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Top UN officials urge 'global movement of minds' to realise universal values



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses press group cultural forum in Shanghai

2 November 2010 – [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon and senior UN communications chief Kiyoko Akasaka have urged academics and scholars to spearhead a movement to further freedom of expression and educational opportunity for all, at a conference on the UN's Academic Impact initiative in Shanghai.

“The Academic Impact aims to generate a global movement of minds to promote a new culture of intellectual social responsibility,” the Secretary-General [told](#) the conference, held on 1 and 2 November in advance of the formal launch of the initiative, which will take place at UNHQ in New York on 18-19 November.

In institutional terms, Academic Impact will serve as a clearing house to match academic innovation with particular areas of the UN's work, including neglected areas of research, countries in need of specific help, research that will help deliver concrete change on the ground, and the best ideas to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

“It is animated by a commitment to certain bedrock principles, among them, freedom of inquiry, opinion and speech; education opportunity for all; global citizenship; sustainability; and dialogue,” the Secretary-General added.

Mr. Akasaka, UN Under-Secretary General for Communications and Public Information, spoke of the integrity and universality of the initiative.

“It is our conviction that principles inherent in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are universal values that education can promote and help to fulfil,” he said.

“There can be no alliance more formidable than that between scholarship and social responsibility.”

Mr. Akasaka added that the spirit and intent of the UN’s Academic Impact initiative was “to unleash minds and their potential by asserting the right to enquire; the right to challenge every dogma, even if it happens to be the only dogma prevalent at the moment; to allow the liberty to express views and opinions, and to acknowledge the responsibility to substantiate them.”

He said the conference, organized by China's Ministry of Education, and attended by some 200 representatives from more than 80 universities and research institutes had helped to define the core principles of the initiative in advance of its New York launch.

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