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Ban urges UN rights body to avoid selectivity, rise above national interests



Human Rights Council

25 January 2011 – [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today called on the main United Nations body tasked with addressing human rights challenges worldwide to be impartial, objective and constructive as it carries out its vital work.

“Facing human rights problems is the first step, acting to fix them moves us forward on the path of progress. As we walk this road we must shine light on abuses everywhere,” Mr. Ban said in [remarks](#) to the UN [Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva.

He noted that the Council’s system of special procedures – experts who travel the world, record what they see, and report to the 47-member body – makes this possible. The Council also convenes special sessions, carries out fact-finding missions and responds to breaking developments.

“But more must be done to fully rise above national and regional interests. If this Council is to deliver on the promise of its founding, you must go beyond narrow considerations,” said Mr. Ban, stressing that for the Council to fulfil its mandate, it must be seen as impartial and fair.

“It cannot be seen as a place ruled by bias or special interests. It cannot be a place that targets some countries, yet ignores others. It cannot be a place where some members overlook the human rights violations of others so as to avoid scrutiny themselves.”

The Secretary-General added that while the independence of human rights rapporteurs cannot and should not be limited, irresponsible behaviour that undermines the Council and the UN cannot be condoned.

He noted in particular recent comments by one special rapporteur who suggested that there was an ‘apparent cover-up’ in the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States.

“I condemn this sort of inflammatory rhetoric,” Mr. Ban said, referring to the comments made by Palestinian rights expert Richard Falk in a blog post this month. “It is preposterous – an affront to the memory of the more than 3,000 people who died in that tragic attack.”

In addition, Mr. Ban cautioned against being “selective” in promoting human rights. “We must address the full spectrum of rights with equal force – civil, cultural, economic, social and political. Put simply, our watchword should be: all people, all countries, all rights.”

He highlighted the need to reject all forms of intolerance, continue working to protect civilians caught in conflict, address rape and gender-based violence, and reject persecution of people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“I understand that sexual orientation and gender identity raise sensitive cultural issues. But cultural practice can not justify any violation of human rights,” he stated. “When our fellow humans are persecuted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, we must speak out.”

Earlier today, the Secretary-General, together with UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos, opened a conference aimed at securing sufficient and predictable funding for the world body’s urgent, life-saving humanitarian work.

He also visited the International Olympic Committee and met with its chief, Jacques Rogge, as well as the heads of some international sports federations.

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