

Ban urges leaders at Davos to forge 'Green New Deal' to fight world recession



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

29 January 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on the world's business and other leaders to use the current economic crisis to launch a new Global Compact entailing a "Green New Deal" that creates jobs and fights climate change by investing in renewable energy and technological development.

"Climate change threatens all our goals for development and social progress. Indeed, it is the one true existential threat to the planet," he told the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in a **speech** that drew parallels from the Global Compact of corporate responsibility launched 10 years ago by then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan in the same hall.

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"On the other hand, it also presents us with a gilt-edged opportunity. By tackling climate change head-on we can solve many of our current troubles, including the threat of global recession. We stand at a crossroads. It is important that we realize we have a choice. We can choose short-sighted unilateralism and business as usual. Or we can grasp global cooperation and partnership on a scale never before seen."

Just as Mr. Annan had launched a Compact that sought to give a human face to the global market, challenging business to embrace universal principles and partner with the UN on big issues, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that seek to slash poverty, hunger, lack of access to health care and education and a host of other social ills by 2015, so now the time has come for what Mr. Ban called "Global Compact 2.0."

"We live in a new era. Its challenges can all be solved by cooperation – and only by cooperation," he said, stressing how the earlier compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, involves over 6,000 business participants in more than 130 countries, pioneering new standards of "best practice" in human rights and labour law, helping to protect the environment, fight against corruption and promote health, education and infrastructure.

"Now, a new set of crises prompts a renewed sense of mission," he declared. "Our times demand a new definition of leadership – global leadership. They demand a new constellation of international cooperation – governments, civil society and the private sector, working together for a collective global good.

"Some might say such a vision is naïve. That it is wishful thinking. Yet we have inspiring examples proving the contrary," he added, citing the critical role of business in the 1960s Green Revolution that lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty in Asia, the global vaccination campaign that eradicated smallpox by 1979, and solid progress in the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis, polio and malaria.

"But we must break the tyranny of short-term thinking in favour of long-term solutions. This will demand a renewed commitment to core principles. A new Global Compact," he added, noting new United States President Barack Obama has made a clear commitment to re-energizing the American economy by boosting the "green economy."

Mr. Ban cited initiatives already underway under the old Global Compact, such as "Caring for Climate," the world's largest business-led project on climate change in which chief executives disclose their carbon emissions and commit to comprehensive climate policies, and the "CEO Water Mandate" advancing water stewardship through drip irrigation and water harvesting.

"Today with the economic downturn and climate change, the stakes for companies have never been higher. But for businesses with vision, the rewards are equally high," he said. "The green economy is low-carbon and energy-efficient. It creates jobs. Investment in sustainable technologies will turn today's crisis into tomorrow's sustainable growth."

At another session in Davos, Mr. Ban **pushed** for a climate change communication initiative that will explain, educate and ask for global engagement, leading to success at the UN climate change conference slated to be held in December in Copenhagen, where negotiations on a successor pact to the Kyoto Protocol are slated to end.

Addressing another event called "**Managing our Water Needs**," he called on participants to make water security one of the top issues for climate change adaptation discussions for this year.

"The problem is that we have no coordinated global [water] management authority in the UN system or the world at large," the Secretary-General said. "There is no overall responsibility, accountability or vision for how to address the related problems of climate change, agricultural stress and water technology."

While in Davos, the Secretary-General also met, last night and today, with a number of leaders. He discussed climate change and the Middle East peace process with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

In addition, he discussed Haiti with former United States President Bill Clinton. And in a bilateral meeting with Mexican President Felipe Calderon, he talked about climate change, food security, the MDGs and Haiti.

From Davos the Secretary-General will travel to Addis Ababa for the African Union Summit, followed by an official visit to the United Arab Emirates. Thereafter, he will travel to Islamabad on an official trip to Pakistan, and then on to New Delhi, India, to attend the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2009.