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## **Ban urges tolerance and social inclusion in an age of global emigration**



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (file photo)

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today urged the world to deepen its commitment to the common values of social inclusion, acceptance and understanding, saying emigration was increasingly a global trend with minorities and migrants gravitating towards cities for economic opportunities.

“We meet in what I call an age of mobility. This is an era where people are crossing borders in ever-increasing numbers in pursuit of opportunity and hope for a better life,” said Mr. Ban, [addressing](#) the International Conference on the Inter-Ethnic City in the Italian capital, Rome.

“Cities are the main centres of action – the hubs, the magnets, the places where people collide and coexist,” he told the conference, organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the auspices of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was created to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The Secretary-General acknowledged that cities face both economic and social challenges in creating an inclusive environment, especially in the prevailing global economic uncertainty and political transitions under way in many countries.

“In such a climate, there is a tendency to blame the ‘other’ or to see the ‘other’ as draining the local economy.

“Indeed, in every corner of the world, migration is often the subject of shrill debate – a wedge to provoke social tensions, drive political extremes, fan the flames of discrimination and hatred,” said Mr. Ban.

On the other hand, migrants tended to complement, rather than displace, national workers. They generated additional demand and often performed jobs that nationals do not want, even in times of economic crisis, he stressed.

“We should also remember that the profile of migrant workers is not always what we imagine. They are not always low-wage, poorly educated labourers. To the contrary, in many countries and cities they are the best and the brightest: doctors, nurses, engineers and other highly educated professionals. They are entrepreneurs who revitalize neighbourhoods and create jobs. These are a welcome addition to any society,” the Secretary-General added.

He pointed out that Italy, which is marking the 150th anniversary of its unification, was, some decades ago, a country of emigration when millions of Italians went abroad and in so doing alleviated unemployment, sustained their families and sent home much-needed remittances.

“Italy showed how international migration can be a triple win – for countries of origin, countries of destination, and migrants and their families. Italy should bring that wisdom to the global debate,” he said.

The Secretary-General said local authorities and civil society groups were essential to the successful integration of migrants and other ethnic minorities, as well as the effective management of cultural diversity.

Corporations too could take steps to make diversity a priority when recruiting their workforce, procuring new vendors and reaching out to new customers, while foundations and local educational institutions could provide safe spaces for people from different ethnicities to discuss their differences and act on their common goals, Mr. Ban said.

“We live in a world where, too often, division sells. It wins votes. It gets ratings. It is much easier to blame others than to think for one’s self.

“And yet, wherever I go, I have found something else – a growing realization that we are in this together. A sharper understanding that cities and communities do best when everyone has a chance to give their full potential – when all can play a part,” the Secretary-General added.

Separately, the Secretary-General [met](#) with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini for discussions that included the current situations in Libya, Somalia, Lebanon, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as nuclear safety. He was also expected to confer today with Italian President Giorgio Napolitano.

Mr. Ban reiterated his condemnation of the attack last week on Italian peacekeepers serving with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon ([UNIFIL](#)), and renewed his sympathies to those wounded and their families.

He voiced his hope that Italy would maintain its current level of support to UNIFIL, saying the Italian contingent and the mission as a whole were making a significant contribution towards stability and peace in Lebanon and the wider region.

Turning to the Middle East and North Africa, the Secretary-General underscored the importance of including women in dialogue.

He voiced his concern over violence in Syria and Yemen, but also took note of the amnesty announced by the Syrian authorities, as well as Bahrain's decision to end the state of emergency.

The Secretary-General and Italian President Giorgio Napolitano exchanged views on developments in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly the situation in Libya. They also discussed emigration, with Mr. Ban stressing that the importance of upholding the rights of emigrants regardless of their status.

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[Peace and solidarity only possible when there is cultural diversity, Ban stresses](#)