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UN stands ready for turbulent times ahead – Ban



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses correspondents at a press conference at UN Headquarters

15 September 2011 –

The world is undergoing “a moment of uncommon turbulence,” facing enormous political, economic, humanitarian and environmental challenges, but the United Nations stands ready to help deal with all of them, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said today.

[Briefing](#) journalists at UN Headquarters in New York ahead of next week’s opening of the General Assembly’s annual high-level debate, Mr. Ban said the agenda of world leaders is more crowded than ever.

“The global economic crisis continues to shake banks, businesses, governments and families around the world,” he said.

“We face an extraordinary array of geopolitical and humanitarian challenges – famine in Somalia, the aftershocks of the Arab Spring, ongoing conflicts in some countries and difficult transitions in others. All this in addition to the deeper political, economic and environmental transformations that are re-shaping our world.”

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More than 120 heads of State and government are slated to attend the [General Assembly](#) next week, and a series of high-level meetings on issues ranging from non-communicable diseases and nutrition to nuclear safety and desertification will also be held.

Ahead of next week’s special session on Libya, Mr. Ban said he looks forward to “prompt” Security Council action on his proposals for a UN support mission to help the transitional authorities and the Libyan people during the critical post-conflict phase.

He also intends to make a special plea before world leaders for the Horn of Africa, where the number of people in need due to drought, famine and conflict has grown from 12.4 million to 13.3 million. So far only two-thirds of the \$2.4 billion in assistance requested by the UN and its partners has been received.

On the Middle East, the Secretary-General stressed the need to resume Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, saying that ending the conflict and achieving a two-State solution is long overdue. “Time is not our friend,” said Mr. Ban.

He also urged President Bashar al-Assad to “keep his word” to stop the violence and repression in Syria and to carry out reforms consistent with the aspirations of his people.

When he addresses world leaders at the start of next week’s general debate, Mr. Ban intends to share his vision of the challenges and the way ahead, beginning with the passionate conviction that the UN has never been more needed, he stated.

“In this age of anxiety, the world’s people look to us for answers and action,” he said. “We know that the UN remains our best hope for building a safer, more secure and just world.

“We know that saving the planet requires us to invest in people, particularly women and youth... We know that we must place new emphasis on prevention, both of conflicts and natural disasters. We know that we must devote new effort to assist nations in transition – from war to peace, autocracy to democracy, poverty to prosperity.

“We recognize the power of partnership,” Mr. Ban added, pointing to the events of the past year such as Libya, Côte d’Ivoire, the Arab Spring, a series of natural disasters and the ongoing

economic crisis. “In all these, the UN responded effectively because we worked closely with international partners, particularly regional organizations.”

He also pledged to put the UN’s own house in order. “Transparency and accountability remain our watchwords. At a time of austerity, we must do more with the resources we have, not those we might wish to have.”

The importance of partnerships and resources to the way the UN carries out its vital work also featured in Mr. Ban’s [remarks](#) earlier today to a meeting of the Women’s International Forum.

“The United Nations is working to make the most of every dollar, every yuan, every rouble and every euro. We understand that governments everywhere are cutting costs. We are too. But we need predictable financing to do our jobs. That will save everyone money in the long run,” he said.

“We also have to reach out to partners, governments and regional organizations, non-governmental groups and religious leaders [and] young people, who will inherit the future... and who are shaping the present.”

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