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Ban urges students to find common ground at UN forum on bioethics



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

4 March 2010 – Bioethics increasingly has implications for many areas of people’s lives and it is important to identify common ground around which controversial discussions can take place, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told hundreds of students today in New York.

“Today, we are witnessing the globalization of health research, the spread of 'health tourism' and the diminishing importance of national boundaries in the fight against deadly epidemics. All these demonstrate that bioethics has an important international dimension,” Mr. Ban said in a [message](#) to the 34th annual UN International School-UN conference on the theme “Bioethics: Striking a Balance.”

“Issues such as promoting access to quality healthcare, sharing the benefits of scientific research, and the protection of the environment, biodiversity and the biosphere cannot be discussed without considering their global implications,” he added.

More than 800 students from across the world are hearing from guest speakers with experience and knowledge of some of ethical concerns raised by rapid advancements in science and medicine, such as human egg markets, organ transplants and the allocation of scarce health care resources.

“As we develop technologies that enable us to make life-or-death decisions, we need a shared, value-based approach to what are fundamentally moral questions,” the Secretary-General told the students.

He said the UN has set the standards and supports efforts to improve the quality of bioethical debate around the world with the adoption of three key declarations – the 1997 Universal Declaration on the Genome and Human Rights, the 2003 International Declaration on Human Genetic Data and the 2005 Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights.

These “acknowledge the wide range of value systems in the world today while attesting to core universal ethical values,” said the Secretary-General.

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