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Secretary-General pledges continued UN support for Arab countries' development efforts



19 January 2011 – [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today said the United Nations stands ready to support the efforts of Arab governments and their partners to achieve shared social and economic goals, with the aim of laying the foundation for a more peaceful and prosperous future.

“By joining forces, we can elevate the status of women, provide greater opportunities for youth, and lay the groundwork for a more peaceful and sustainable future,” Mr. Ban said in a [message](#) delivered to the 2nd Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on his behalf by the Administrator of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), Helen Clark.

The Secretary-General said that Arab States have made significant strides towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), but noted that gains have been uneven within and between countries. The eight MDGs – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and leading development institutions.

“Many have made strides towards gender equality and increased access to education, particularly among girls. I hope the region can go further by making sure that the well-schooled girls of today become the women leaders of tomorrow,” the Secretary-General said in his message, noting that these gains have been uneven both within and between countries.

He urged governments to strive to ensure that job opportunities keep pace with population growth, adding that “in this region as in others, a greater emphasis on inclusion and equity can strengthen social cohesion.”

The UN chief spoke of the growing impact of climate change, desertification and dwindling water resources on the Arab world despite the region’s relatively small contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, and warned that regional conflicts continued to exacerbate development challenges.

“I commend the generosity of many Arab countries in supporting development and humanitarian initiatives in this region and beyond,” Mr. Ban said, urging the region’s leaders to utilize the Arab world’s rich human and material resources to generate jobs, strengthen economies and promote trade and good governance.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General left Oman today to return to New York. While in Oman, he met with the country’s leader, Sultan Qaboos Bin, and the pair discussed, among other topics, the forthcoming Decade of Action for Road Safety, Iran and the Middle East.

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