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Development needs of today must not trump prospects for tomorrow – Ban



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The world has little time to lose to come up with bold but pragmatic solutions to balance the need to provide an equitable, prosperous life for all with the imperative to save the planet from climate change and runaway over-exploitation, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon [warned](#) today.

“Leaders need to make tough choices. We need to provide for the needs of today, while investing in the people, the planet, and the promise of tomorrow,” he told Member States in a briefing on progress made by the High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability that he set up a year ago to provide a roadmap for next year’s Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil.

Leaders need to make tough choices. We need to provide for the needs of today, while investing in the people, the planet, and the promise of tomorrow.

“The world today faces challenges that make this work even more urgent than it was a year ago. Across the globe, economies are teetering. People are expressing widespread disillusion. We see distrust in institutions, be they public or private, a sense that the playing field is tilted in favour of entrenched interests and elites. At the same time, the global thermostat continues to rise. Extreme weather is now becoming the new normal.

“Scientific tipping points could alter life as we know it, affecting our climate, the oceans and the existence of other species,” he told the briefing, which also heard reports from the panel’s co-chairs, President Tarja Halonen of Finland in person and South African President Jacob Zuma by video link.

The panel is scheduled to wrap up its work in December and provide its final report in January and Mr. Ban urged it to be “courageous” in providing a blueprint to ensure a viable and equitable future for all, one that will not only speed up progress toward the achieving the poverty-fighting Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) by 2015, but also develop a new generation of sustainable development targets for the years beyond.

The MDGs, set by the UN Millennium Summit of 2000, seek to slash hunger and poverty, maternal and infant mortality, a host of diseases, and lack of access to education and health care, all by 2015, but many countries have fallen behind schedule in many or all of the targets.

“We have little time to lose,” Mr. Ban said of the overall need to find ways to lift people out of poverty while tackling climate change and ensuring that development is environmentally friendly. “I asked the panel to look at these issues with a bold but pragmatic eye.”

General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser also warned of the need for urgent action.

“Dramatic changes are occurring across the globe,” he said. “Food and energy price hikes threaten millions of people with still deeper poverty. Extreme weather and other impacts of climate change continue to jeopardize development gains.

“Taken in combination, these factors affect our well-being and feed anxiety about the future – our own, and that of our children.”

Mr. Al-Nasser [stressed](#) the need for policy-makers to “connect the dots between issues” so that they develop policies that are “coherent, effective and beneficial.”

He added it was vital to ensure that the outcome of Rio+20 “is innovative and at the same time practical in its approach to tackling issues of sustainable development and poverty eradication.”

Two other panel members – former Mozambican prime minister Luisa Diogo and current Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd – also briefed the meeting.