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Ban stresses role of NGOs in helping transitional countries build institutions



Secretary-General (right) speaks at meeting with NGO community. Maher Nasser, Director of the DPI Outreach Division is at left

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today stressed that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play a crucial role in supporting countries in transition as they work to build and strengthen their fledgling institutions with the assistance of the United Nations.

Meeting representatives of the NGO community at UN Headquarters in New York, Mr. Ban [noted](#) that many countries in the Middle East and North Africa undergoing the Arab Spring

reform movement face major challenges like organizing elections, drafting new constitutions, promoting democratic practices, building independent judiciaries and developing free media.

“There can be no success without a healthy civil society. Please, do your part. Help these women’s groups, social media activists, human rights defenders and others to take their rightful place in society – in government, in parliament, in every public institution,” he said.

He said the voices of NGOs will also be crucial as the world forges a common agenda for sustainable peace, prosperity, freedom and justice, noting their support will be required in promoting sustainable development and disarmament.

He noted, with appreciation, that NGOs have been fully engaged on the issues of climate change and the preservation of the world’s biodiversity since the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, and urged them to build on the same spirit during the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in the same city in June next year.

He welcomed their decision to make disarmament the focus of their annual joint conference with the UN Department of Public Information in Mexico City two years ago, noting it was one of the largest assemblies of disarmament NGOs ever held.

“We need you to keep pushing – for greater transparency, for deeper reductions in arsenals, and for more ratifications of disarmament treaties, above all the CTBT [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty],” said Mr. Ban. “Too many people dismiss disarmament as a pie-in-the-sky ideal. Let us work together to bring disarmament down to earth.”

He stressed that one of the lessons he had learned as Secretary-General was the power of partnerships – working in concert with the business community, civil society, philanthropists and faith leaders.

“Thanks to the power of partnership, we are closing in on a day when we can eliminate deaths from malaria. Our target is 2015. By that time, we expect that there will be no malaria-related deaths.

“It [partnership] is the operational strategy underlying our new initiative for maternal and child health, ‘Every Woman Every Child’. That is also our approach with the new ‘Sustainable Energy for All’ initiative. Together, in close coordination and cooperation, we can achieve outsized results on virtually every aspect of our shared agenda.”

The Secretary-General also stressed the need for NGOs to continue supporting those in need despite dwindling resources in the current difficult economic times when budgets are being cut and austerity measures instituted.

“Everywhere, people are living in fear – fear of losing their jobs, fear of being unable to feed their families, fear that governments and public institutions will fail them yet again.

“It is up to us – organizations like yours and mine – to help restore that faith. To deliver for people in need. The austerity challenge is not merely about quantity; it is about quality. It is not merely about ‘doing more with less’ but about ‘doing better with less’,” he said.

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