assembly President Joseph Deiss

28 March 2011 – The world is facing an important shift in global history which is “no less transformative” than the “epochal” year of 1989, when numerous governments fell across Eastern Europe, **Secretary-General** Ban Ki-moon **said** today.

Speaking at the **General Assembly**, where he introduced an address by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano, Mr. Ban noted that the world is witnessing a period of revolution. He recently returned from a visit to Egypt and Tunisia, where long-standing regimes were toppled by a wave of pro-democracy protests that have engulfed much of North Africa and the Middle East, and have led to fierce fighting in Libya.

“Revolutionary change is sweeping the Arab world, with repercussions that will be felt everywhere and by all,” he said. “We face no less epochal change in other spheres – from climate change to fighting global poverty to advancing human rights.”

Welcoming Mr. Napolitano to the United Nations, Mr. Ban extolled the statesman for being “a leading moral voice” of his country and expressed gratitude for his advocacy for the common values embodied by the UN.

“You have been a champion of public principle, good governance, openness and transparency and honesty as democracy’s highest good.”

Meanwhile, in his address to the Assembly, Mr. Napolitano hailed the relevance of the UN in a world caught up in political instability.

“Winds of freedom, human dignity and social justice are blowing strongly across the world,” he said. “We need to uphold human rights as a foundation of political stability and sustainable growth. We need the United Nations.”

At the same time, he praised Mr. Ban for “tirelessly” calling the UN to advance its agenda in the face of challenges ranging from international peace and security to sustainable development.

General Assembly President Joseph Deiss also thanked Mr. Napolitano for Italy’s commitment to the UN and highlighted Italy’s long-standing support for global governance.

“I would like to emphasize that the Italian Constitution recognizes the prominent role of international organizations in ensuring peace and justice among nations,” said Mr. Deiss.

Earlier today, Mr. Deiss also received a high-level delegation from Malawi headed by the country’s Foreign Minister, Eta Elizabeth Banda.

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