



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



Intercultural dialogue crucial for world peace, Ban tells Security Council



26 May 2010 – The Security Council today highlighted the vital role of intercultural dialogue in securing global peace, with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warning that while the world is growing more connected through migration, trade and technology, it is also growing more apart.

“At a time when prejudice and hatred are all too common, when extremists seek new recruits through incitement and identity-based appeals, when politicians use divisiveness as a strategy to win elections, dialogue can be an antidote,” he **told** a day-long session the 15-member body, chaired by Prime Minister Saad Hariri of Lebanon, which holds this month’s rotating Council presidency.

He stressed that while countries coming into more frequent contact with each other and many are becoming more multicultural and diverse, this enrichment, a matter of celebration for many, can be confusing and intimidating for others.

“This underscores the need to build space for cooperation and to strengthen mutual understanding and respect,” he said. “We do not do this as a feel-good exercise. We do this because it is essential for achieving peace and security in the broadest sense. Dialogue can defuse tensions, and keep situations from escalating. It can promote reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict. It can introduce moderate voices into polarized debates.”

Mr. Ban praised the Alliance of Civilizations, whose third forum he will be attending in Rio de Janeiro on Friday. Set up under UN auspices in 2005 at the initiative of Spain and Turkey, it seeks to overcome prejudice among nations, cultures and religions.

“Support for the Alliance keeps growing,” he declared. “We just welcomed the 100th member, the United States. I hope its membership and work will expand further still. It is the right initiative at the right time. Our world is changing rapidly. And it is changing in unpredictable ways.”

Noting that the General Assembly proclaimed 2010 the International Year for Rapprochement of Cultures, he said everyone agreed on the importance of intercultural dialogue and shared values for peace and security.

“The challenge now for the Security Council in particular is to follow up on today’s discussion by incorporating intercultural dialogue more fully into your efforts to maintain international peace and security,” he said, adding that many members had ample experience in the problems that can ensue from cross-cultural tensions and perceptions of injustice.

“But you are also well versed in the benefits of dialogue and the great strength to be found in diversity,” he concluded. “I urge the Members of the Council to draw more on these experiences and share the lessons you have learned. Intercultural dialogue is an important tool in the diplomat’s toolkit. I urge you to make greater use of it.”

Mr. Ban met with Mr. Hariri separately to discuss implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701, adopted in August 2006 after fighting between Israel and Hizbollah, which called for an end to hostilities, respect for the so-called Blue Line separating the Israeli and Lebanese sides, disarming of militias and an end to arms smuggling.

The talks focused on violations of the Blue Line, allegations of arms smuggling and the situation in Ghajjar, where Israel continues to occupy the northern part of the village although it is north of the Blue Line.

The two also discussed the Middle East peace process in general and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, an independent body based in The Hague, Netherlands.

The tribunal was set up following a probe by an independent international commission, after an earlier UN inquiry found that Lebanon’s own probe into the 2005 car bombing that killed Mr. Hariri’s father, former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and 22 others was seriously flawed and that Syria was primarily responsible for the political tensions that preceded that attack.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

Ban issues call for religious leaders to foster dialogue between cultures

