

## **On visit to Republic of Korea, Ban highlights role of businesses in sustainable development**



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon address at the National Assembly. UN Photo/E. Debebe

1 November 2012 – Private businesses, which play a crucial role in achieving sustainable development, must boost their efforts to integrate sustainability principles into their operations, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon stressed during his trip to the Republic of Korea (ROK) this week.

“It is time to take corporate sustainability to the next level,” Mr. Ban said in his remarks at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development annual meeting in Seoul on Tuesday. “We need companies everywhere to deliver value not just financially – but also in social,

environmental and ethical terms – to look at the quadruple bottom line – and to report publicly on results and progress.”

Mr. Ban underlined the importance of the business community and governments recognizing that working on projects for the common good also benefits companies’ profits, making it essential that they contribute to sustainable development efforts.

“Market disturbances, social unrest, ecological devastation, and natural man-made disasters – near and far – directly affect your business – your supply chains, capital flows, your employees and your profits,” Mr. Ban said. “You see that your ability to innovate and grow depends on collective systems that support peace, prosperity and basic human freedoms.”

Mr. Ban emphasized that a significant shift needs to occur in businesses worldwide, in which they consciously embrace sustainability principles and incorporate them into their operations everywhere. He added that governments must also encourage this shift with the right incentives.

In his remarks, the Secretary-General highlighted the UN Global Compact initiative, which counts with some 7,000 corporate participants in 140 countries which have committed to integrate universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption into their operations.

Businesses must also build on the commitments made during the UN Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)), held in June, Mr. Ban said, which include contributing to the fight against hunger, empowering women, and ensuring sustainable energy access for all, among others.

“Rio+20 showed that there are plenty of companies with vision – businesses that are prepared to lead – to take risks and seize opportunities,” Mr. Ban said. “We count on your energy, support and leadership to spread the word – and the action.”

During his visit to the ROK, which ended on Wednesday, Mr. Ban also addressed the country’s National Assembly, and called on the East Asian country to take a leadership role in addressing issues such as sustainable development, security and human rights.

“I wish to see my mother country, Korea, stand tall and proud as an advanced nation by making a bigger contribution on the world stage and gaining ever more respect in the international community. The window of opportunity is wide open. We can add a new chapter to the success story of Korea,” he said.

He added, “Let us never forget that ending poverty, advancing democracy, protecting human rights, working to secure peace is possible. That is the story of Korea. And with your help, we can make it the story of the world.”

The UN chief also spoke at the Rehabilitation International World Congress in the city of Incheon on Tuesday. He praised the region’s efforts advocating for the rights of people with disabilities and urged countries that have not yet done so to adopt the Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities, which obliges States to ensure and promote the full realization of their rights without discrimination.

On Wednesday, Mr. Ban met with ROK President Lee Myung-bak, and expressed his deep appreciation for the country's active support for the UN on issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and energy and education, among others.

The two men also discussed ways to deepen cooperation between the ROK and the UN, with Mr. Ban expressing hopes that the country would expand its contribution to the work of the world body, including peace and security, as a one of the new non-permanent members of its Security Council, a position that the ROK will take up at the start of 2013.

The Secretary-General returned to UN Headquarters on Wednesday.

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