

Agreement on new climate change pact crucial to future of humanity, says Ban



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon holds a town hall meeting at the Vienna International Centre

28 August 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today underscored the need for countries to ‘seal the deal’ at a major climate change conference later this year in Copenhagen, stressing that a successful outcome is crucial for the planet and the future of humanity.

“We have about three months until the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December in Copenhagen – three months to reach an agreement that will determine the future of our planet,” Mr. Ban **said** at a ceremony in the Austrian capital to mark the 30th anniversary of the UN headquarters there, known as the Vienna International Centre.

When they meet in December, Member States are expected to agree on a new pact on slashing greenhouse gas emissions to replace the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period ends in 2012.

In his address at the anniversary ceremony – attended by around 1,000 people – the Secretary-General also spoke about the importance of the work of all the Vienna-based UN organizations, which include the International Atomic Energy Agency (**IAEA**) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (**UNODC**), among others.

“From outer space to the human heart, this Vienna International Centre has done far more than witness history; it has brought great progress to our world,” he said. “Every office here, every single member of the UN family in Vienna, is making a major difference in people’s lives.”

The UN chief added that he had “left half his heart in Vienna,” after serving as Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Austria some 10 years ago.

While in Austria, Mr. Ban is also scheduled to make a private visit to the President’s summer residence. He will then go to Tyrol where he will address the Alpbach Retreat 2009, which focuses on the theme, “The UN Security Council and the Protection of Civilians: Improving Effectiveness and Accountability.”

The Secretary-General’s current trip also includes a stop next week in Svalbard, Norway, to see first hand the impact of climate change on the Arctic. The visit is part of his efforts to push for action ahead of the December conference and follows a similar trip to Antarctica in 2007.

"This will be a very important experience," he told reporters today following a meeting with Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger. "I am going to send out to the international community a strong message, so that we will be committed even further to seal the deal in Copenhagen."

With only 100 days left before the December meeting, the UN is launching Global Climate Week from 21 to 25 September. The Secretary-General is calling on communities around the world to take advantage of that week to encourage leaders to reach a fair, balanced and effective agreement on climate change.

Events are planned in more than 120 countries for this first Global Climate Week, which coincides with the summit on climate change being convened by Mr. Ban on 22 September in New York.

The UN is also encouraging communities, businesses and individuals to add their voices to the Seal the Deal! campaign during Global Climate Week by signing the online Climate Petition, which will be presented by civil society to governments at the Copenhagen meeting.

UN Environment Programme (**UNEP**) Executive Director Achim Steiner said that a deal reached at Copenhagen "is so essential on a planet of 6 billion people, [that is] rising to over 9 billion people by 2050."

He added that a deal would also serve as "perhaps the biggest and most far-reaching stimulus package of 2009 and beyond."

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