



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



Conflict management, development among key focus areas for deputy UN chief



UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson. UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz

23 August 2012 –

[Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson](#) says key development issues such as tackling food security and fighting poverty, as well as the crisis in Syria, will feature high on his agenda at the United Nations.

“As Deputy Secretary-General I will of course focus on what the SG [[Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#)] wants me to work with. But I will probably focus most on two areas: development – and we face some very serious challenges in this area – and secondly, political issues,” Mr. Eliasson said in an interview with the UN News Centre.

“On development, it’s such a wide range of areas, but the most urgent [...] issue is the food security crisis,” he added. “We are expecting price increases of food all over the world in the next 4-5 months.”

The veteran Swedish diplomat, who took up his post in July, is no stranger to the Organization, having served in a number of UN positions, including Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, President of the General Assembly and Special Envoy for Darfur.

“The United Nations has always been very close to my heart,” said Mr. Eliasson. “I believe in the values and principles of the United Nations. We are often criticized but I think we are a reflection of the world as it is and not as we want it to be – but we have to bridge that gap, make sure the world becomes more of what we want it to be.”

Among the areas where there is still much work to be done, the Deputy Secretary-General cited the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) – specific targets on poverty alleviation, education, gender equality, child and maternal health, environmental stability, HIV/AIDS reduction, and a ‘Global Partnership for Development’ that world leaders have pledged to achieve by 2015.

Last month Mr. Ban announced the members of a high-level panel he set up to present recommendations on a global post-2015 agenda with shared responsibilities for all countries and with the fight against poverty and sustainable development at its core.

There were many crises to deal with on the political front, Mr. Eliasson noted. “The most dramatic one, the most internationally recognized one is, of course, Syria, where we are dealing with very serious matters, providing hopefully a peaceful alternative to the horrible fighting that goes on now, and the suffering that goes on now, with huge humanitarian consequences.”

Syria has been wracked by violence, with an estimated 17,000 people, mostly civilians, killed since the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began some 17 months ago. Over the past month, there have been reports of an escalation in violence in many towns and villages, as well as the country’s two biggest cities, Damascus and Aleppo.

Other issues of concern, he said, include the tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel, along with the conflict in northern Mali.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Ban appoints veteran Swedish diplomat as new UN Deputy Secretary-General](#)