

Trust and renewed multilateralism keys to tackling today's crises – Ban



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (second from left) and President Heinz Fischer of Austria (third from left)

30 August 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today highlighted the importance of trust – both among States and in the United Nations – in tackling a range of global crises, while calling for a renewed multilateralism that delivers results for the world's people.

“Pressed by crisis on several fronts, the world is coming to understand the need to work together as never before in a spirit of shared purpose,” Mr. Ban said in a **speech** to the European Forum Alpbach Political Symposium in Austria, where he is currently on an official visit.

“A renewed multilateralism that delivers real results for real people in need,” he stated, “a multilateralism where countries and regions engage with each other in a spirit of trust, cooperation and mutual reliance.”

Whether it is climate change, or the global crises related to food, fuel, flu or financial issues, today's challenges have highlighted the interdependence of peoples and nations, and the importance of multilateralism, he said.

And the “defining challenge for multilateralism” is climate change, said the Secretary-General, calling it “a health crisis, an energy crisis, a food crisis and a security crisis all rolled into one.”

This December, in Copenhagen, governments will meet to finalize a new climate change agreement, and Mr. Ban stressed the need to conclude “a fair, effective, science-based, ambitious deal that will benefit all countries.”

The UN chief, who will be travelling to the Polar ice rim in the coming days to see the melting glaciers and highlight the challenge of climate change, said a renewed multilateralism will seal a deal in Copenhagen.

“We know that the cost of inaction will dwarf any price tag for actions taken today. We also know many of the solutions already exist,” he stated.

"What we need is national and international leadership from Heads of State and Government. And we need trust. Trust between developing and developed nations."

Mr. Ban noted that a renewed, effective and meaningful multilateralism also means "delivering on our commitments," and that when Member States give the UN a mandate, they must also give it the resources to see the job through to the end.

At the same time, he acknowledged that too often, complacency and cynicism have prevented the UN from acting as early or as effectively as it should.

"Yet this past decade has also seen acceptance of the responsibility to protect," he said. "Four years ago, world leaders unanimously committed themselves to preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

"This universal and irrevocable commitment was made at the highest level, without contradiction or challenge. Our common task now is to deliver."

Mr. Ban also stressed the responsibility to protect in a speech to the Alpbach Retreat on "The UN Security Council and the Protection of Civilians: Improving Effectiveness and Accountability."

He said the failure of warring parties to respect their obligations to protect civilians demands a reinvigorated commitment by the Council, Member States and the UN to meet five core challenges.

These include seeking better compliance by warring parties with international humanitarian law and human rights law, finding ways to better engage with non-State armed groups, and ensuring that peacekeeping missions have better operational and material support for the protection aspects of their mandates.

In addition, humanitarian actors need improved – and much safer – access to civilians, and there needs to be enhanced accountability, he said.

Mr. Ban now heads to Norway, where he is scheduled to meet with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, before traveling to Svalbard, in the Arctic Ocean, to see firsthand the impact of climate change.