



UN NEWS CENTRE

With breaking stories and
newswire products from



North Africa and Middle East events prove democracy a universal yearning – Ban



15 September 2011 –

This year's dramatic popular support for political change in North Africa and the Middle East showed that democracy is a governance model that people of all cultures yearn for, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said today, noting, however, that it cannot be imposed from abroad.

“The world saw the truth of the saying that countries do not become fit for democracy – they become fit through democracy,” Mr. Ban said in a [message](#) to mark the International Day for Democracy.

“Young people, above all, brought home this message. They championed the democratic ideal and now face the challenge of working to realize the potential of the transitions they helped to set in motion,” said the United Nations chief.

He noted that the preference for democracy is also borne out by the fact that this year is the 20th anniversary of the transformation of Eastern Europe, where many of the countries are still in the early stages of their democratic passage.

“They know the painstaking work involved in building the rule of law, fostering transparency and accountability, and overhauling political and economic systems. They know the setbacks that can disappoint expectations, and the passion needed to keep moving forward. Their experiences provide important lessons,” said Mr. Ban.

The UN plays a crucial role to develop and strengthen democratic institutions and practices around the world – supporting free and fair elections, encouraging popular participation by civil society, and nurturing dialogue when parties are deadlocked after disputed polls, the Secretary-General pointed out.

He highlighted UN mediation in fragile political situations to prevent conflict, fostering accountable security institutions after conflict and the deployment of experts to help strengthen the rule of law, develop multi-party structures and build effective and accountable public administrations.

“In all these endeavours, the UN does not seek to export or promote any particular national or regional model of democracy.

“It works on the understanding that the democratic ideal is rooted in philosophies and traditions from all parts of the world; that effective democratic governance enhances the quality of life for men and women everywhere; and that democracy provides the foundations for durable peace, security and development,” said Mr. Ban.

He called for the redoubling of efforts to support all people, particularly the young who have been the catalyst of this year’s momentous events that brought political changes to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and engendered democratic movements in many countries in the Middle East.

“This Day belongs to them. Let us honour their commitment to a lifelong journey in democracy,” said the Secretary-General.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Arab nations need to ensure sustainable transition to democracy – UN rights chief](#)